Marilyn Strathern

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ISSUES IN COMPLEXITY AND SCALE

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Prickly Pear Pamphlet No. 6

THE RELATION: ISSUES IN COMPLEXITY AND SCALE was first published by the PRICKLY PEAR PRESS, 6 Clare Street, Cambridge CB4 3BY, United Kingdom, in 1995.

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Design by S. Bander
Produced by P. Verdon

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
THE RELATION: ISSUES IN COMPLEXITY AND SCALE

ISSN 1351-7961

Printed in Great Britain by
Rank Xerox, 42 Sidney Street,
Cambridge, CB2 3HX, U.K.

Contents

The Lecture 5

Notes 33

The text of an inaugural lecture given before the University of Cambridge, 14th October 1994, by the William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology.

The Relation

Issues in Complexity and Scale

There was a moment at a meeting in 1914 when Sir James Frazer raised not one but two gusts of laughter. His listeners could not have been more distinguished. From Cambridge they included the Disney Professor of Archaeology (Professor Ridgeway), Dr Duckworth whose name is familiar to Biological Anthropology, and Drs Haddon and Rivers who can be claimed for the Museum (of Archaeology & Anthropology) and for Social Anthropology.

Following a Royal Commission on university education, the gathering had come to deliberate practical measures "for the organisation of anthropological teaching".[1] One speaker noted that what Oxford needed "is more system".[2] The indispensability of the subject to the intelligence and enlightenment of administrators was not in doubt. It would put colonial officers into touch with the real world — accurate knowledge of the customs and ideas of non-Europeans throwing light on their own painfully acquired empirical understandings.[3] Well, as we know, the European war interrupted many plans, though Oxford did in the end get its 'system'. Indeed Meyer Fortes brought some of it with him when he came from there to Cambridge in 1950.

People present then, preparing to make representations to the Prime Minister, Asquith, must have thought they were at an epoch-making moment. As far as the advancement of knowledge is concerned, though, epochs probably get made in other ways. One was, conceivably, foreshadowed in Frazer's joke. (I should warn you that is both a bad joke and frequently retold.)

I Conceptions, Abstract and Concrete

Frazer's joke was about the difference between 'savage customs' and 'civilised law'. An administrator investigating the customs in his district "found that they were extremely odious and disagreeable to his mind, and he abolished them all at one stroke. (Laughter.) The natives came to him shortly afterwards and said, 'Amongst the rules that you have abolished is the rule that we may not marry our sisters; does the Government wish us to marry our sisters?' (Great laughter.)".

Remark the conjunction between rules of conduct in the abstract and a rule made concrete through reference to kin. It suggests to me a potent if concealed connection between the connecting of disparate customs and laws and a rule about connections between persons.[4] Possibly the laughter responded to that clinching concretivity. But before I say why there might be any interest in this, let alone epoch-making qualities, let me summon another situation altogether.

Imagine yourself set down in an actual court of civilised law, the year 1993 and the venue the Supreme Court of Justice in California.[5] A woman had contracted with a couple to carry their genetic child for them,[6] with the aid of in vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer. However, relations deteriorated to the point of the couple seeking a pre-birth declaration that they were the legal parents, to which the pregnant woman responded by a counter-claim. The Supreme Court found in favour of the couple, and laid stress on procreative intent.[7] The judge argued: "But for [the couple's] acted-on intention, the child would not exist ...", quoting the view of a commentator.[8]

> The mental concept of the child is a controlling factor of its creation, and the originators of that concept merit full credit as *conceivers* (my emphasis).

He means the conceivers of the mental concept, valuable in itself as fixing in "the initiating parents of a child", a sense of their obligations. But this was also a quite dreadful pun. What are we to do with the unspoken conjunction between the (abstract) conception of an idea and the (concrete) conception of a child?

If the two senses of 'conception' are embedded in the English language, there are similar terms of double resonance — generate, reproduce, create. Another set clusters round the idea of connection — affinity, kinship, relative. I mean no more of course than that the idiomatic possibilities of resonance are there. The cultural potential may invite one to imagine, as I have just done, connections people have not necessarily spelled out. But we do have to hand a well-documented example of an explicit transfer of meanings from this same field. Think how recently 'gender' has solidified in its current feminist usage. We can date that creative moment precisely. Before the early 1970s, in Fowler's stern words,[9] it was a grammatical term only, other senses being either a jocularity or a blunder; these days we do not think twice when gender refers to the social classification of male and female persons.[10] Sexual difference in turn has acquired some of the connotations of grammatical inflection: the social and cultural properties of one sex appearing as a correlative of the other.

We might be content to take these as metaphorical extensions or analogies.[11] Metaphors give some shape or sense of materiality to a thought, or intellectualise an experience or bodily condition. An anthropologist would ask why this or that particular conjunction of terms.

What intrigues me is the consistent parallel, the repeated echo, between intellectual propagation and procreative acts, between knowledge and kinship. These metaphors and analogies are following a particular path. Gillian Beer [12] points to one such path when she notes Herschel's astronomer's vision of the planetary system: what was formerly mere resemblance between bodies in space became perceived as "a true family likeness; they are bound up in one chain ... in one web of mutual relation". Darwin goes further: he gives the idea of family a genetic actuality when descent becomes "the hidden bond of connexion which naturalists have sought under the term of the

Natural System".[13] I would only add that in this culture the act of conceptualisation is seemingly caught up in a similar matrix. Thoughts are conceived as children are; kinsfolk are bound together by the idea of their relationship. One may even be the offspring of a thought — as in the Californian case, where intent becomes relational: "intent joins people".[14] If these are puns and conjunctions in the first instance allowed by the English language, and the way it creates verbal connections, then they must also be allowed by English kinship in the way it sets up connections between persons.

I refer to 'English' — that is, English language-speaking or Euro-American — kinship as a modern phenomenon. Although both senses of conceive seem to have been there from the 1300s,[15] other connections appear much later. Affinity seems to have been a relationship by marriage or an alliance between consociates before it became in the sixteenth century a term for structural resemblance or causal connection. Conversely, connection itself, which appears in the seventeenth century, seems to have referred to the joining of words and ideas by logic before it referred to the joining of persons through marriage or (more rarely) consanguinity.[16] The same holds for the term 'relation'.

Relation, already in English a combination of Latin roots, variously a narrative, reference back to something, or comparison, became in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries applied to connections via kinship.[17] The burst of knowledge that we associate with the new sciences was presumably also refashioning the way people represented their relations to one another. From the example of gender, one can only guess at the creative appropriations there may have been. And I say that in order to comment on knowledge-making in the twentieth century.

I am going to suppose that it was a creative appropriation of The Relation, at once the abstract construct and the concrete person, that lay behind some of the dramatic development of anthropology in the middle years of this century. But let me introduce that sideways.

II Kinds of Connections

Of course it is a disconcerting fact that one can find relations anywhere. Example: St James's Park and the cassowaries. Cassowaries are large, flightless birds from Papua New Guinea and South East Asia. In his essay of 1690 John Locke refers to two on display in St James' Park.[18] The philosopher wanted to illustrate the logical circumstance where a relation could be perceived clearly though the precise nature of the entities so connected might be in doubt. His concrete example was this strange bird, its enigmatic identity contrasting with the clearly perceived relationship between the pair: they were dam and chick.[19] These birds can be somewhat of an enigma in their home country too.[20] The Karam people of Papua New Guinea do not classify it with other birds at all. Here, too, a relation is evident. For the cassowary must be treated with the respect due to kin (they are like, men say, their sisters or cross cousins).[21] The Karam ornithologist, Saem Maenjep, introduced a further dimension. Saem insisted on specifying the source of his knowledge in particular forest places, for that came to him through a relationship. His father had died when he small; he knew things because he had walked round with his mother who had shown him.[22]

So out of these connections I could weave a story about connections: the seventeenth century Englishman seizing on the relationship between casssowary parent and child as a concrete example of an abstract problem in human understanding, alongside the twentieth century Papua New Guinean thinking of

his knowledge of cassowaries in the abstract as an outcome of a most concrete relation with his own parents. I could add connections. The Karam ethnographer was Ralph Bulmer, one of many Cambridge students who have worked in Melanesia, including Papua New Guinea, an undergraduate when Fortes arrived and supervised by Jack Goody at the much missed Bun Shop.[23]

This is primarily a narrational connection, to introduce the way I propose to refer to the work of the [Cambridge] Department of Social Anthropology and the wider community of anthropologists in this university. Many are present here. I shall recognise their *presence* by sparing their *names*. — Though several of you, and not just anthropologists, will recognise your ideas in what I say, as will my Manchester colleagues. — The names you will hear from now on are all of former anthropologists at Cambridge, some staff, some research students. That way, I can claim a goodly portion of the profession! And if I restrict illustration to Melanesia, it will be to invite you to scale it up to almost any part of the world. But while anyone can weave ingenious narratives, anthropologists do not pursue connections simply in order to be ingenious. They route them in specific ways.

Social anthropologists route [24] connections through persons. They attend to the relations of logic, of cause and effect, of class and category, that people make between things; it also means that they attend to the relations of social life, to the roles and behaviour, through which people connect themselves to one another. And habitually they bring these two domains of knowledge together, as when they talk about the relation between culture and society.[25]

This is the legacy of the 'organisation' of anthropological knowledge [26] for which the meeting in 1914 wished but could not see. It rested on new techniques for analysing relationships,

and distinguished British Social Anthroplogy from its American and continental counterparts.

Routing relations through persons became the substance of anthropological empiricism. Whether the relations were intellectual or social, made in fantasy or acted out in daily life, their source in people's interactions was made significant. Anthropologists stopped talking about savages and their customs. W.H.R. Rivers at St Johns, and his Trinity pupil A.R. Radcliffe-Brown,[27] had set the agenda for another project: how to understand the totality of social life in terms of its own internal ordering, namely *as* 'social organisation'.[28] And the enunciation of rules was understood as the moment at which people became articulate about relationships. Rules about whom to marry, to whom to show respect, about rights over resources comprised a virtual model of society. For the anthropologist could make connections between the rules, build up a picture (say) about how residence, claims to land, and respect for chiefs fitted together.[29] 'System' did not just mean the methodical collation of facts, but something closer to Darwin's imagery of descent: a system was a working model demonstrating how parts of social life fitted together and had an effect on one another. And with their penchant for the concrete, anthropologists identified their systematic descriptions of social organisation with the regulatory functions of the rules to which people adhered; 'social order' became simultaneously the description of society and the perceived means of its cohesion.[30]

There was a double emphasis, then, on relations known to the observer as principles of social organisation and relations observed as interactions between persons. The islanders of Melanesia did not just specify who was marriageable but where couples should reside, the most punctilious conjugal contracts being on the island of Dobu where couples annually alternated residence. Social structure inhered in relationships relevant to people's acts and intentions. This concrete location of structure

in people's actions puzzled continental observers of the British scene, but it gave British Social Anthropology one significant edge. The model could be *enacted* over and again in fieldwork. The tradition of fieldwork meant that anthropologists learnt about systems by entering into relations with those whose social life they were studying. Like Saem, the apprentice gained knowledge in the course of interaction. This disposition was amplified where kinship was at issue.

In his 1953 inaugural lecture, Meyer Fortes [31] argues that "[m]oral systems exist only as a part of man's <u>social</u> life; and this is as real and material a part of <u>nature</u> as his body and brain ... This makes it reasonable to suppose that human society exhibits regularities consistent with those found in the rest of nature". He validates the point: "If we consider only the discovery and elucidation of classificatory kinship systems it is enough to prove this". Fortes thus moves from moral systems to nature to kinship, and to these shifts in scale adds the elucidation of organisational principles as evidence that anthropology could organise itself. In his view, anthropology was not yet a discipline at the time of the first world war. There was a field of enquiry but no theory: "a definite organization of anthropological studies" [32] had indeed been required. But he did not mean quite what the 1914 meeting had in mind. The discipline could not have been organised until its theories were, and these were theories about the foundations of human organisation. "[O]ne of our principal aims," he declares, "is to discover how morals, beliefs and values are shaped by social relations and in turn regulate social relations".[33]

But why should evidence for regularity come from kinship systems? Fortes evokes an anthropological ancestor [34] who had seen principles of social ordering in people's classification of relations (that is, kin relations). The field of kinship emerged as a system in its own right, the recognition of a network of relationships which presupposed people's perception of relations

between relations. — The father of a father or the daughter of a sister. — Yet kin taxonomies initially led to an obsession with categories or classes. There was a time when 'marriages classes' were seen as the key to everything, a move that failed through too literal an attempt to read laws and regulations into kin terms, as though there were a direct congruence between them.[35] What Fortes and his colleagues did was to make a change of scale explicit.

Out of the idea that in the classification of relatives one could find wider social principles came a more general, and utterly simple, proposition: *persons are classifiable by their relations to one another*. And one could study these with a view to extracting diverse knowledge — political, economic, religious or whatever.[36] Taking up kin relations as a system was an impetus for describing social systems of all kinds. In short, social relations had become an object of knowledge.[37] Social relations may be abstractions, wrote Fortes, but "in order to be at the disposal of those who engage in them, [they] must become discernible, objectified ... bodied forth in material objects and places, in words, acts, ideas [and] rules".[38] British Social Anthropology remained closely tied to the conviction that at the heart of systems were persons' dealings with one another, the systems they created for themselves being second-order manifestations of their primary human ability to make relationships.[39]

This introduces the idea that ways of reckoning kin connections acknowledge relations already in a sense existing.[40] The kind of 'recognition' implied in the elucidation of kinship led some to stress its ideological role in relation to other enduring social realities. This was the brunt of Edmund Leach's quarrel with taking kinship too seriously. A kinship diagram does not represent a whole society! Kinship, he argued, cannot "be considered without reference to its political, demographic or economic implications".[41] To focus on explicit norms of kinship

behaviour may overlook the realities of political or economic power for which the rhetoric of kinship is a gloss.[42] What remains still at issue is the assumption that anthropological knowledge attends to relations between relations; but kinship must be related *to* other areas of social life.

Anthropologists hardly invented the idea of second-order modelling or of ideology. Nonetheless, kinship studies gave them a concrete tool for conceiving the complexity of social organisation in these terms. They were dealing with a double ordering of relations: indigenous models of kinship as a second-order classification of ties established through blood and marriage, and their own models of social relations that enabled them to debate the structuring role of kinship systems in society at large.

Rivers had devised what he called a genealogical method for collecting kin terms because he supposed that pre-literate people such as Melanesians apprehended abstract ideas via concrete facts: establish the (concrete) personal relationship and then ask the (abstract) kin term.[43] Fortes transformed the scale of this strategy. For him, in even the simplest societies, relations of kinship are at once a concrete vehicle for conceiving of a social order and an abstract articulation of the relational quality of all social existence.[44] People demarcate the differences in scale through diverse distinctions. Distinctions between kinds of kin may thus distinguish different orderings of social life.[45] Scale is my term, not Fortes's.

III With and Without Scale

Scale has been a headache for anthropology. If anthropology routes its knowledge through persons, the individual person appears to have its own scale, a 'small' entity by comparison with everything we know about society. Anthropological interest

in interpersonal relations seems side-tracked to dealing with 'small scale' societies. We think we know by contrast what complex ones are like — indirect communication via technologies of information transfer; persons dealing with others on anonymous, transient bases; open-ended in all directions. So for anthropologists to focus on kinship only seems to underline the point. For in complex societies, so understood, kinship occupies a domain in social life regarded as smaller in scale than the whole.

To make matters worse, many nonliterate peoples appear to see persons even where the anthropologist would not. And kinship may be claimed for relations between entities that English-speakers conceive as frankly improbable. Papua New Guinea provides notorious examples, as Gregory Bateson [46] found in Iatmul in the 1930s where human beings are simply one manifestation of clan persons also manifested as every conceivable entity in the environment. The tuber, yam, for instance. Reo Fortune reported the same from Dobu.[47] Yams have personal names, give birth, respond to speech, walk about at night. As Stephen Gudeman [48] commented fifty years later, this makes agriculture an activity carried out not in relation to 'nature' but in relation to other human-like beings. Now this should make us think again about scale, and about complexity for that matter.

Dobuans locate their own agency in a world of agents, human and unhuman; indeed, in the same way as persons have to be spurred into action, so does the growth and generation of plants, often through magic, for growth is not an autonomous process.[49] And their conceptions of time, Gudeman says, are not linear. In the beginning everything was related to everything else, and it is this past which has to be brought back again. "Far from providing a foundation or base for the social order, 'the economy' ... is an enactment which refers to other social acts",[50] an exemplary recurrence,[51] replaying what already exists in order

to make it appear again — the kinship-based lineage and its persons, human and yam. Forms must be repeated. Husbands and wives keep their yam seed apart in order to conserve its separate lineage identities.

Dobuans take the person as a measure of all things. Personifications have, we might say, a holographic effect, that is, one can encounter 'persons' in all forms of life.[52] As a consequence, there is nothing either large-scale or small-scale about the person. One can have small or large yams or important and unimportant events, but the person as such has no scale. Rather, Dobu personifications can take any scale, appear as any order of phenomena. Dobuans are not confused about the difference between yams and humans; the point is that lineage persons can take the body [53] of either kind of being.

Something not dissimilar is there in English ideas about knowledge. Like the person in Dobu, The Relation, itself neither large or small, can cross scales. It does so by virtue of two properties. They are found in both the abstract concept and the concrete kinsperson .

IV Holographic and Complex Phenomena

I want to understand the creative energy [54] released by the way knowledge was being organised in the middle years of this century — how with hindsight we might see the burst of anthropological activity from the Cambridge School. Perhaps in providing a counterpart to the organisation of knowledge in people's organisation of relations among themselves, the construct relation also introduced scale to special effect.

The concept of relation can be applied to any order of connection; this is its first property. It is *holographic* in the sense of being an example of the field it occupies, every part

containing information about the whole and information about the whole being enfolded in each part.[55] It is a holographic effect to imagine one can make connections anywhere. For the relation models phenomena in such a way as to produce instances of itself. We could call it a self-similar construct, a figure whose organising power is not affected by scale. At whatever level or order, the demonstration of a relationship, whether through resemblance, cause and effect or contiguity, reinforces the fact that through relational practices — classification, analysis, comparison — relations can be demonstrated. It works above all as a model for the kind of secular knowledge ushered in with the seventeenth or eighteenth century conviction that the world (nature) is open to scrutiny. For relations are produced through the very activity of understanding when that understanding has to be produced from within,[56] that is, when things in the world can only be compared with other things on the same earthly plane.

If one's heuristic world is society, relations are demonstrable across any order of event or rule, domain, institution, behaviour. You could look 'within' society and find economic and political structures or relations 'between' religious and legal values. Based on his own fieldwork in West Africa, Fortes pursued the insight within the domain of kinship, uncovering people's distinctions between the political and domestic aspects of kin relations.[57] The effect was to show that kinship is not just a familial phenomenon, but contains within itself the kinds of demarcations English-speakers make between (say) public and private spheres.

The relation has a second property: it requires other elements to complete it — relations between what? This makes its connecting functions *complex*, for the relation always summons entities other than itself.[58] Again, this is true whether these entities are pre-existing (the relation is 'between' them) or are brought into existence by the relationship and thus exist 'within' it.[59] — When one does not only see relations between things but things as relations.[60] —This is formally evident in the very perception of relationships as a matter of making connections explicit. We may call the relation an organising figure with the second-order capacity to organise either the similar or dissimilar. Parent and child are similar insofar as they are defined by their reciprocal relation, dissimilar insofar as they are defined by different criteria. (English-speakers can look at anyone and see a child; they cannot look at anyone and see a parent.)

The relation as a model of complex phenomena, then, has the power to bring dissimilar orders or levels of knowledge together while conserving their difference. In Fortes's analysis, the distinct identity of the domestic and politico-jural domains was crucial to their relationship. Moreover, the politico-jural relations of kinship were on a different scale from familial kinship. A homely parallel is the way English-speakers commonly talk of 'a relation' between individual and society: the relation brings together phenomena of quite different scales. A counter-example makes the point. Mary Bouquet,[61] reflecting on Portuguese perplexities over British anthropological theorising on kinship, notes that there is in Portuguese "no separation, such as the English might make, between the [private] person and [public] ... conventions". One cannot in Portuguese, it would seem, contrast persons and system, and therefore cannot relate them, or derive one from the other. As a consequence, the personal geneaology could not be used to collect abstract information.

The English relation as kinsperson also has holographic and complex features. And here we see how knowledge enters the very definitions of kinship.

First, one may cut off kin by saying they are not relatives. Then again, anyone who counts may be included, immediate family, in-laws, distant cousins. But what is holographic is that each

usage summons the field; to call someone a relation implies discrimination between all those possibly connected and those whom one chooses to recognise. — "I would hardly call them relatives!" [62] — Repeated each time is the distinction between what is given and what is open to choice,[63] imparting ambiguity to the very term relation itself. People may even say they are uncertain how to apply the term in all cases.

Second, relations are always people related through some other criterion. To hear an English-speaker call someone a 'relation' tells you there is some other reason for the connection than simply calling them that: he is a relative by marriage or she a relative through an aunt. If knowledge consists in making explicit a field of connections that already exist, so is connecting kin an open-ended and complex matter. Certain social relations (marriage, tracing ties through consanguines) form the foundation for others and, beneath it all, ideas about the role of biology ('nature') in procreation is taken to be the reason for there being kin relationships at all.[64]

What happens when we bring these two properties (holography and complexity) together, when we consider the facility of The Relation both to slip across scales and keep their distinctiveness? In late twentieth-century parlance, our little construct starts looking like *a self-organising device*.

Self-organising has been used to describe certain non-linear effects — not a holistic or functional interpretation of 'organisation' but a model that accounts both for the persistence of patterns and the capacity of systems, organic, social, intellectual, to take off into quite new paths. Evolutionary pathways are of course of great interest to our colleagues in Biological Anthropology,[65] though I have actually culled the phrase self-organisation from the archaeologists.[66] Their concern is with the irreversible outcomes of factors that could have taken many routes — like so many counterfactuals [67] — in their case

of outcomes running simultaneously along several quite different temporal and spatial scales. You have to account for the outcome of recent, millennial and geological change all at once. But anthropology could also borrow the concept from the sociology of science where 'complexity' has acquired quasi-disciplinary status, whose own precedents are claimed to lie in thermodynamics and mathematics, as well as in ecology and biology.[68]

This is beyond my expertise. It is not beyond my interest, however. If the concept of self-organisation proved of any use to anthropology, we would find that the very notion of 'organisation' had taken off on a new path. Consider one of the new idioms of propagation; the subject matter is knowledge, the resort to biological idiom specifically a procreative one, the image a kind of stem, a rhizome. This growth "assumes (I am quoting) diverse forms, branches in all directions, and forms bulbs and tubers. It has different principles of connection and heterogeneity; [the rhizome] is multiple, giving rise to its own structure but also breaking down that structure according to the 'lines of flight' it contains".[69] So listen to this: it is a question of relying "on clumped networks of signification which require that they be organized in ways that are not lineal [as propositional language is lineal] but multi-stranded". Here the subject is everyday thought, and Maurice Bloch's culling from cognitive science a new model for how people are likely to convey their thought processes.[70]

If systems — ecological, social or whatever — can appear self-organising, so too may our cognitive tools. I suggest The Relation is already there in anthropology as an epistemological device that can work in the same way.

In bringing together the two disparate senses of relation, between ideas, between persons, I have followed the English convention that depicts ideas as abstract and persons as concrete.

For Fortes, anthropologists codified abstract social relations as a knowledge of systems whereas preliterate peoples had to body forth such abstractions in material objects as well as in words and rules. From Melanesia one could add that persons themselves take both concrete and abstract form, whether as human beings and yams with their evident bodies or as personified sources of power lying beyond them. To access power one has to enter into relations with persons, visible and invisible, of which the concrete effects are also the objects and words that flow between them. Dobuan yams will only listen to people if they are addressed in the appropriate speech.

V Retaining Detail and Avoiding Overload [71]

Why should this be of any current interest? I could give several answers. The one I have chosen for this occasion is of course exactly that.

We could certainly note that while The Relation as an intellectual construct could possibly be claimed as a self-organising device in the new sense, it also served the old regime of systematisation just as well. Clearly the concept has staying power. But is there any forward durability [72] to those rather particular mid-century kinship studies that were so important for anthropology in this country and so central to the work being done at Cambridge? There is, but it does not necessarily look like them.

Take the relationship between the abstract and the concrete, whose modern formulations Stanley Tambiah reminds us came in the seventeenth century.[73] Those kinship systems from Melanesia or West Africa invite us to ask what English-speakers make into abstractions, into objects of contemplation. For they tell of elsewhere, where it is persons or relations which are already in the world, there in the abstract, which *have to be made concrete*, that is, have to be given body, made to appear. But English-speakers imagine a world of knowledge-making where the concrete is already given in nature, so when scientific knowledge is made concrete it is embodied in technology which by definition 'works' in the natural world. It tends to be system and organisation that are contemplated in the abstract. To make them appear one has to *make them explicit*. This kind of second-ordering leads to certain excesses. It also overlooks certain unremarked features of the 'English' world, namely the concrete embodiment of organisation in social relations.

Now those earlier studies were carried forward in a challenging way by Jack Goody.[74] I refer to his works on codifications of knowledge that can be transmitted independently of persons, and on technological innovations some of which affect the disposition of kin, others the disposition of knowledge. He may not have wanted to make that connection, but we might wish to now. It is not only in the search for clinching idioms that kinship and knowledge seem to body each other forth. Think again about the Californian surrogacy case.

The means by which we know a child's parents traditionally differentiated mother from father. The mother was known through birth, the father by his relation with the mother. Reproductive technology rearranges these relations and creates new criteria. Here, genetic connection might establish the father's parenthood but it did not solve the question of which woman was the mother; the decision was based on a mental concept: who intended to be parent.[75] If technology was assisting conception (the processes of reproduction and procreation), then the law was assisting conceptualisation (what was to count as kinship and relationship). It does not matter that this is a case in far-off California; the consequences for kinship come from a more general application of new knowledges. Statements such as the following are beginning to sound familiar. "While computer and information technologies are bringing about a regime of

technosociality ... biotechnologies are giving rise to biosociality, a new order for the production of life, nature and the body through biologically based technological interventions".[76] Note that biotechnology requires that the relational bases of parenthood be made explicit in ways once never necessary.

Technology, along with material culture, always had a presence in the Faculty Museum at Cambridge. Now, no-one surveying the teaching of Social Anthropology in British universities today could fail to be struck by the extent to which it has reappeared on the agenda. Indeed, with diffusion being given renewed vigour in discussions about globalisation, it sometimes feels that we are closer to the beginning of the century than to the middle of it.[77] Current interest in technology, however, has come out of its relational potential. The person is seen to have technological as well as organic or social accoutrements or props.[78]

For this is not the beginning of the century but the end, and these interests are routed through those middle years. Present-day concerns with material culture/technology revive questions about social relations. Indeed it is intriguing to see colleagues from sister disciplines — and I include sociology here — inserting artefacts into social relations with the status of actors.[79] These are more than metaphorical borrowings: they are ways of recasting relations to include the unhuman with the human.[80] The problem of excess comes when technology is regarded as enabling, as a prosthesis that enhances personal performance, and when persons become obliged to demonstrate they have been enhanced.

The very term enhancement implies we are bound to want it, and this is where things begin to get out of hand. Thinking once more of the meeting in 1914, one wonders if anthropologists and administrators would recognise themselves now. They might find a common enemy less in ignorance than in what I call, post-enterprise, the culture of enhancement.

The late twentieth-century culture of enhancement is devoted to making everything explicit. We are all implicated, for it imitates best scholarly practice. But it promotes the illusion that effects should be aims. There is a good case for saying that aims should be explicit. That is what they are: overt goals for organisation. But what gets identified as an aim? Scholars do not imagine that one can have methods and protocols for producing intellectual epochs. Such epochs are effects, outcomes; indeed, effects can become silly when turned into aims. The story can be told against anthropology. My distinguished predecessor, Ernest Gellner, scorns the pretensions of cultural relativism.[81] Of course he is right. A sense of relativism may emerge from the anthropologist's investment in relations, and from taking those relations across cultures. And the effect can be stunning: one becomes aware of the positioning of knowledges in relation to one another. But that revelation works best as the outcome of substantive interests focussed elsewhere — on understanding data by content not just by context.[82] To try to enhance the effect of comparison, to make relativism an aim, produces some of the excesses to which Gellner has so eloquently objected.[83] By analogy, the effect of work carried out in Cambridge may be stunning, may make it "one of the world's leading universities", but how can that be presented, as the format of strategic plans insists,[84] as its mission?

A second illusion of the culture of enhancement is to imagine that organisations work better when they are explicit. I borrow from the Vice-Chancellor's comments to Regent House on the 1993 Audit report on Cambridge, a point where, had such moments been recorded, it is conceivable that the congregation would have laughed in sympathy. This was the point at which he observed that the only thing the University was faulted upon was failure to be explicit about procedures. "The highly effective *implicit* way in which Cambridge is organized does not fit well with many current philosophies, and it is sadly the case that much money, and much time, has now to be expended on

making more *explicit* its sense of purpose".[85] The auditors could not see how it worked! The problem is that what might have remained a passing perplexity becomes the basis of policy recommendations: organisation must be there in the abstract — the university simply has to make it visible. But of course it cannot make explicit what works by being implicit.[86] It has instead to double the abstractions — enhance the systematisation — and what is made visible or concrete tends to be what can be technologically embodied in memoranda or put on disk. Far from energising, such enhancement may divert energy from elsewhere. And it may fatally undervalue the organisation that is already concretely embodied in people's relations with one another.

This is the point at which to capitalise on my observations about the holographic and complex properties of The Relation. It has been argued that "[t]he driving dynamic at the forefront of new scientific knowledge today is what could be described at a 'multi-type complexity'... not only is more than one scientific 'discipline' involved in problem solutions but so too are different *kinds* of knowledge, both explicit and tacit, for example ... [of the tacit] knowing *how* to laterally connect ideas from other fields and discourses".[87] This comes from a talk, beyond Cambridge and anthropology altogether, given in Korea by a Director of a Centre for Research Policy in Australia. He points to research being published across disciplinary boundaries. One set of Australian figures suggest that 65% of research from physics and earth sciences departments were published 'outside' these fields; psychology publications were spread across 49 disciplines. Some 880 research centres have mushroomed across the Australian university system.

What drives such creativity are new relations of knowledge production increasingly dependent on actor-to-actor exchanges. "Personal networks and immediate personal relations", I quote, "appear to be of crucial importance at the leading edge of new fields — which ... emerge and dissolve through network relations rather as do 'self-organising systems' ".[88] And what drives the personal immediacy of such networking is *un*codified knowledge — including knowledge about how to conduct relationships. "What matters in the 1990s", he said, " is the transfer of both the embodied technological knowledge — in machines, artefacts, and so on, *plus* the transfer of uncodified capability — in people's tacit knowledge both about the technologies and the social means by which they can be captured".[89]

But one does not have to be talking about research centres and leading edge innovations. The hugely proliferated systems of information-production in which university scholars are caught these days is only made workable by interactions between social beings who maintain multiple connections between themselves through what they independently value as their relations. By virtue of these relations, people sustain a flow of knowledge, that is, select appropriate information, far greater than can ever get systematised. (The argument from commerce is that, in the face of too much information, it becomes more efficient to go to key persons.) [90]

This is the real world of the late twentieth-century scholar. So, like organisation, knowledge has a second locus. It is not just made concrete in technology. It is also embedded in people's relations with one another, and may link persons just as kinship substance does, although one would not want to call them kinship networks. They may appear kinship-sized.[91]

There is a chance that the present prestige of communications technology might make visible what was concealed by those conventions of scale that regarded the interpersonal as 'small-scale'. The conventions could not have been more wrong. Networks can take any scale — have the power to cross different organisational levels — precisely because each relation

invokes a field of embodied [social] knowledge about relationships. So perhaps such social relations will survive anyhow. After all, similar networks always existed alongside the disembodied apparatus found in libraries and in paradigms. And, as I remember Audrey Richards talking about the telephone which enabled Elmdon 'villagers' to keep up contact with distant kin,[92] they would seem only facilitated by those electronic devices such as fax, xerox machine and personal computer. At the same time these artefacts are the very instruments of the speeding up [93] of information acquisition and transfer that makes short-circuiting through interpersonal links a desperate necessity. But more than that, they are also instruments of the counter-productive activity of enhanced systematisation. And this is the juncture at which I have a little trouble with them.

Intellectual procreation, relations of creativity, introduces the question of where our energies go. One does wonder how as university scholars and administrators we have connived in an externally imposed ethos of management that is not just old-fashioned [94] but at times antithetical to creativity.[95] I do not mean that we should overturn the need to be accountable nor that we cannot improve the way we impart information to students. And, absolutely, I do not see any return to departmental styles as they were forty years ago. My question is, simply, from which kinds of activities should we draw our criteria of good practice, and by the same token invest in?

The systematisation of knowledge is one thing. Without the disembodied abstraction of information in books or papers, there could not be the same accumulation of insight or data. Moreover, cumbersome as institutional codification is, it has always been important as a democratic safeguard against elitism; those in power tend to cling to implicit practices, a good feminist point, to follow Henrietta Moore.[96] It is an aid to transparency and open government, and my scepticism should

not be taken as dismissal. Yet we understand too little of the creative processes that go into the production of knowledge. Abstract knowledge is an end-result, the effect of creative work, whether it took place in a laboratory or in the Lake District, the outcome of processes going on elsewhere and in other modes. A book may reproduce some of the creativity that went into its making when it generates ideas in the reader. That is the point: readers generate their own responses by everything brought to the reading — you don't (ordinarily) read a book by writing it over again. In short, output cannot be measured against input, for they involve activities of different scale.

Yet what we see is systematisation gone mad.[97] And it has gone mad in the name of enhancing the system. A despairing chair of an academic board wrote to the Secretary of State for Education in 1993 that the director of his institution [98] had had in the course of a single year to provide information under the following rubrics: the Research Assessment Exercise (UFC), Research Performance Indicators for the Annual Survey of Publications (CVCP), Academic Audit (CVCP), Quality Assessment (HEFCE), Guideline for good practice in respect of quality assurance systems procedures (HEQC), Review of the Academic Year (Flowers Report) (CVCP), and so forth, over and above strategic plans, operating statements and financial forecasts, not to mention Higher Education Funding Council circulars of which no fewer than 20 had been received by the May of that year. Think of the human activity at the xerox machine alone. What has been observed of chaos graphics could as well be said of such exercises — disembodied but prosthetically enhanced by electronic technology.[99]

I can summarise these points in an observation about scale. *Person-to-person networks that succeed by replicating the conditions under which persons relate to one another, work, as relations do, holographically*. Their power is that *interpersonal relations can take any scale*, be productive at any order of

encounter, whether in a small university department or across the globe. It is a mistake to think they can be measured by size. But they do demand time, energy and cultivation, and that is what is at stake. It would be an equal error to fail to acknowledge scale elsewhere. I would point to *the significance of recognising different scales of endeavour in fundamental creativity*. The reproduction of knowledge is a *complex, heterogeneous and non-linear process that involves concrete as well as abstract relations*. And there can be no procedures for success; or rather, the procedures are not the success. This is where stated aims sometimes look silly. In human reproduction no-one ever reproduces themselves: they always see themselves in another form.[100]

There is some future profit, I think, in theorising The Relation that was such a key device, and key figure, in anthropology's interest in kinship. But those mid-century kinship studies cannot be turned into present aims: they are (in turn) for studying, not imitating. If they have produced concepts applicable to other areas of enquiry, we do not enhance their effect by striving to write the books over again.

Of eight articles in the most recent issue of the Royal Anthropological Institute's journal,[101] three — the authors from London, Israel, the States — caught my attention. They recapitulate some of my own themes. Adam Kuper voices a plea for generating debates that will have resonance beyond our immediate fields.[102] Nurit Bird-David discusses social relations among a tiny forest-dwelling population in India, challenging how we might think of 'face-to-face' connections.[103] Debbora Battaglia comments on jokes told by migrant Trobriand Islanders in Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby, though they were not comic like Frazer's and do not bear re-telling.[104] These were, however, jokes about the inappropriateness of enhancement — people were planning a yam competition but the quantity of the urban harvest would not of itself be an index

of creativity (her term is generativity) for the appropriate social relations were not in place.

The articles caught my attention for another reason: they are all by former research students at Cambridge. And there is a fourth, by a student of such a student,[105] but I shall avoid any puns about issue. Let me just borrow from the idioms I have been making explicit. The point of course is to ask how else one might celebrate the generative power of a Department but in the generations of scholars it produces?

The text can be read with or without the notes. I have included these notes and references in recognition of the obvious fact that the connections one makes are at once one's own and not one's own at all.

Notes

1 – The case was presented by a Joint Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the British Association ('Report of Conference on anthropological teaching in the universities', printed in *Man*, 35, 1914, pp.1-16) to some 60 university representatives, MPs and members of the civil service. The proposed petition was one in a long line of petitions to the government from the British Association (and later the RAI), initially to set up a bureau of ethnology (see Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Social Anthropology, 1885-1945* , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, ch. 2).

2 – The President of Magdalen College, Oxford, who also claimed that anthropology was a legitimate expansion of classics, for, he opined, one of the reasons why classicists had been so successful as overseas adminstrators was that classical studies already contained so much anthropology. He pointed to a classics pupil of his (Sir Hubert Murray) who had been appointed Governor of Papua.

3 – The words of Sir Henry Craik, MP, civil servant and educationalist.

4 – Frazer's joke was meant to illustrate an argument about difference. He argued that, given the "profound difference which separates the savage races of man from the civilised", it was futile extending the rule of law without modification. His example was the concrete thinking of the petitioning "natives". It is Frazer's usage which interests me. His example, most concretely, serves to embed the idea of rules and customs in relations between persons. (I wonder if he was also insinuating that civilised and savage are like brother and sister in being at once both close and distant, both similar to and dissimilar from one another; naturally, brother and sister do not marry.)

5 – The case was widely publicised at the time and has been the source of much commentary since. My account draws from analyses provided by the lawyer and anthropologist Janet Dolgin ('The "intent" of reproduction: reproductive technology and the parent-child bond', *Univ. Connecticut Law Review* [forthcoming]) and by Derek Morgan whose interests are in health care law ('A surrogacy issue: who is the other mother? *International Journal of Law and the Family* vol. 8, pp. 386-412, 1994). I am most gratetul to both of them for allowing me access to then unpublished material, and to Derek Morgan for sending me a copy of the draft transcript from the Supreme Court of California's hearing of *Johnson v Calvert* May 1993 (851, P. 2d 776 (1993)).

6 – I use the colloquial phrase as a shorthand. For a critique of the view of organic development implied, see Susan Oyama, *The Ontogeny of*

Information: Developmental Systems and Evolution, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

7 – The presiding judge opened with a general observation about legal questions raised by developments in reproductive technology before coming on to the particular case. When one woman gives birth to the genetic child of another, in his phrasing, who is the child's natural mother? In California law there can only be one natural mother, following earlier legislation which abolished the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children.

8 – At 783, see n. 5. The phrases 'mentally conceiving' and 'initiating' parent were already in circulation (e.g. in George P. Smith, 'The case of Baby M: love's labor lost', in L. Gostin (ed), *Surrogate Motherhood: Politics and Privacy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, to which Frances Price earlier drew my attention). The judge cited three commentators in all. Another had observed that the intending parents are "the first cause" or "prime movers" of the procreative relationship; the third had argued that reproductiuve technology extends "affirmative intentionality" so that "intentions that are voluntarily chosen ... ought presumptively to determine legal parenthood" (at 783, see n. 5). However, a dissenting opinion from the bench challenged the first cause argument for its misleading evocation of intellectual property rights, and challenged the focus on the genetic mother for excluding the carrying mother who was every bit as much "a conscious agent of creation".

9 – H.W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927 edition). His objection in full is as follows. "To talk of *persons* or *creatures of the masculine and feminine g[ender]*, meaning *of the male and female sex*, is either a jocularity or a blunder" (p. 211, original italics). The grammatical term referred to kinds or classes sorted according to whether they were masculine, feminine, common or neuter. In reference to persons, gender had the connotation of a kind or sort, as in 'the general gender', a common sort of people.

10 – Ann Oakley (*Sex, Gender and Society*, London: Temple Smith, 1972, p. 16), crystallised the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' as a distinction between biological difference and social classification. Much was being written at the time on the biological and behavioural/social aspects of 'sex differences' without recourse to the term 'gender' (e.g. *The Development of Sex Differences* edited by Eleanor Macoby [London: Tavistock 1967] or *Males and Females* by Corinne Hutt [Penguin 1972]). But 'gender' then moved into place so rapidly that Gilbert Herdt can write in 1994 (Introduction to his edited volume, *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimophism in Culture and History*, New York: Zone Books) that the idea that sex was to nature as gender was to culture has been a canonical view for "more than fifty years" (p. 51). His exploratory interest in a 'third gender' (grammar gave four) only makes sense in reference to the gendering of persons.

11 – Among other types of linkages, e.g. as Anthony Giddens (*Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1991, p. 219) reminds us of the modern connotations of 'reproduction' as both biological and social continuity. James Boon's *Affinities and Extremes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) deploys the double entendre of 'affinity' as both marriage alliance and the values of attraction and repulsion.

12 – Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) p. 169.

13 – *Ibid*. p. 170.

14 – The phrase is Janet Dolgin's (see n. 5). She points out how intent, a thought about what one would like to do or be, becomes connective: "intent joins people more strongly than any contract can". Biological potential may also be likened to a thought (to an idea or concept). When the British Parliament was debating the 1990 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill prior to its enactment, the then Master of Pembroke, Lord Adrian, introduced the term 'conceptus'. A designation was needed for the early precursor of the embryo. (This was part of a definitional debate: see Pat Spallone 'The salutory tale of the pre-embryo', forthcoming in *Between Monsters, Mother Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Perspectives on Science, Technology and Health Care*, ed. N. Lykke.) He added: "the point about using the word 'conceptus' is that in that stage the fertilised egg is a concept of a new individual and not the individual. It is only when the blueprint has been achieved ... that one can say the embryo starts". In other words, the conceptus is seen as chromosomal material in the process of being formed into an individual, which at that stage is purely notional (a concept). The remark is quoted by Sarah Franklin in *Technologies of Procreation: Kinship in the Age of Assisted Conception* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) p. 110; she and the other authors of the book, Jeanette Edwards, Eric Hirsch and Frances Price, have provided much of the stimulus to my interest in this field.

15 – In the dual senses of receiving seed (becoming pregnant) and taking something into the mind (grasping an idea); only later is 'conceive' used more loosely to cover both conception (of a woman) and begetting (of a man).

16 – A usage that seems to have become prevalent, in certain circles at least, in Jane Austen's time (see Richard Handler & Daniel Segal, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture: an Essay on the Narration of Social Realities*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990, p.33). They suggest that 'connection' stressed the socially constructed and mutable (their phrasing) dimension of the kinship tie as opposed to its natural basis in blood. I note that like the Anglo-Saxon 'kin' before it, 'family' seems to have referred to the household before it became in the seventeenth century a term for an assemblage of items.

17 – To the extent that, when the substantive 'relation' is personalised, it denotes a kinsperson and nothing else (see e.g. Raymond Firth, Jane Hubert and Anthony Forge, *Families and their Relatives: Kinship in a Middle Class Sector of London: an Anthroplogical Study*, 1969, pp 93-4).

18 – John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, 1690. The OED indicates that there were cassowaries in St James' Park in 1611.

19 – Locke *Ibid*. p. 237 (New Edition, London: Ward, Lock & Co, no date). The illustration of avian connection had been preceded by a reference to human kinship. In talking about the way that the very act of comparison (bringing items into relationship) is a clarifying exercise, he argued that "in comparing two men, in reference to one common parent, it is very easy to frame the idea of brothers, without yet having the perfect idea of a man" (p. 236). Indeed, throughout chapter XXV ('Of Relation'), he takes kin relationships as immediately accessible exemplars of logical relations. Thus he gives as examples of correlative terms obvious to everyone "father and son, husband and wife" (p 234).

20 – See Ralph Bulmer, 'Why is the cassowary not a bird? A problem of zoological taxonomy among the Karam of the New Guinea Highlands', *Man* (NS) 2, 1967, pp. 5-25.

21 – Bulmer approaches the 'anomalous' taxonomic position of the flightless cassowary by several routes. His suggestion about sisters and cross-cousins (mother's brothers' or father's sisters' daughters, terminologically 'sisters' from a man's point of view) is that these figures offer a central metaphor for ambivalent relationships of closeness and distance. Men are both close to and distant from wild cassowaries; one cannot marry close human sisters, but one can marry distant [wild'] ones. (See 'The Kalam Cassowary revisited', by Jan Pouwer in *Man and a Half: Essays in Pacific Anthropology and Ethnobiology in Honour of Ralph Bulmer*, edited by Andrew Pawley, Auckland: The Polynesian Society, 1991). Saem [see n. 22] offered a further analogy, saying that the cassowary is also like a cross-cousin to the domestic pig (pigs and men together belong to the settlement by contrast with the forest).

22 – "My mother would tell me where she had accompanied my father, and point out each place" (in Saem Majnep and Ralph Bulmer, *Birds of my Kalam [Karam] country*, Aukland: Auckland University Press, 1977, p 184).

23 – Ellaine Mabbutt refers to this as the 'department pub' of the time ('Hans Breitmann gife a barty', in *Man and a Half [ibid]*). Ralph Bulmer was subsequently foundation Professor of Anthropology at the University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby.

24 – I take 'route' from Gillian Gillison, *Between Culture and Fantasy: a New Guinea Highlands Mythology* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1993) p.9, and her exegesis of Gimi myth as routed through Gimi ritual practice, that is, practices at once articulating and in counterpoint to myth.

25 – In his inaugural lecture published in 1953, for example, (*Social Anthropology at Cambridge since 1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 38) Meyer Fortes refers to culture and social organisation as two complementary frames of reference within which anthropology works.

26 – I take a liberty here: the meeting was primarily concerned with the organisation of anthropological teaching.

27 – On the connection, see Ian Langham, *The Building of British Social Anthropology: W.H.R. Rivers and his Cambridge Disciples in the Development of Kinship Studies, 1898-1931*, Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1981, pp. 271ff.

28 – Some discussion may be found in Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 121-23; cf. n. 56 below.

29 – W.H.R. Rivers opens his lectures on *Kinship and Social Organisation*, London: Constable, 1914, p.1, with the words: "The aim of these lectures is to demonstrate the close *connection* which exists between methods of denoting relationship or kinship and forms of social organisation" (my emphasis). (The connection in question is one of causal determinism.)

30 – In the same way as, for example, the notion of a 'corporate group' at once offers a formal description and indicates unity in action (see Meyer Fortes, *Kinship and the Social Order: the Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*, Chicago: Aldine 1969, p. 304).

31 – Fortes 1953, pp. 34-5 (see n.25).

32 – Fortes *ibid*. p.15.

33 – Fortes, *ibid* p.40.

34 – The American, Lewis Henry Morgan. This point became the subject of Fortes's later Morgan Lectures (1969, see n.30); the reference is primarily to Lewis Henry Morgan's *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1871.

35 – I return to the question of congruence in a quite different context below (see n. 95).

36 – Given that people were related to one another, by whatever mode, the question became how they organised those relations. What followed from this was the productive moment Fortes was celebrating.

37 – See M. Carrithers *Why Humans Have Cultures: Explaining Anthropology and Social Diversity*, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1992.

38 – Fortes 1969, p. 60, see n. 30.

39 – Maurice Godelier puts it powerfully. "Kinship is not just recognition of father, mother ... But it is equally and just as much knowledge of father's father, ... mother's mother ... and so on. This then entails recognition of a network of transitive relationships which in turn presupposes the ability to perceive relations between these relationships", from his *Generation and Comprehension of Human Relationships and the Evolution of Society*, Herbert Spencer Lecture, Oxford, 1986 (mimeo).

40 – Fortes (1969 p. 80, see n. 30) refers to the social mechanisms and processes by which "the elementary principles of kinship structure ... are put to work — and thus 'recognized' —in a society".

41 – Edmund Leach, 'The structural implications of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage' [1951], reprinted in *Rethinking Anthropology*, London: Athlone, 1961, p. 89.

42 – A point developed at length in his monograph, *Pul Eliya. A Village in Ceylon: A Study of Land Tenure and Kinship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

43 – Adumbrated in a lecture to the Royal Anthropological Institute, published in the *Journal of the RAI* 1900, vol 30 ('A genealogical method of collecting social and vital statistics').

44 – I believe this is an accurate summary of some of Fortes's thinking, inferred for instance from his treatment of the distinction between domestic and politico-jural domains (see below, p. 21). Writers sometimes have problems keeping the two terms, concrete and abstract, under control. Leach (*Social Anthropology: A Natural Science of Society*, the British Academy's Radcliffe-Brown Lecture for 1976, published in the Academy *Proceedings* vol LXII of the same year) makes hay of Radclife-Brown's contradictory usages.

45 – If there was a phrase that haunted my undergraduate learning years (1960-63) it was "Let us distinguish between ..." In considering indigenous distinctions, institutional or conceptual (Fortes 1969 pp.110, 118 etc, see n. 30), one was considering the way people made different domains, realms, areas of life for themselves. Not all distinctions mobilised different scales or orders of events, but the capacity to make such distinctions was key evidence for when they did.

46 – Gregory Bateson, *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View*, Stanford: California UP, second ed.1958, e.g. p. 127 [first edition 1936].

47 – Reo Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu: The Social Anthropology of the Dobu Islanders of the Western Pacific*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, second ed. 1963, e.g. pp. 107-9 [first edition 1932].

48 – Stephen Gudeman, *Economics as Culture: Models and Metaphors* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) p. 141.

49 – Gudeman *ibid*, p. 132. He then proceeds to compare the ideas of the Papua New Guinean Dobu with those of the central African Bemba studied by Audrey Richards, where hierarchical values instead lead to figures (such an animal spirits) being interposed between human persons and the natural world.

50 – Gudeman *ibid* p. 141 He calls gardening a reflexive construction, in that its actions are modelled on other actions. (For an echo compare my *After Nature*, p. 87, see n. 28.)

51 – Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989) p. 65; also p. 69: everyday life envisaged thus is persuasively wrought through "a rhetoric of re-enactment". I take this opportunity to thank Paul Connerton for his several observations on my arguments.

52 – And so, too, may persons may appear 'within' persons; see Gillian Gillison, 'The flute myth and the law of equivalence: origins of a principle of exchange', in *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia* (eds. Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern, Cambridge:

CUP, 1991), and Roy Wagner's comments in the chapter preceding ('The fractal person') which develops the concept of holography in this context.

53 – On the significance of 'body' in this sense, as a 'support' for the person, see Maurice Leenhardt's *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*, trans. by B.M. Gulati, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1979, chs 2 & 3; also Debbora Battaglia, 'Projecting personhood in Melanesia: the dialectics of artefact symbolism on Sabarl Island', *Man* (NS), vol. 18, pp. 289-304.

54 – For a relational and connective exposition of energy see Teresa Brennan, *History after Lacan*, London: Routledge, 1993.

55 – The paraphrase is after David Bohm; my use of holography in the elucidation of cultural materials derives from Wagner, e.g. *Symbols that Stand for Themselves*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986.

56 – In the last chapter of *The Order of Things* (trans. 1970, London: Routledge), Michel Foucault addresses the delimiting effects of knowledge that knows itself as finite. We may see relations (in the sense used here) as an effect of just such a limitation that conceives of things as "contain[ing] the principles of their existence within themselves" (p. 317). For a critique of twentieth-century examples from biology, see Evelyn Fox Keller, 'The language of reproductive autonomy' (1987, reprinted in *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender, and Science*, New York: Routledge 1992).

57 – E.g. Fortes, 1969, pp. 23, 72, 80, see n.30.

58 – Complexity in this sense denotes systems not just heterogeneous in composition but open-ended in extent (as in Lévi-Strauss's complex structures of kinship). "The Darwinian world is always capable of further description" (Beer 1983, p. 55, emphasis omitted, see n.12).

59 – Connections 'within' may be seen as another example of connections 'between'; see Bertell Ollman's discussion of 'The philosophy of internal relations' (*Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge: CUP, 1971). He quotes Leibniz: "there is no term so absolute or so detached that it doesn't enclose relations and the perfect analysis of which doesn't lead to other things and even to everything else, so that one could say that relative terms mark expressly the configuration which they contain" (Ollman, p. 31).

60 – Ollman, *ibid*, p. 27 on Marx's attempt to distinguish two types of relations; in this usage 'things' and 'relations' correspond to what some symbolic anthropologists (after Wagner, see n. 55) might wish to call figurative and literal constructions or macrocosm and microcosm.

61 – Mary Bouquet, *Reclaiming English Kinship: Portuguese Refractions of British Kinship Theory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1993, p. 172.

62 – As someone interviewed by Raymond Firth and his team in North London said of her mother's father's sister's daughter's son's wife's kin (and another of her sister's husband) (R Firth, J Hubert and A Forge, *Families and Their Relatives: Kinship in a Middle-class Sector of London*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1969, p. 97).

63 – A theme of the material I wrote up for Audrey Richards (*Kinship at the Core: an Anthropology of Elmdon, a village in north-west Essex in the nineteen-sixties*, Cambridge: CUP, 1981). A quite different argument is put forward by C.C. Harris (*Kinship*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), namely that what might be read as ambiguity is a function of the fact that 'kinship' simply does not work as a domaining term.

64 – Hence the OED definition of a relation as a 'connexion between persons *arising out of* the natural ties of blood or marriage' [my emphasis] (Oxford: OUP 1971). Cf. David Schneider, *American Kinship: a Cultural Account*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968.

65 – E.g. Robert Foley & Phyllis Lee, 'Finite social space, evolutionary pathways, and reconstructing hominid behavior', *Science* 243, pp. 901-06.

66 – E.g. Sander van der Leeuw, 'Social and natural aspects of degradation', paper prepared for 'Desertification in a European context', a summer school organised by DG XII of the Commission of European Communities, Alicante, Spain, 1993, where society is referred to as a self-organising system of communications. I am grateful for permission to cite this unpublished paper. (For a biological anthropologist's comment on the 'extraordinary range of scales' — from hundreds of millions of years to days and months — across which accounts of human evolution may have to traverse, see Robert Foley, 'Causes and consequences in human evolution', *JRAI* [formerly *Man*] (NS) 30: 1-20, 1995, pp 17-18.)

67 – Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds: Possibility and Understanding in History and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

68 – Arturo Escobar ('Welcome to Cyberia': Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture', *Current Anthropology*, 35, pp 211-31, 1994) has brought this home, no doubt rather late in the day, to anthropology.

69 – The reference is to Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University

Press,1987, as cited in Escobar 1994, ibid p.222, who refers to their work as offering a most thorough review to date of the pervasive character of self-organising processes. David Harvey (*The Condition of Postmodernity: an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Blackwell,1989, p. 42) reproduces a 1985 tabulation of features ascribed to 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', counterposing 'rhizome' to 'root'. The fluidity with which the newly illuminating distinction between rhizome and root has flowed across cultural analysis is a phenomenon in itself. One interesting treatement is Liisa Malkki, 'National geographic: the rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, 1992, pp 24-44.

70 – 'What goes without saying', in Adam Kuper (ed), *Conceptualizing Society*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 128 (emphasis removed). Bloch is addressing connectivism in cognitive theory; the core idea, he says, is that "most knowledge. especially the knowledge involved in everyday practice, does not take a linear, logic-sequential form but rather is organized into highly complex and integrated networks or mental models most elements of which are connected to each other in a great variety of ways" (p. 130)

71 – From Richard Thorn, 'Interactive multimedia — yet another revolution for anthropology', *Anthropology in Action*, 1, 1994 [special issue on Organisational Culture], p. 21.

72 – On the notion of durability as a relational effect, that is, an outcome of the devices, props and processes which sustain the character of things, see John Law, *Organizing Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p.102.

73 – I take this from his discussion of Lucien Febvre's *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century* (trans, 1982, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP); see S. J. Tambiah, *Magic, Scicence, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge: CUP, 1990, p.89.

74 – J.R. Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa*, London: Oxford University Press for the Int. African Inst., 1971;*The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; *Production and Reproduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; as well as his writings on literacy.

75 – Both of the intending parents were 'genetically' related to the child but the criterion was not sufficient in the 'mother's' case. As a result of the hearing, the 'father' (already proven) was so to speak proven again as an initiating parent like the mother.

76 – Escobar, 1994, *ibid* p. 214.

77 – In *From Physics to Anthropology — and Back Again* ,Prickly Pear Pamphlet No. 3, Cambridge, 1994, p. 48, Simon Schaffer calls for a rejuvenated return to/from the spirit of fieldwork at the beginning of the century. It might inspire, in turn, "the return of field techniques to our own institutions".

78 – Props: Law, 1994, p. 3, see n. 72 ("We are all artful arrangements of bits and pieces ... without our props we would not be people-agents, but only bodies", emphasis removed).

79 – I refer to the works of Bruno Latour, John Law and colleagues. Though coming from a very different position, in British anthropology Tim Ingold has tackled ideas about sociality beyond the human agent in quite original ways.

80 – The phrase human and unhuman comes from Donna Haraway (see, for instance, her collected essays, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, London: Free Association Books, 1991) whose interest in and critique of actor-network theory and the sociology of science draws on a field of feminist scholarship that remains mindful of social relations.

81 – As in his sermon on *The Uniqueness of Truth* (1992) before the University; see both *Reason and Culture: The Historic Role of Rationality and Rationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, and *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London: Routledge, also 1992.

82 – Context remains one of anthropology's essential heuristic devices, but, when it is the focus of explicit cultural attention (as dramatically evinced at the universal exhibition in Seville, Expo 92 [Penny Harvey, 'Culture and context: the effects of visibility' in R. Dilley ed. *Context and Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford U.P., forthcoming]), it becomes interestingly problematic. (See also chapter 8 in Marilyn Strathern ed., *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*, London: Routledge, in press.)

83 – However, I would say that trying to create a programme out of relativist insights can become the absurdity where Gellner instead finds absurdity in 'relativism' for — among other things — not having any programme (*Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, p. 70, see n. 81). For a comment on objectivist views of relativism that imagine relativists as trying to describe the objectivists' world with their principles taken out, see Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1988, ch 7.

84 – I quote from the University of Cambridge's *Strategic Plan, 1993-4 to 1997-8*.

85 – From the address of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Williams, to Regent House (*The Reporter*, 13 October 1993, p. 47, original emphasis). (The audit in question was undertaken by the Academic Audit Unit of the former Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, now the Quality Audit Division of the Higher Education Quality Council.) "One of the ironies of the present situation is that we have to present the work and successes of the University to the outside world in terms which satisfactorily explain how we meet the value system underlying the present managerial philosophy and linguistic shibboleths, yet without undermining or denying the highly productive way in which the University is actually organized"; he adds that although the Higher Education Funding Council has been at pains to stress that it is not a planning council, "we are increasingly called upon to codify and publish our planning strategies" (pp. 47-8).

86 – Apropos what he calls incorporating (as opposed to inscribing) practices, Connerton (1989, p.101, see n. 51) points out that their backgrounded, and thus implicit, effect is a defining feature of the practices themselves, which "cannot be well accomplished without a diminution of the conscious attention that it paid to them".

87 – Stephen Hill, 'The new globalism: implications for ASEAN technological policies', address to ASEAN-Republic of Korea Workshop on 'Korean-ASEAN S & T Cooperation and Establishment of S & T Policy in the ASEAN Nations", Seoul, 1994, p. 7; my thanks for permission to cite this.

88 – Hill, *ibid*, p. 7. An example of such an operation on a commercial scale is a group based in Sydney with a staff of 200, turnover A $43m, *divided* into 24 companies that work together as a cluster. Hill's point about the importance of personal relations, including people's subjective styles, is expanded in 'Cultures in collison: the emergence of a new localism in academic research', in Strathern ed., in press, see n. 82.

89 – Hill, *ibid*, p. 9, original emphasis. On the significance of the difference between proprietary knowledge, codified and public, and tacit knowledge "implicit in the professional and institutional culture of a firm", see Michael Gibbons *et al*, *The New Producton of Knowledge: the Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage , 1994, p. 25. The authors suggest that the "prevalence of tacit over proprietary knowledge brings the culture of technologically advcanced firms much closer to academic cultures than is usually assumed" (p. 26). Among the authors, Helga Nowotny has a dual interest in knowledge systems and in the phenomenon of self-organisation.

90 – Efficiency may well be related to keeping the interactions informal. A conversation with Stephen Hill was very illuminating in this context.

91 – Colleagues in Biological Anthropology draw my attention to Robin Dunbar's paper, 'Co-evolution of neo-cortex size, group size and language in humans', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* preprint, 1992.

92 – The telephone network here works as a substitute for and enhancer of face-to-face contact, by contrast with the Amish view that only face to face contact can be constitutive of community — their leaders have banned home telephones since 1909 (Diane Zimmerman Umble, 'The Amish and the telephone: resistance and reconstruction', In *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, edited by Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch, London: Routledge, 1992).

93 – On the speed of acquisition in the context of capital's constant need to increase profit (the self enhancement of capital), I note Brennan, 1993, ch. 4, see n. 54. Harvey (1989, p. 291, see n. 69) complains that Baudrillard one-sidedly exaggerates the effects of speed and technological fixes in his image of a society in a crisis of explanatory logic (the triumph of effect over cause), and points to countervailing tendencies towards greater rigidity. But if people react to perceptions of flux and speed by trying to enhance conservatism, as — Harvey's example — by insuring to an ever greater extent against the future, Baudrillard's point about effect is made. I have argued elsewhere, in connection with late twentieth-century Euro-American ideas about the family, that sometimes there seems more of *both* 'tradition' *and* 'change' around.

94 – Taking us back to older understandings of 'organisation' as a regulatatory mechanism that can be codified in rules, protocols or procedures. Of course 'old' and 'new' forms co-exist side by side (Susan Wright, ed. *The Anthropology of Organizations*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.2 [Introduction]). The contrast she draws between a 'strengthened Fordism' and a 'flexible' company culture echoes that of the two modes of knowledge organisation in commercial enterprises identified in *The New Production of Knowledge*, see n. 89. Mission statements, alas, would seem to belong to both.

95 – I am thinking particularly of quality control mechanisms in higher education and the kinds of *representations* of 'quality output' they require. They often presume the demonstrability of a direct, iconic relationship or congruence between quality and what can be 'seen' as output. Yet think of the reverse case: interpreting evidence often presumes an indirect relationship between the visible data and what produced it. The Disney Professor of Archaeology's inaugural lecture was on just this topic (Colin Renfrew, *Towards an Archaeology of Mind*, Cambridge: CUP, 1982). For

an anthropological example of misplaced congruence, see n. 9. In any case, the iconic 'matching' of performance and productivity is bypassed in those management practices that recognise the obliqueness of creativity. I was struck by the description one senior manager gave me of the prevalent ethos which influenced his own office organisation: small working groups [and see n. 88], with people on flexi-time, egalitarian in manner, following largely uncodified conventions and cultivating interpersonal relations in non-specific ways that need have no direct bearing on the job in hand. This could have described a small academic department of a couple of decades ago! The (re)discovery of the efficiency of the whole, relational person goes against the de-skilling and de-professionalising tendencies in those quality control mechanisms that work by isolating separately measurable components of productivity. For one, well established, rendering of 'networkers [my term] versus bureaucrats [term used by the networkers]', see Jeanette Edwards' account of Housing Aid workers in *Anthropology of Organisations*, p. 199 (see n. 94)

96 – Exposing and unmasking the power relations embedded in traditional structures is one of feminism's projects (but also see Henrietta Moore's critique in *Feminism and Anthropology*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1988).

97 – 'A thunderclap gone mad' was how Ongka, a former big man of the Kawelka people in the Mt Hagen area, Papua New Guinea, described some people's first hearing an overhead plane (see *Ongka: A Self-Account by a New Guinea Big Man*, edited by Andrew Strathern, Duckworth, 1979).

98 – I am very grateful to Professor Michael Kauffmann, Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art, for this information.

99 – Quoted by Kathleen Biddick, 'Stranded histories: feminist allegories of artificial life', *Research in Philosophy & Technology*, 13: 165-82. Thanks to Sarah Franklin for drawing this to my attention.

100 – I needed this idea in order to comprehend various Melanesian practices (see *The Gender of the Gift; Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Los Angeles & Berkeley: California University Press, 1988). The insistence on matching, on congruence between performance and output, on being able to 'see' quality [see n. 95], emphasises immediate effect in ways that may truncate people's orientations towards the future. Imagine an education system which encouraged teachers and researchers to emphasise their own performance at the expense of what can be handed on to others. For the problem is that, in real life, the former does not necessarily match (reflect, express, give evidence for) the latter. While there are, for instance, contexts in which it is crucial that students replicate information in the mode in

which it is received, the reproducibility of *knowledge* requires the student to process information in ways that work, concretely, for his or her times and circumstances. What is best learnt may not necessarily 'look like' what is best taught.

101 – *Man*, Vol. 29, September 1994.

102 – A Kuper 'Culture, identity and the project of cosmopolitan anthropology', *Man*, Vol. 29, pp. 537-54.

103 – N Bird-David 'Sociality and immediacy: or, past and present conversations on bands', *Man* Vol. 29, pp. 583-603.

104 – D Battaglia 'Retaining reality:some practical problems with objects as property', *Man* Vol. 29, pp. 631-644. Jokes were constantly told against the Bau, members of the lowest of the Trobriand ranked sub-clans (they enjoyed a reputation for powerful sorcery). The sponsor of this particular yam competition was a Bau man; the size of the harvest yield was to be measured and prizes awarded. Bau were claiming typical Trobriand creativity (productivity), but they could not in the end instantiate it. They were not in the right relationship with members of other Trobriand sub-clans. "Bau patterns of conduct, combined with their reputation for sorcery, cancelled in advance any cultural activity of Bau as a model only of virtue ... [T]he threat of the opposite of generative collective action was always invisibly foregrounded by the Bau presence on [any] scene representing ... generativity" (p 3) .

105 – Eric Hirsch, former pupil of Alfred Gell at the London School of Economics, 'Between mission and market: events and images in a Melanesian society', *Man* Vol. 29, pp. 689-691.

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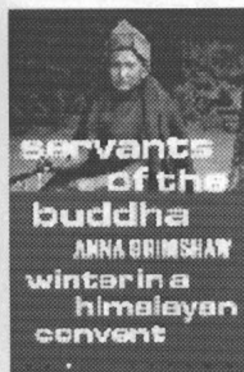

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