

RADCLIFFE-BROWN LECTURE IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Disease of Language and the Language of Disease

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Preamble: a revelatory event¹

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE that any of us writing and thinking in the human sciences, in the hours, days and weeks closely following 11 September, can escape its shadow, not only because of the challenge of this catastrophe to our sense of humanity and inhumanity, but also because of its challenge to our professional understanding of human possibility and constraint. There is the challenge of these truly awful events to our moral imagination, to take a problematic concept which I try to develop in my argument. The lecture I wish to offer here—it was completed before the emergency brought by 9/11 into our lives—seeks to raise and put before us some of the interlinked matters that have been very much at issue in press, television, and the world wide web ever since.

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The subject matter of this lecture has been a constant in my teaching and inquiry for many years. The list of influences, professional and pedagogic, that should be acknowledged, therefore, would be very long indeed. I hope I may be excused for here acknowledging just those colleagues and students helpful and stimulating in the actual writing of this particular lecture only: Raymond Fogelson, Paul Friedrich, Mary Huber, Heather Kapplow, Stacy Lathrop, the late Milton Singer, George Stocking.

¹ I have found it useful in ethnographic inquiry, to begin or base analysis and interpretation upon the narration of revelatory incidents or events in the culture being studied, in which are embedded thematic problems and structural predicaments needful of explanation. See the use of these revelatory incidents in *Bwiti* (Fernandez: 1982) and an explanation of their value to ethnographic inquiry in the 'Introduction' to *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Fernandez 1986a).

First is the role of the imagination itself, and of the unimaginable, in experiencing and categorising what we have difficulty understanding, its role in our coming to terms and in our coping with difficult matters of any kind.²

Second I am interested in this lecture in the social interaction processes of categorisation and re-categorisation. Subsequent to that tragic Tuesday in September there have been intense discussions as to whether 'war' is the category to which this event properly belongs, or whether such is not, in fact, in our thinking, a 'category mistake'.³ For it may really be much more a crime against humanity than an attack on our national security and vainglory.

Third in this lecture I am interested in the contribution to our understanding given by attention to the play of tropes in social life, to the importance of tropology to our anthropology. Here too there has been public debate in the last weeks over our obligation to distinguish, in our attempt to get experiential understanding, what we owe to metaphor from what we owe to a pragmatic appraisal of our strategic options.⁴

Fourth there are the multitude of moral issues and their claim upon our actions and reactions: the morality present in religious fundamentalism, for example. But also now under intense and renewed debate is the morality of political assassination, of racial profiling, of the employ of

² See the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman calling upon our imagination in order to free us from our over-reaction to terror and enabling us to deal with the unimaginable. He says 'That nineteen people would take over four civilian airliners and then steer three of them into buildings loaded with thousands of innocent people was, I confess, outside the boundary of my imagination. The World Trade Center is not the place where our intelligence agencies failed. It is the place where our imaginations failed' ('A Failure of the Imagination', *New York Times*, Op. Ed. Section, 25 Sept. 2001).

³ Here are the words of Hendrik Hertzberg in the memorable and assuaging, if such an outrage could ever be assuaged, 11 Sept. (24 Sept.) issue of the *New Yorker*: 'With growing ferocity, officials from the President on down have described the bloody deeds as acts of war. But unless a foreign government turns out to have directed the operation that is a "category mistake" (emphasis mine). The metaphor of war—and it is more metaphor than description—ascribes to the perpetrators a dignity they do not merit, a status they cannot claim, and a strength they do not possess. Worse it points towards a set of responses that could be futile or counterproductive. Though the death and destruction these acts caused were on the scale of war, the acts themselves were acts of terrorism, albeit on a wholly unprecedented level' (*The New Yorker*, 24 Sept. 2001: 27).

⁴ See the *New York Times* Op. Ed. column on the implications of the war metaphor by Michael Walzer (21 Sept. 2001): 'So is it a war?' Walzer says 'The word is unobjectionable, as long as those who use it understand what a metaphor is . . . We should pursue the metaphorical war, hold back on the real thing.' Walzer seeks to distinguish, perhaps too neatly, between strategy and rhetoric in terms of real world effects, as if rhetoric did not have real world effects and as if strategy did not have its rhetorical aspects or did not rest on world views influenced by metaphor.

weapons of mass destruction, whether these be commercial airliners or B52s. And the morality of government intrusion into our private lives.

And fifth, in all of this and everywhere we find the disease of reification/entification of our newly realised world historical problem, the increasing disparity of well being. It is reified into the figure of a bearded, relentlessly prophetic not to say pitiless Saudi expatriate living in the wilderness, Franciscan-like in his denial of the 'good life' emanating from the materialist west, Moses-like in the conviction that he carries through the desert Allah's engraved commandments to all the tribes of Mohammed. Everywhere we find reification, nominal realism, metonymic misrepresentation.

These are the diseases of language we investigate here. I can hardly rejoice for the experiential understanding that these revelatory events bring to my words. But I can hardly seek to conceal their relevance to my otherwise inevitably academic argument. I offer these words, after all, in the respected precincts of the British Academy. I am grateful for the opportunity it has offered me here. Though I am uncertain that my words can in any way be equal to the occasion.

I. The Disease of Language and the Play of Tropes

The concept of function applied to human societies is based on an analogy between social life and organic life. The recognition of the analogy and some of its implications is not new. (A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'On the concept of function in the Social Sciences'.)

Let me begin by calling attention to the play of tropes in our title, in particular the play on the reciprocal, an instability of the figurative long recognised in the study of rhetoric, since Aristotle in fact.⁵ For many decades now I have been interested in how the play of tropes enters into, indeed is crucial to our understanding. I take this play very seriously. Insofar as we do not take this play—this diseased condition as Max Müller would have it—into account we risk living a 'dream of reason' which as Goya puts it in one of his most famous *Caprichos* can 'produce

⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III. 4 (1984) 'If a metaphor is constructed on similar ratios it ought to admit of paying back the borrowed term.' Or otherwise translated 'But the proportional metaphor must always apply reciprocally to either of the coordinate terms.' See also Max Black's interactive view of metaphoric predication: that if King Richard is a lion and there is something lionlike in Richard there is something Richard-like in the lion (Black, 1962).

monsters.’ There are some monstrous things to account for in recent history, to be sure, and some nightmarish uses of organisational and bureaucratic and religious reason⁶ though we will be content, here, to identify ‘afflictions that infect our communicative interaction and the vitality of our lives in community’, or to evoke RB, our success or failure in the structuring of economic function in society. The struggle of humans to understand our understanding is an old story indeed. But we will begin our story in late Victorian times, more or less conterminous with the rise of social and cultural anthropology. We will begin with two, from the anthropological point of view, eminent Victorians, by which I mean patriarchs whose interests and expressive arguments made them an exemplary part of Victorian intellectual life and, I believe, also exemplary to our own. We conclude, perhaps appropriately, with the insights and arguments of contemporary feminist anthropologists on the ‘diseases’ that interest us.

We begin as the lead off subject of our interest with Frederik Max Müller, the famous, in his day, nineteenth-century German expatriate and Oxford philologist, and Indianist who promulgated the phrase ‘The Disease of Language’.⁷ Müller is taken most seriously for his interest in naturist religions and the comparative study of mythology, particularly nature myth theory whereby all religions were supposed to have begun in the impress on primitive imaginations of the natural wonders of the world, and in particular the celestial wonders, and more particularly yet still the sun. Hence Müller’s fame as a Solar Mythologist.

It is true that Müller was about as dazzled with the sun as the cynosure of the primitive mind and as a source of mythology as those primitives he speculated upon. But as Durkheim pointed out, Müller as a philologist was primarily interested, as I am here, in ‘certain mischiefs attendant upon the practice of language’,⁸ that is upon, as Durkheim put

⁶ I have in mind, of course, that compliant and banal exemplar of bureaucratic reason, Adolph Eichman. See Hannah Arendt (1994). See Sharpe (1999) for an exercise of the ‘moral imagination’ concerning Arendt’s study.

⁷ The actual phrase employed by Müller in his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (Second Series) (1866/1885) is rather different. In speaking about the emergence of mythology in early man he refers rather to ‘diseased language’: ‘Whenever any word that was at first used metaphorically is used without a clear sense of the steps that led from its original to its metaphorical meaning, there is danger of mythology; whenever these steps are forgotten and artificial steps put in their place, we have diseased language, whether that language refers to religious or secular interests’ (1866: 358).

⁸ The phrasing is that of Tomoko Masuzawa (1993) in her chapter long restudy of Müller, emphasising his focus as more upon the ‘accidental’ production of mythology by reason of language’s frailties as much as upon the mythology itself. In *Search of Dreamtime*, chap. 3, ‘Accidental Mythology’, p. 60.

it, that ‘language play’ that led from metaphor to mythology.⁹ Thus the coinage ‘the disease of language’. He was a philologist, in brief, interested in the pathologies of language which might help account for the massive body of Indian Mythology which he compiled, analysed and edited.

Müller was himself the object of much playful observation during his career being himself made out as a Solar Hero or Deity¹⁰—not inappropriate given the fact that his career like that ‘glorious lamp of heaven the sun’ rose brilliantly into the intellectual firmament of the Victorian world only to set precipitously at the end of his life, coinciding with the end of the century, passing virtually into oblivion after his death.

But rather than the playfulnesses of and upon Müller’s person and upon those who were affected by his ‘brilliance’ it is his notion of ‘language play and particularly the play of tropes as ‘language disease’ that interests us here. For in this respect in recent decades his stock has risen again in value and it is being quoted at a healthy figure.¹¹ Indeed Jacques Derrida’s essay (1974) on ‘White Mythology’ evokes the centrality of solar tropologies in the self congratulatory experience of intellectual illumination and ‘brilliance’ among the philosophical classes in a way that is quite congenial to Müller’s argument.

Müller had a special meaning for the term ‘mythology’. ‘In the sense in which I use mythological’, he averred, ‘it is applicable to every sphere of thought and every class of words’ (1866: 367–8). ‘Whenever any word

⁹ Durkheim (1915) warns against confounding, as have many scholars, the foibles of Müller’s naturism theory with the predominating if controversial role of ‘language play’ in his search for the most ancient system of religious ideas. Chap. 3, ‘Leading Conceptions of the Elementary Religion: II Naturism’, p. 79.

¹⁰ Dorson (1965: 20 n. 22) refers us to an article, ‘The Oxford Solar Myth’ by Revd R. F. Littledale which first appeared in *Kottabos*, a magazine of Trinity College Dublin No 5, 1870, which proves Müller to be a Solar Hero. E. B. Tylor (1891, 3rd edn. vol. I: 319–20), the founding figure of Anglo-American cultural anthropology, although he took many of Müller’s arguments quite seriously, also plays upon the ever present possibilities of ‘solarising’ the rising and setting careers of prominent men and women such as Cortes and Julius Caesar if not, as we have done here, Müller himself.

¹¹ Even George Stocking whose *Victorian Anthropology* (1987) is the most complete account we have of the nineteenth-century British antecedents of twentieth-century anglo-american anthropology spends more time dealing with Müller than one might expect of a figure heretofore taken as of ‘merely historical significance’ that is without ‘contemporary influence’. That is because Stocking, acting, as the historian is wont, as anthropology’s arbiter of ultimate significance and influence and as our ‘last court of appeal’ recognises, nevertheless, the need to hold back a bit on Müller’s obituary because of recent efforts to reconceptualise the importance of language in British social anthropology (cf. Crick, 1976, Parkin, 1982). Such a move must needs reconsider Max Müller’s philological anthropology as embodying many of the concerns of those moving away from a positivistic and functional anthropology to a ‘semantic style of investigation’ (Stocking, 1987: 294).

that was at first used metaphorically, is used without a clear conception of the steps that led from its original to its metaphorical meaning, there is danger of mythology (emphasis mine), whenever these steps are forgotten and artificial steps put in their places we have mythology, or if I may say so, we have diseased language.' The disease or affliction, in short, is that of forgetfulness of the figurative. So rather than a mythologist Müller, we see, was a student of tropology, which is to say of the vicissitudes of figurative meaning, and, thus, an unmasker of the mythologies produced by powers of figuration in all their forms in the ever-presence of human forgetfulness.¹²

To be sure we can find in Müller himself the 'disease of language' and this in regard to his forgetfulness of his own abiding myths and in his resistance to the full implications of the Darwinian doctrine and its inclusion of man among the animals, subject, thus, to all the vicissitudes of their adaptation and parlous survival. Müller, probably because of his Lutheran Pietism, saw humans to be different in kind from the animals. He felt a separation of category. There was nothing in any animal that was like or could lead to human language. The imperative of this categorical distinction had important epistemological consequences for a fully explicative science of language and of thought, although because of Darwinian pressures he was led into the malaise of 'retrodition',¹³ repeated attempts at compromise without effective conciliation.

While raising, thus, the problem of Müller's over commitment to category we have to also say that a fully Darwinian explication of the evolution of language from apes to man, from call system to the duality of patterning (structure and meaning) and to the virtually infinite possibilities of very finite phonetic and phonemic resources characteristic of human language systems, has never been satisfactorily expressed to everyone's satisfactions.¹⁴ And in respect to a full acceptance of the disconsolate message of Darwinian evolutionism and the deposing of any pretences to permanent privileges for any form of living being which that

¹² Probably in favour of a highly refined and non institutional form of Lutheran pietism, which produced confidence in the truth of 'subjective revelation' which he took from his mother (Stocking, 1987: 57). Combined with Müller's romanticism this seems to have energised his search for the roots of a true, primordial pristine non-mythologised belief.

¹³ Cf. Gregory Schrempf's study (1983) of the history of 'retrodictions' in Müller's career by which he sought to recurrently reformulate his previous positions on the Darwinian view of the integration of life without giving up on his 'categorical imperatives'.

¹⁴ Hockett and Ascher (1965) review the ways that human communication differs from animal communication in ways that would be congenial to Müller, although, in their case, the differences are much more completely worked out.

message presents, there is, in more recent social science, also a categorical resistance to the Darwinian message reminiscent of Müller.¹⁵

To be sure the 'grammaticalisation' concerns and the concerns about significant and insignificant sounds, 'differences that make a difference' in the structure of meaning, concerns that appear after de Saussure, were not Müller's. He wrote in a time of associationist psychology. The innate structures that he contemplated were those to be found in identifying the root utterances of physical activity and spatial orientation and the corresponding elemental emotional expressions of early humans. Out of these roots one could see how words were built up and how these words, in turn, used at first metaphorically but then forgotten, could evolve narratively into whole mythological universes.

There was to be found in this investigation, surely, moments of gratifying discovery, especially for a nineteenth-century romantic temperament, and Kantian idealist, drawn to things pristine. The discovery of original ideas embedded in elaborated roots had its powerful attraction. It was like the exhilaration in physical science obtained by cracking gross matter into its elementary parts and thus understanding constitutive processes. Satisfying intellectual energy is released when the totality of primordial animal experience is first broken up into its constituent parts, its root utterances, only to be reconstituted by imaginative processes into the variety of mythological world views. Whatever the 'disease of language', and the muddle of metaphor that exemplified it the resultant mythological traditions, the vast corpus of the Rig Veda he compiled, for example, were marvellous to behold. Even more marvellous was to have shown how such great wholeness arose out of particularity and partness.¹⁶

Such was the excitement of etymological method whether for Muller or Vico before him. It is an excitement found in much philology. In Müller's time it was Bastian's identification of 'the elementary ideas', presuming the psychic unity of mankind, out of which the folk ideas of cultures were composed which was animating. Eventually this attraction to explaining the roots of language origins came to seem a disease of linguistic science, for who could ever know. Such speculation was excluded at professional meetings. But versions of this interest, versions of Bastian's 'elementary ideas' and 'folk ideas' lived on in Jung's 'collective unconscious' with its universal archetypes, primordial symbols, and

¹⁵ See Davydd Greenwood's (1984) study of the ways, even among evolutionary biologists, that the full Darwinian implications for social life and social privilege, are resisted.

¹⁶ See the argument, picking up on views of C. Levi-Strauss, for the inescapable attractions of 'returning to the whole', which is necessarily an imaginative operation (Fernandez: 1986b).

images. And it is not only in psychoanalytic investigation of the collective unconscious. Theory in the human sciences continues to be attracted to ‘cracking’ the primordial code and to finding ‘the elementary ideas’. This is the case, in my own field of tropology. The cognitive linguists of the present delving into the psycho-biological unconscious, have been cracking the code of reason and discovering the primary, secondary and complex metaphors that constitute it.¹⁷ Bastian’s elementary ideas live on.

If Müller, found it finally impossible to include humans among the animals his resistance was in good company and not simply among religious groups who rejected the Darwinian violation of favourite origin narratives. The co-discoverer of evolution, A. R. Wallace was, himself, unable to assign the human powers of intellection to Darwinian processes. He saw in these attributes a ‘superior intelligence which had guided the development of man in a definite direction and for a special purpose’ (Gould: 1982). In the stages of classic evolution we see vestiges of the medieval Great Chain of Being, notions, that is, of increasing stagelike perfection of being from savage to civilised. Crucial differences, of course, lay in rigidity of category as between the evolutionary stages, differences in the arteriosclerotic infirmity, otherwise known as the disease of reification.

The disease syndrome of language here lies in ‘nominal realism’ and rigidity of boundary maintenance, and perhaps we can, from the perspective of another millennium and after several wars, see both rigidity of category and the category changes that time has wrought in Müller’s preface to Charles Kingsley’s controversial Cambridge lecture series ‘The Roman and the Teuton’. Kingsley examines the way ‘our Teutonic Race’ (1864: 1), an inclusive category embracing English and Germans, was enabled to appropriate the civilisation of Rome without the vices of the Latin race.¹⁸ If reification is a disease of language of which we are all aware but still often enough afflicted, more serious is the capacity to

¹⁷ See the magnum opus of Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999).

¹⁸ It is true that amidst very generous and friendly laudatory treatment of Kingsley’s person and imaginative and dramatic powers Müller, in his preface and from a philologist’s point of view, corrects a number of historical and linguistic mistakes in these essays. Also given the well recognised and accepted German sources of the British Monarchy, the common Teutonic identification had a different weighting in the nineteenth century than it could possibly have after two wars with the Teutons, or Huns, in the twentieth. Kingsley’s *Westward Ho!*, a historical novel largely of the competition between England and Spain over the Spanish Main culminating with the defeat of the great Armada gives a complementary, if relatively benign, view of his sense of the North–South categorisation otherwise present in ‘The Roman and the Teuton’.

go from reification to the social organisation of reality in favour of the 'reifier' and for and/or against the reified, the Latin Race in this instance.

Perhaps Müller as a German expatriate was more *in* the Victorian World than *of* it. Because we want to make a contrast of that world with ours at present let me take a striking late-Victorian instance of reification and consequent social organisation by means of the military metaphor, 'General' William Booth's Salvation Army, with its precisely ranked and disciplined officer corps, its smart uniforms, its drum and bugle bands, its journal 'War Cry', its 'Articles of War' or evangelical marching orders, and its plan of attack on poverty and pauperism. If there ever was a thoroughgoing and enduring 'performance of a ritual metaphor' (Fernandez: 1978) this has to be one. We ought to recall, that the Salvation Army is still today the most successful and top grossing charity in the United States. It has virtually world wide representation in over a hundred nations (Winston: 1999). And even as we speak the Army is intensely embroiled, because of its bible based homophobia, in the politics of multicultural toleration in the United States.¹⁹ The Army is also interesting for another reason. And that is the reaction it provoked in the great paleo-zoologist and statesman of nineteenth-century British Science, 'Darwin's Bulldog', T. H. Huxley. We pass on now to his struggle with category. I am wanting to suggest, of course, that the struggle over categories very much involves the 'moral imagination' and I think we can show that in Huxley's case.

In respect to imaginative language, at least, not to say of the moral imagination, we can find it in the book—or military manual—presented by Booth in 1890, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. Just as full of imaginative argument is Huxley's reaction to it.²⁰ Though 'Darkest England' wasn't the first play on the tropical trope brought home in the

¹⁹ In recent years The Gay Rights movement, the Civil Rights Movement and the general politics of multi-culturalism and toleration for diversity in the United States has posed general problems for organisations like the Salvation Army with strong objections to homosexuality. The consequent loss of federal funding has had very real consequences for its programmes for providing meals and lodging to the indigent and elderly. The Army was hoping that the election of George Bush, with his fundamentalist sympathies, would provide them some relief. But this has not occurred. See also Stacy Lathrop's valuable ethnographic and tropologically sensitive study of the vicissitudes of the Salvation Army's meals programme in San Francisco in the face of the very active Gay Right's movement there (Lathrop: 2000).

²⁰ His letters and short essays attacking Booth and the Salvation Army are found in addition to his Romanes Lectures in Huxley (1894/1911).

form of, what we would later call, the ‘asphalt jungle’²¹ it was surely the most persuasive at that time of African exploration, high civilising mission and Victorian moral earnestness. It plainly, in view of its tremendous sales, excited the ‘Victorian Moral Imagination’, an idea employed by Gertrude Himmelfarb, the pre-eminent American student of the Victorian world (1991), to illuminate the tenor of concern over poverty and the impulse to ameliorative action of the period.

Huxley’s opposition to Booth and his Army has to be understood, to be sure, in the contexts of debates going on in the late Victorian social imagination, which we will take here as a variety of ‘moral imagination’.²² There was on the one hand the communitarian socialism suspicious of the emerging Social Darwinism, the latter defended in the form of National Darwinism by Huxley for most of his life. This latter was accompanied by a laissez-faire individualism anxious to cultivate those eminent Victorian virtues of responsibility, industriousness, prudence, thrift, and temperance in the impoverished classes, and fearful that any form of socialism, even religious socialism, would have just the opposite effect by leading to dependency, profligacy, and intemperance. Socialists on the contrary felt that under the acquisitive individualism of laissez-faire capitalism character was declining.²³ This debate, of course, is still going on, as are debates over ‘faith based initiatives’ such as the Salvation Army which, indeed, have become very much a part of present day American politics.

There was in Huxley, in his latter years at least, a dilemma behind his epistolary diatribes against the coercive Christianity of the Boothian cohort. We might call it his own struggle against the discomfiting implications of the Darwinian struggle of existence which he had fundamentally espoused. In this debate with the Army Huxley was asked, in

²¹ Booth, of course, was playing off of Henry Stanley’s explorations as presented in *In Darkest Africa* (1890) but there had been previous plays on the equation of the slums with tropical darkness and their inhabitants with savage and barbarous and benighted peoples. As for example in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) in which the street folk of London are equated with barbarous peoples in barbarous climes (referenced in Himmelfarb, (1991: 224)). For similar titles we have James Greenwood’s, *The Wilds of London* (1874) and Richard Jeffries’ *Wild England* (1906, 1885).

²² I intend by the ‘social imagination’ a sub type of the ‘moral imagination’ having to do with one’s understanding of the relations between and sense of the comparative realities of life lived out in the different classes and among the distinct types or categories in the social order. Of course, we are bringing the stability of these classes and types under scrutiny in this lecture

²³ Himmelfarb argues that in late Victorian times and in the middle and upper classes the moral imagination was especially exacerbated and the miserable lot of the poor at particular issue. See particularly *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (1991).

view of the undoubted miseries of the slum world, by both Booth (Huxley: 1894, 239) and by the regnant Henry Cardinal Manning (Ibid. 292) what, in effect and in all earnestness, he would propose to do in place of the real, if evangelical and faith based, aid which the Salvation Army was providing. Huxley's standard answer was that England must provide for the 'efficient and disciplining teaching of science and technology' in extension schools. (Ibid. 236).

But this rational answer did not overcome a more profound dilemma . . . his susceptibility to the ethical arguments of the late Victorian moral imagination amidst which he lived, and the problem of relating these arguments to the 'struggle for existence'. And thus it was, to make a much longer story short, that the author of 'The Struggle for Existence in Human Society' (Ibid. 195–236) in his final work, 'Evolution and Ethics', modified his Darwinism . . . if not to embrace the possibility of Evangelical Christian cooperation or 'mutual aid'²⁴ at least as far as to separate human ethics from the 'war' of Darwinian natural competition. Adopting the stages of classical social evolutionism, he argued that while the 'savage fights out the struggle for existence to the bitter end, like any other animal' the citizen of a civilisation 'devotes his best energies to the object of setting limits to the struggle' (Ibid. 203)—struggling against the struggle for existence as it were.

Huxley's attack on Booth's revivalist approach to 'the social question' appeared first in a series of letters to *The Times* in 1890–1 and then as collected in two books *Social Diseases and Worse Remedies* (1891), and in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (1894), published the year before his death. Just to recall our other patriarch, Müller's resistance to crossing the animal-human rubicon (but not to recall his aristocratic politics):²⁵

²⁴ The reference is to Petr Kropotkin's response to Huxley's 'Struggle' argument in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1955). As for Booth at times he himself admitted of socialist inclinations. See below, n. 31.

²⁵ Müller, to be sure, was hardly a part of this intensely debated late Victorian schism in the Moral Imagination. Müller's visions of the origins of Indian High Culture, largely the product of the highest Indian castes, were naturally quite popular with the British upper classes who cultivated him and his work as he cultivated them. For a view of Müller's relation to aristocracy see his *My Autobiography* (1901), particularly his earlier years and his family's relationship to Duke Leopold Friederich of the Duchy of Dessau (1901: chap. 2, 'Childhood at Dessau'). See also *Auld Lang Syne* (London, 1898), Part II. 'Recollections of Royalties'. This 'appreciation' of 'royalty' as an essential quality of character is followed by a final rather arch chapter on the cleverness of 'Beggars' and other scapegraces of the 'other England' which ends on a pious note leaving their fate to Deity, hardly an earnest engagement with the moral and social question of the late Victorian period. For Müller though highly integrated in Victorian intellectual life, a

although Huxley in *Man's Place in Nature* had maintained, in contrast to Müller, the psychic unity of man with the lower animals, in his final work, *Evolution and Ethics* and its *Prolegomena*, he shows flexibility of category seeing both unity and difference in this respect. He offers a nature and culture dualism to the consternation of such former collegial combatants for Darwinism as Herbert Spencer. Spencer had remained unswerving in his utilitarian naturalism and survival-of-the-fittest ethic. In his final years of suffering, however,²⁶ Huxley found cause to rethink his categories and he presented a dualistic picture of humankind's conflicted psychic and social condition, ever struggling between nature's self-aggrandising laws and societies, that is to say civilisation's, moral obligations toward self-containment and charitable renunciation. As he affirmed, while evolution may account for the rise of morality the principle of evolution in general cannot be adopted as an ethical principle. When life's long push came to final shove Huxley rejected a purely evolutionary ethic. It was an argument that anticipated Freud's picture of a conflicted humanity, struggling between categorical imperatives, to serve self on the one hand and to serve society on the other, as exemplified in 'Civilisation and Its Discontents'.

Huxley's Romanes lectures (*Evolution and Ethics* and the *Prolegomena*) are a notable instance of the Victorian moral imagination in struggle with its categories, natural and cultural. It is a moral imagination making creative combinatorial use of Malthusian pessimism and Humean optimism. It turned out to be a landmark argument recurrently returned to, by his grandson, Sir Julian, among others in another Romanes Lecture.²⁷

class integration to be sure, and widely read and appreciated, was yet by socialisation a German Lutheran pietist deeply, if uncomfortably, steeped in that tradition as his autobiography well testifies. Regarding the profound debates over the social question in late Victorian England, he seems, as we have pointed out, to have never been as engrossed in them as was Huxley towards the end of his career. Müller was part of a pietistic tradition that worked against the very presence and expression of the animal instincts in humans. It was hard for him to go hand in hand with his animal nature, it was harder yet to become identified with the moral problems of the late Victorian age.

²⁶ James Paradis makes this connection between Huxley's picture of the painful conflicted, almost pathological condition of humankind struggling between utility and morality and the disease and psychic pains in Huxley's own life. He was suffering from heart disease and the recent loss of his favourite daughter. Paradis (1989: 41) extended introduction to the two essays of the Romanes Lectures, 'Evolution and Ethics in its Victorian Context' is a valuable contextualisation.

²⁷ J. Huxley (ed.) *Touchstone for Ethics—1893–1943* (1947). The volume contains both T. H. Huxley's and Julian Huxley's Romanes lectures. It also contains several other introductory and concluding essays by Julian Huxley.

There were, to be sure, a number of struggles going on in Huxley's thinking. There was his National Darwinism,²⁸ for example, never entirely abandoned. In the eighties and as a man of much public participation he took seriously the evident competition setting up between the Industrial Powers then contesting British dominance after the Industrial Revolution. And taking this struggle for national existence as axiomatic, he argued for maintaining a highly trained and virtuous, in the Victorian sense, that is diligent, prudent, self disciplined and thrifty, and thus fully competitive, British workforce. He did not see such a workforce emerging, as we have seen, from the Salvation Army's evangelical plan to address the 'social evil'. He felt that to be a renunciation of a responsible and productive individualism in every sense. He argued that Booth's evangelical philanthropy based upon the military model, created dependency and subservience and, following the inverted colonial, that is 'darkness' model, even a kind of enslavement of the person.²⁹ The Army's insistence on obedience would numb the moral sense, and anaesthetise the intellect upon which individual responsibility and efficient national industry could only be built (1894: 244). But his own intellect was hardly anaesthetised by his National Darwinism. And in the Romanes Lecture (*Evolution and Ethics* and the *Prolegomena*) we find a much more imaginative, which is to say poetic and philosophical attention to the agonising aspects of the human condition.

One says 'poetic attention' and even 'agonising argument' because these lectures made, as he recognised, extensive use of the figurative. He begins, in *Evolution and Ethics*, with 'Jack in the Bean Stalk' which he takes as a fable for the horticulturalist's creative power to bring into existence new realms of being. He makes much use of garden imagery and the gardening trope to stand for man's capacity to struggle against and supplant nature. The domination, however, is never perfect and, lest 'the survival of the fittest' and 'eugenics' ideologues (the 'Survival of the Fittest Fallacy' as he called it (1894: 80)), take heart from the trope, as any gardener understands 'fitness' in the plant world as elsewhere is never perfectly understood and always susceptible to changing natural circumstance. Moreover there is always the 'serpent', which is to say the 'natural

²⁸ See the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* biography of Huxley for a discussion of his application of 'the struggle for existence' in the relation between nations and his consequent 'National Darwinism'. Cf. Huxley, T. H. 'Encyclopedia Britannica Online'. <<http://search.eb.com/bol/topic?eu=42592§n=1>>

²⁹ In *Evolution and Ethics*; Letter to *The Times* on 'The Darkest England Scheme' (1894: 240 and passim).

instinct' of Malthusian multiplication (*Prolegomena*: 1894: 20–23). Indeed, there is a certain sombre sense of imperfection in human understanding of and mastery over nature, even pathos, in the argument and Huxley ends with tragically hopeful lines from Tennyson's Ulysses.³⁰ We cannot pause to examine the many uses of figurative language he employed here and also in his previous combative debate with the Salvation Army. We may mention just several. When General Booth employed a kintrope to mollify the stern martial image of himself³¹ and the Army and spoke of the 'mothering' that the Army's New Organisation of Society needed³² Huxley responded that anyone who had studied these cases of salvationist 'mothering' would find in it 'the most unscrupulous maternal meddling' (1894: 252). And Huxley went so far as to suggest in one essay that, rightly understood, which is to say in *laissez-faire* terms, 'Capital was to be understood as the Mother of Labour'.³³ Interestingly also, in both the Romanes lecture and the subsequent *Prologomena* to it, Huxley took up the colony trope. This was Booth's also in *In Darkest England*. For did not the Salvation Army propose to set up soup and bible kitchens, little colonies of Salvation, amidst the urban heathen. For Huxley, however, it was civilisation that was a kind of Colony, a garden of orderly horticultural artifice and ethical obligation, set down amidst the barbarities of wild nature.³⁴

³⁰ 'We are grown men and must play the man . . . *strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield*, cherishing the good that falls in our way, and bearing the evil, in and around us, with stout hearts set on diminishing it. So far we may strive in one faith towards one hope: *It may be that the gulfs may wash us down, It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles, . . . but something ere the end, / Some work of noble note may yet be done*' (1894: 86).

³¹ This is not the only instance in which Booth attempted to encompass opposing perspectives with apt images. On the one hand he adopted 'struggle for life' talk but used the fact that 'the weakest will go to the wall . . . and . . . the fittest in tooth and claw will survive' to justify doing 'all that we can do is to soften the lot of the unfit and make their suffering less horrible than it is at present' *Darkest England* (1890: 44). Quoted in Huxley as an instance of Booth recognising the facts of evolution but his obduracy in recognising the implications of Darwin's teaching (*Evolution and Ethics*, (1894: 286)). On the other hand Booth also embraces socialism by identifying his scheme as 'Socialist Utopianism' (1891: 79) a labelling that additionally provoked Huxley into foreseeing an eventual 'socialist army' and a 'despotic socialism' in Booth's scheme (1894: 288).

³² *In Darkest England*, Section 4 (1890: 219). 'Society needs a great deal of mothering . . . I propose to meet that want.'

³³ Chap. IV. 'Capital—The Mother of Labour: An Economical Problem Discussed from a Physiological Point of View'. The essay is a sort of natural history of the appearance and productive and protective work of capital in human affairs.

³⁴ Cf. J. Paradis (1989: 52–5), 'Conclusion: the Human Colony'. While seeing civilisation as a colonising of nature Huxley in turn sees colonisation as a horticultural process engaged in replanting and domesticating the wilds and wild people of the world. *Prologomena*: pp. 16–20.

In such ways was a difficult argument seeking to merge 'Evolution and Ethics' made. It was an argument inevitably overburdened with contraries couched in, if not over run by, metaphors apt for resolving them. But we must not think that in this rhetorical last act of Huxley's moral imagination, it was only he that turned to the tropes, to gardens, to colonies both bee and human, for a solution to the contrariety of competitive nature and nurturing culture. Metaphor runs constant in the evolutionist argument from its inception until the present and in Darwin himself.³⁵ Indeed Huxley had himself previously objected to metaphorisation in evolutionary argument and in his final years when he was 'figuring out' the relation between evolution and ethics he specifically rejected, for its presumptive preemption of empirical evidence, Spencer's 'social organism model'. We have noted it as basic in Radcliffe-Brown. Spencer had long depended on it (in, for example, *The Social Organism*, 1860) to express his confidence in progress in evolution both organic and social.

In any event to escape brute 'survival-of-the-fittest' philosophy Huxley's emphasis was on environmental change through human artifactual which is to say nurturing and productive horticultural powers and not on organic change. His notion of environment in his argument was much conditioned by the attractions, however imperfect, of the gardening metaphor and not on that figure, need we remark, of the industrial wasteland so very much a trope of the twentieth century and the environmental movements' contemporary contemplation of nature's fate. The 'hothouse in the garden' in Huxley's final prose,³⁶ may anticipate but is a different trope than our present greenhouse of global warming, a trope that today articulates what is seen as one of the 'great moral crises of our times', the need for radical changes to the indulgences of our unsustainable life ways in our garden grown too lush.³⁷

³⁵ In this respect see the extended argument by Stanley Edgar Hyman (1962) about the literary appeals and figurative devices employed in all the great social and natural science thinkers.

³⁶ 'Two thousand five hundred years ago . . . it was obvious that only in the garden of an orderly polity can the finest fruits humanity is capable of bearing be produced. But it has also become evident that the blessings of culture were not unmixed. The garden was apt to turn into a hothouse. The stimulation of the senses, the pampering of the emotions . . . overstimulation opened the gates of civilisation to the great enemy, ennui!' (*Evolution and Ethics*, 1894: 55).

³⁷ Bill McKibben, 'The Environmental Issue from Hell: Global Warming as the great moral crisis of our times', *In These Times*. 30 April 2001. McKibben argues that this is a 'moral crisis' because climate change is going to effect much more negatively the already poor and marginalised of the planet than those whose consumption is producing this change. It is also going to effect much more our children and grandchildren than ourselves. Also this 'change' is so insidious and difficult to demonise that we need new oppositional symbols and metaphors to engage in battle against it such as the Sports Utility Vehicle.

Darwin, himself, as we say, was not exempt from the influence of metaphor. In the first chapter of 'The Origin of the Species', 'Variation Under Domestication' humans, ostensibly the subjects of natural selection, were shown as themselves creative forces in nature. This use of artificial selection as a metaphor for understanding natural selection was remarked by Wallace (1864) and since by many others.³⁸ It is not coincidental that Huxley who undoubtedly knew this chapter well makes repeated reference to horticultural process in the *Prolegomena to Evolution and Ethics*. He uses horticultural practice as a vehicular source of insight into the artifices of culture, including into moral codes themselves, which are destined to stand in constant tension with the compulsions of brute nature. With such figurations of evolutionary thought present in its very founders it is not surprising that evolutionary biologists have been, among the disciplines, the most sensitive to the presence and importance of metaphor in their arguments.³⁹

In Part I of our argument we have encountered two kinds of struggle: Müller's struggle confronted by the Darwinian Revolution to maintain the categorical distinction between animal nature and human culture and Huxley's struggle, participating in, if not confronted by, the Late Victorian Moral Imagination, to bring these categories into a relationship of productive and ameliorative tension. For Müller, we might say, humans possessed as animals did not, a spark, not to say a sun beam of the Divine, the evidence of which spark is seen in the gift of language. For In the Beginning, after all, Was the Word. For Huxley the human was a creature in struggle between categories, between the State of Nature and the State of Art, between the Cosmos and Society, between creaturehood, on the one hand, and the artifactual, horticultural capacities of colonisation and civilisation on the other. In his own struggle to grasp that complex contrariety he turned for experiential understanding to the tending of his own garden, that is to say to the figurative, as any imagination confronted by complexity and contrariety is so often inspired to do.

³⁸ Paradis, citing Beer (1983), points up Darwin's use of analogy in an argument not entirely independent of nineteenth-century literary narrative devices. 'We can see in Darwin's thinking at the very beginning of "The Origin" an incipient dualism in which the human intervention through horticulture becomes the allegory of natural process. Human designs guided by human purposes provide the model for and hence systematically shift the non-teleological processes of nature. An anthropomorphic analogy presides over the stringent naturalism of Darwin's Origin of Species' (Paradis. p. 35).

³⁹ Outstanding among these evolutionary biologists has been Stephen J. Gould, fully aware in practically all his writings of the 'figurations' upon which biological thought has long, often unwittingly, depended. See particularly *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle* (1987). But practically all his work is a 'crossing over', as he says, between art and science. See also the work of Richard Lewontin whose 'dialectical' biology is fully aware of the tropes of social ideology that influence biological thinking and dreaming. See Lewontin (2000).

II. The Moral Order and the Moral Imagination

Now the conception of the universe as a moral order is not confined to primitive peoples . . . It is I think a universal element in human culture. With the question of why this should be so I cannot now attempt to deal. (A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'The Sociological Theory of Totemism'.)

Radcliffe-Brown, like Durkheim, had a recurrent interest in how society indeed the universe came to appear a moral order, a compelling larger whole, to which men and women felt sentiments of obligation and solidarity which were energised and maintained by various institutions and rituals. In 'The Sociological Theory of Totemism', (1952: 131), this institution and its attendant beliefs and rituals, for example, created the sense of a larger whole and thus provided a representation of the universe as a moral order. In 'Religion and Society' (1952: 176) in his attempt to find morality in primitive man's magic and religion, in contrast to Tylor's attempt to exclude it, he discussed the ritualisation of the sense of dependence in religion and magic and the morality in the sense of social cohesion that arose from it. And in his essay on 'Primitive Law' (1952: 212) he discussed that law as a body of 'penal sanctions' against actions which offend some strong and definite moral sentiment. It was energised by the moral indignation that arose from offences that produced 'social dysphoria'. Primitive law was a mechanism of sanctions for maintaining and restoring 'social euphoria'. Its ultimate function is to maintain the moral sentiments in question at the requisite degree of strength in the individuals who constitute the community. And in his Andamanese ethnography the burden of argument in his final chapters (1922: V and VI) on 'The Interpretation of Andamanese Customs and Beliefs' was to show how the power of society acting through these customs and beliefs created moral obligation in the individual.

Clearly Radcliffe-Brown's interest in 'the moral order' and the 'moral sentiments' are antecedent to contemporary interests in the problematic presence in human affairs of the 'moral imagination', a presence which we identified in both our Victorians. Huxley's imagination has been more interesting to us here because of his struggle to relate the two categories of the human and the animal rather than reject their possible relationship. In any event by shifting our focus from 'the moral order' and 'moral sentiments' to the 'moral imagination' we not only bring into focus a term repeatedly applied to the mentalities of late Victorians but we are also trying to assess its usefulness as a contemporary concept that brings us to

focus more clearly and usefully on the work of imaginative elements, mainly the tropes, that enable the gaining of conviction in the presence of complex and otherwise baffling issues and difficult times. One of the difficult issues of both Victorian times and of our own is the ethical challenge of Darwinism to our sense of moral order. And our two Victorians' response to that challenge makes them interesting, especially their struggle with that abiding disease of language reification on the one hand and figurative displacement of the focus of argument on the other.

We have identified in both our authors, though in rather different ways, certain 'afflictions': bound up in what we might like to call the 'dynamic of the categorical'.⁴⁰ Müller, a man of the high romantic age who sought to understand the origins of language at its original and pristine moment of emergence was prevented from achieving this by an exclusiveness of categories that inhibited him from seeing anything animal in the human as far as the linguistic capacity was concerned. Huxley the noblest Darwinian of them all, perhaps, who was dedicated to arguing the essential unity of animal and human nature on Darwinian principles was yet, one supposes, under the pressure of the high moral earnestness of late Victorian times to make a categorical exception for mankind's ethical sensibilities, his capacity through his artifactual and horticultural powers to struggle against the struggle. Let us recall the moral energy if not imagination in Huxley's vision of that struggle in the final pages of *Evolution and Ethics* (1894: 82–83):

... the practice of that which is ethically best – what we call goodness and virtue—involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle of existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion, it demands self-restraint, in place of thrusting aside or treading down all competitors, it requires that the individual should not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive ... let us understand once and for all: the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.

There is, perhaps, something ironic here where men in ostensibly different if not opposing camps on the Darwinian debate yet can be seen to have come to occupy some common ground in respect to essential and exceptional human difference.

⁴⁰ Cf. my own use of this concept in 'Culture and Transcendent Humanization: On the Dynamic of the Categorical' (1994b). This usage intends to evoke the moral consequences and ethical obligations entailed in categorical assignments, and therefore plays on the Kantian 'categorical imperative'.

We prepare now to take up the language of disease, and to make this time leap from Victorian to modern and especially late-modern (contemporary) mentalities. It is hard to believe that the issues with which Müller, in his pious, and Huxley in his much more combative and pragmatic way, struggled, that is to say with the relation of man's spiritual dimension to his animal nature, of his moral which is to say cooperative and communal obligations to his competitiveness and self-servingness, were theirs alone. It is hard to believe that the relation that is of ethics to evolution as Huxley put it in his very title is any less a consternation for us. T. H. Huxley's own grandson Julian Huxley, for example, continued to ponder in his own Romanes lecture (1947) the issues raised in his grandfather's, re-examining the original lecture in more psychological terms.

Indeed there is much evidence of this continuing struggle to relate evolution to ethics and, as it were, return to some wholeness of perspective.⁴¹ In mid last century at least it was, as we recall, the Jesuit palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin, much admired by Julian Huxley,⁴² who sought to create a more holistic 'evolutionary humanism' by relating the canons of Darwinism to an exceptionalism in humans derived from our 'cephalisation' which is to say our consciousness of self, or self-awareness. The appearance of mind in this sense was an entirely new element in evolution and instead of the evolutionary radiation of species we have increasing convergence and complexification of human interrelationships suggesting the possibilities—congenial to his professional Christianity—of increasing perfection of human interrelationship in this round world where what 'goes around eventually comes around'.⁴³

At the present moment where globalisation is everywhere an issue it should not be forgotten that Teilhard foresaw that a round rather than a flat world would inevitably, in a communicative and self-aware species, produce convergence and complexification on a global level rather than

⁴¹ For comment on the dynamic of 'returning to the whole' in human thought and action see Fernandez (1986b).

⁴² Julian Huxley provides an admiring Introduction to the English translation of *The Phenomenon of Man* (1961).

⁴³ Teilhard, a Jesuit, was criticised and brought under pressure by his own church for a too great optimism in this matter and for his neglect of ever-present evil and human imperfection. He rather belatedly, apologetically (and very briefly, three pages only and as an Appendix at the end of *The Phenomenon of Man*) takes up the question of 'The Place and Part of Evil in a World in Evolution'. He discusses four evils: disorder and failure, decomposition, solitude and anxiety, and growth. These are all seen, to be sure, not from the perspective of the Ten Commandments but from the perspective of optimising the expected evolution of increasing intensity and convergence of human interrelationships.

speciation. It would produce involution rather than evolution. One might question the beneficial consequences of involution and convergent complexification for the creation of more perfect human relationships. It could as easily suggest, of course, obscurantism and self-serving obfuscation, as is often enough argued in respect to the intellectual life. However that issue is to be decided, Teilhard is another notable instance of a person fundamentally committed to evolutionary science who, like the two Huxleys, grandfather and grandson, seeks to relate it to moral matters and the spiritual not to say teleological commitments involved in 'becoming more human'.

More directly pertinent to matters of the 'moral imagination', Julian Huxley speaks in his introduction to *The Phenomenon of Man* of Teilhard's 'genius for fruitful analogy' (1961: 20) by which he means not only Teilhard's image of the 'noosphere' as a sphere complementary to the biological sphere, a sphere of in-volving human mentation and the drive of communicative interaction towards perfection rather than evolving physical adaptation and competition, but he also means Teilhard's capacity as 'a strong visualizer' (1961: 17). For example, in his time at Berkeley, Teilhard's imagination was quickly kindled by the parallel between the famous cyclotron in operation there, generating immense intensities of physical energy in the inwardly accelerating spiral orbits of its fields of force, and the entire noosphere with its fields of thought curved round upon themselves to generate new levels of 'psychical energy' (1961: 19).⁴⁴ Teilhard's argument is plentifully supplied with such visual 'aides pensees' (well worth examining in another place): and, indeed, he begins his argument in 'The Phenomenon' with a brief Foreword labelled simply, 'Seeing', thereby alerting the reader from the very start to the visual understanding, the visual metaphors, that are going to be helpful in the difficult integrative argument that he is going to be making.

Subsequently, of course we have seen other notable efforts to make whole, whether in hermeneutic or scientific circles, the difficult if not opposed relationship of natural selection *with* spiritual self-awareness and ethical intention. We see it in the recent very large idea of unitary co-evolution associated with the work of Gregory Bateson, for example, or the Gaia Hypothesis of James Lovelock.⁴⁵ These symbiotic or unitary

⁴⁴ Taken from Teilhard's essay, 'En regardant un cyclotron', in *Recherches et débats* (April 1953), p. 123.

⁴⁵ G. Bateson (1972) *Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays* (1980), *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. James Lovelock (1988), *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of our Living Earth*; and James Lovelock and Lynn Margolis (eds.) (1997), *Slanted Truths: Essays on Gaia, Symbiosis and Evolution*.

arguments are surely exercises in the 'moral imagination' under the aegis of one of the grandest tropes of all, Gaia, that is to say, Mother Earth. They are each attempts like Huxley's to 'interconnect' the biological and physical world's and see in them a systematic self-adjusting or self-correcting relation, the kind of self-regulation that is life's most essential characteristic.

All these imaginations were and are in one way another in struggle with the moral, or perhaps better said, the amoral implications, of the Darwinian message. They are, therefore, among other things exercises of the moral imagination. In respect to the powerfully motivating moral imagination of Booth and the Salvation Army, contending less with Darwinism than with an agnostic socialism, it is an imagination still with us embodied in a continuously flourishing international institution rather differently challenged, in its moral principles today, than at its inception.⁴⁶ No one would doubt, though we have only glancingly considered Marx, the energising power of his moral imagination, an imagination whose concentrated 'consciousness raising' about the involuted and self-serving excesses of capital and the exploitations of class became, to say the least, a dominant leitmotif of the social imagination of the last century and a half.⁴⁷ And surely Marx has important and quite moral things to say about the evolution of political economy. We do not have time to offer in this lecture evidence of the connections between Huxley's argument and all these latter day inquiries into the very general topic of 'Evolution and Ethics'. But before taking up the 'language of disease' it would be useful to our argument to treat more directly the contentious idea of the moral imagination.

We may singularise, as has Himmelfarb, this concept of 'moral imagination' but we must emphasise that even in Victorian times it is not simply a question of one overarching moral imagination. The contrast between the imperial imagination of Booth's Spiritual Army and

⁴⁶ At the very moment I write, summer 2001 in the United States, The Salvation Army's views rejecting same-sex marriages and its general acceptance of the biblical rejection of homosexuality have been much in the news. Its hopes that the new Republican administration, well known as friendly to faith-based initiatives, would support the Army's views that private charities should be exempt from Federal anti-discrimination laws have been dashed, a rejection costing it important government support for its poverty programmes. Gay rights, to say the least, was hardly a politically valent issue to be openly contested in late Victorian times as Oscar Wilde might earnestly testify.

⁴⁷ Reference is made here to this author's subdivision, in his teaching on this issue, of the moral imagination into sub-types: the social imagination, the religious imagination, the cultural imagination, the psychic imagination and the corporeal imagination.

Huxley's imaginative struggle with the disconsolate message of Darwinism is indicative of this. Moreover there is much dynamism in moral imaginations. They are in constant evolution. Did the Victorian 'moral imagination' itself have the same earnestness after Oscar Wilde's ironic comments on earnestness itself?⁴⁸ Or in the particularly interesting case of an institutionalised moral imagination, that of the Salvation Army, we have only to recall George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, and its acerbic and mocking commentary on the purity of the Salvation Army's social commitments.⁴⁹ These precursory expressions of the late twentieth-century 'Age of Irony', in which we here in the West are said to have fallen, themselves announce evolving if not evolutionary pressures on the moral imagination to which it has had inevitably to respond.⁵⁰ Indeed in an 'Age of Irony' to speak of the Moral Imagination takes a certain temerity. Irony itself is so very often a use or denial of use of the 'moral imagination'. I do not wish, by any means, to argue that the moral imagination is an exclusively positive faculty, 'eunomic' in its contributions to the 'moral sentiments' and the 'moral order'. But, in fact, I think we must continue to examine its usefulness not as a descriptive label so much as a play of mind or 'play of tropes' that leads us into deeper understanding of, among other things, the 'dynamic of the categorical' insofar as the assignment and acceptance of types, classes, and categories of belonging is in large measure what the moral imagination is exercised about.

We have, however, to admit in the same breath, whatever its analytical utility and possible theoretical status in our concerns, as we try to show here, that there are reasons for hesitation in evoking the 'moral imagination' in social science explanation. Let me speak briefly to that hesitation. Quite beside the fact that in a secular, constitutionally non-religious society like the American one it is felt that moral principles should be mainly left to the individual or the group and that they are not the pragmatic issues of 'governmentality' as it is called, on which one can dispute fruitfully, there is a feeling, as far as social science is concerned,

⁴⁸ Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899).

⁴⁹ See also the more recent stage play, *Guys and Dolls*, also making ironic commentary on the materialism present in spiritual commitment to do-gooding, to doing well by doing good! I owe to Stacy Lathrop this reference to *Guys and Dolls* in the context of evolving views, some sardonic, of the Salvation Army.

⁵⁰ For comment on our contemporary 'Age of Irony' see the 'Introduction' and the 'Coda' in J. W. Fernandez and Mary Taylor Huber (eds.), *Irony in Action: Anthropology, Practice and the Moral Imagination* (2001).

that morality talk conceals much more than it reveals, however one tries to make it revelatory. We see that most obviously in political movements such as 'Moral Rearmament' or the 'Moral Majority', and other faith based organisations such as the Salvation Army, who however they seek to Do Good, Do Well by so often ultimately ignoring the political economy of privilege and prejudice that is a severely inhibiting force in the lives of those they, in one way or another, seek also to serve. The judgmentalisms that arise from moral principle tend too easily to ignore matters of prevailing hegemonic power and privilege. In the United States we may recall that accusation of obviated attention in the extensive debate over the 'Culture of Poverty',⁵¹ which in the end was a concept that seemed to assign so much to morals, values and ingrained behaviours as to ignore the delimiting structures of racism and the perpetuation of class privilege that sustained minority poverty and explained dysfunctional, from the majority point of view, behaviours. Morality as an explanation for behaviour, it has often been argued with justice, mystifies more than it clarifies.

The answer to this well founded misgiving is simply that I do not seek to explain here anything as complexly over determined as human behaviour by simple and direct reference to morality and moral principle itself. But rather I seek to elucidate how by the play of the imagination difficult moral issues are grappled with, moral principles are energised and, as we say, how they come to capture the imagination. As should be clear from the argument I do repose considerable explanatory value in the imagination's role in those choices that provide a basis for, confirm or lead to human action. I also assume that these choices, insofar as we can be aware of them in a conscious way, pose problems of distributive justice and well being. Darwinism for example poses these problems to the moral imagination for any anthropologist and it is of interest therefore to see how some of our eminent predecessors, whether T. H. Huxley or Tielhard de Chardin or Gregory Bateson, grappled with them.

Just as interesting or even more so is attentiveness to how our interlocutors in other cultures grapple with them. I have not worked in any culture in which attentiveness to the struggles of the moral imagination was unproductive of insight into local dilemmas that trouble local

⁵¹ This debate has had extensive participation. It was Oscar Lewis who first articulated and then under criticism (1968) defended the idea. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1969) perpetuated a version of it with his analysis of the dysfunctional, matriarchal black family. Charles Valentine (1968) gave one of the most trenchant early critiques of the thesis. There have been many critiques since.

understanding of the human condition. Quite beside that is the usefulness of the term in speaking to our enduring social science interests in cohesion and coherence in society, and, at the least since Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, what that cohesion and coherence has to do with the moral order of society as this is created and maintained in the imagination.

One can ask of course: Is there not a better formulation? On Marx's example we might just as well, or better, have referred to the Victorian ideology, or the ideology of Social Darwinism or, less likely, of the ideology of German Lutheran pietism, or German romantic idealism. All of these 'ideologies' are involved in the complex contexts of our subjects' lives in Victorian times. I do not wish to deny the importance of that concept nor its productiveness in our investigations into political economy, and into the interface between society, particularly, political economy and language. Indeed it could well be argued that the prevalent and preferred term in the treatment of the role of language in society, which in the end is our subject matter, *is* ideology.⁵²

Several things, then, can be said in favour and several against the idea of 'the moral imagination' in relation to 'ideology'. First as the dictionary tells us the word ideology carries a negative weight as 'a prescriptive doctrine not supported by rational argument'. This is certainly the case in the best known use of the term, Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (1989). Special precautions must be taken to prevent these negative associations from prejudicing inquiry. If not the term ideology tends to privilege he or she who takes to study it over against those, he or she studies, that is the individuals, groups, classes, who are identified with such an 'unsupported' scheme of ideas as a guide to his or her conduct in the world. There is correspondingly the tendency in studying ideology of studying the other without implicating the self who is doing the studying, producing invidious analysis of the kind 'I have supported beliefs, you have an ideology'. The study of the moral imagination, more readily

⁵² For example, see its varied use in the collection edited by Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity, *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (1998). Especially important and clarifying is the 'Introduction' by Woolard (1998: 3-47) in which she reviews the quite varied usages (four groupings) to which 'ideology' as been put in the social science literature, most often negative. By pointing up that most usages have to do with the relation of social and political position to language she argues for creating a space (such as the collection she introduces) in which the various understandings of that 'responsive' relationship can be explored thus 'opening up a bridge' between 'linguistic and social theory'. See also the pioneering consideration of this issue, influential in Woolard's review, by Paul Friedrich, 'Language, Ideology and Political Economy' (1989).

implicates, one may argue, the investigator as observer for who would want to deny that they themselves were such automata, such creatures of culture, as to be without moral imagination, or that their (that is the observer's) moral imagination is in some kind of dynamic relation with that of the observed. Of course, by that very fact of implication the worry arises that objectivity will be lost, insofar as one in late modern times may still hold to the possibility of an objective posture of inquiry.⁵³ The investigator interested in the moral imagination, it may be felt, will find himself more directly embroiled in the strong currents of moral judgmentalism and revivalism so ever-present in dynamic societies particularly those of the secularised modern world, itself, ironically, so cast off from canonical moral anchorage.

But just as students of ideology may take precautions against the pejorative weighting of their central term, so students of the 'moral imagination' must be especially reflective on the key tropes that constitute and represent their own 'moral imaginations' in relation to the dynamic of the moral imaginations they are studying. In studying Huxley's last years for example I am myself aware of the contrast between the quite different weighting of the 'hothouse in the garden' trope in his time and the 'gas filled global greenhouse' of our own present day moral imagination, certainly of mine.⁵⁴ For another example I am myself aware of a certain moral discomfort brought by changing times in reading Radcliffe-Brown's, 'Introduction' to the 'Andaman Islanders' where he relates matter-of-factly the decimation wrought by new diseases of the colonial situation upon the natives. 'It is probable', he says, 'that in another fifty years the natives of the Great Andaman islands will be extinct', an observation that does not seem to have much excited his moral imagination as it is more likely to excite our own, or at least those of us aware how devastating global warming is likely to be for the already impoverished peoples of the earth (1922: 19). In any event that awareness of the different tropes and different weighting of tropes that animate the imagination,

⁵³ See, in this respect, Renato Rosaldo's argument in *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis* (1989), that the postmodern bringing into question of the possibility of objectivity 'creates a space for ethical concerns in a territory once regarded as value-free. It enables the social analyst to become a social critic' (1989: 181), a phrasing 'to become a social critic' which we would put rather as 'to employ his moral imagination'.

⁵⁴ In a course taught over many years on 'The Anthropology of Development' in which the gross and destabilising and detrimental differences between the first and the third world is a basic theme and the negative impact of climate change and failure to achieve 'sustainable' development in the first world are minor themes. The moral issues involved and the distinction between prudential and moral reasoning are recurrently discussed.

and the insights obtained into the commitments or lack of commitment generated, is part of the value, I believe, of maintaining the 'moral imagination' as a useful concept in our inquiry into the other; an inquiry into the other which takes them as beings like ourselves animated by the moral imagination.

But quite beside this question of methodological posture and engagement or distancing from the other, already well treated in the anthropological literature of post-modernism,⁵⁵ the argument is to be made that by giving interpretive credence to the role of the imagination and the images it both generates and is stimulated by, we are provided with insight into visions of orderly and disorderly worlds, of comfort or discomfort levels or, if one prefers, of our easy and/or 'dis-easy', vital or moribund interactions with selves and others in these worlds. That is to say that we are given insight into 'relationships', the basic subject matter, in the end, of any envisioned social science, as true of the moral philosophers of the eighteenth-century as of the contemporary thinkers considered, whether Teilhard, Bateson, or Lockyard. For the moral imagination has above all to do with visions of the perfection or imperfection, of the well-being and ill being of human relationships in the world and of the obligations, accountabilities or liabilities these visions carry. Above all the moral imagination has to do with what we are calling the 'dynamic of the categorical', a dynamic surely of the most enduring interest to anthropology and a dynamic we turn to in Part III.

When students of the period talk about 'the moral imagination' of the late Victorians, or when at recurrent moments in the modern anthropological literature we anthropologists ourselves speak of the 'moral imagination' in culture and social life⁵⁶ we can usefully and insightfully turn to the 'disease of language' in the two senses we are here considering it, as reification and figuration, and the playing out of this 'disease' in narrative enactments in which the imagination works out its dilemmas and contradictions. We do so in order to gain explanatory purchase over the springs or roots of that imagination, to gain, as we can call it, *experiential understanding*, understanding not held in thrall by abstraction but rooted in the vitalities and fatalities, the vicissitudes, of everyday

⁵⁵ And particularly in respect to the distancing from common occupancy of time and space with the informant (participatory co-evality) the well-known essay of Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1982).

⁵⁶ For example in the well-known essay by Clifford Geertz 'On The Social History of the Moral Imagination' (1983). See also T. O. Beidelman *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought* (1986).

life as that life is anchored in the body and the body's experience in the social world. Indeed we might argue that the moral imagination is inevitably anchored in the disease of language so considered: for it must inevitably be stimulated by reification, which is to say the dynamic of the categorical in social life, as it is by the endless figurations, configurations, and re-configurations of the social.

We turn now in Part III to the relation between the 'disease of language', from which disability, however, as from the deadly bowman Philoctete's ulcerating wound, in the Sophoclean play by the same name, our moral imaginations may still be strengthened and provided with some greater accuracy of understanding, to the 'language of disease', which is to say to some of the more ominous social diseases to which the body social is exposed.⁵⁷ In a sense in focusing now on the language of disease we pursue a linkage between injury and insight, disease and discernment.

III. The Language of Disease and the Dynamic of the Categorical

The problem for social science is one of dividing social systems into types. Unless we can classify societies together we can never make any statements about them . . . But there is no break of continuity from type to type. Where you draw the line is more or less arbitrary. (A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'A Natural Science of Society'.)

If for Radcliffe-Brown the organic trope was fundamental to his understanding, so argues Robert Nisbet (1969), it has been fundamental in social thought since classical times. Nisbet traces its presence in practically every social thinker from Heraclitus and Aristotle through St Augustine to Marx and Herbert Spencer to the founding lecturer of this series, Raymond Firth. Implicit in this trope as an inevitable condition of its use has been the disease states to which any organism is inevitably exposed. The organic trope has been used with frequency to describe the afflicted condition of fading spheres of influences, as in Spengler's 'Decline of the West', and of declining empires. The Iberian historian John Elliott (1977) gives us a detailed account of the rhetoric of a diseased body politic as employed by royal advisors (*arbitristas*) to Carlos IV in an organisationally over extended and financially over taxed Spanish

⁵⁷ Cf. Edmund Wilson (1941: 272-95), chap. 7. 'Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow'.

Empire of the seventeenth century on which the sun was beginning to set.⁵⁸ Elliott argues that the royal advisors might better have presented the King with structural analyses of the Spanish economy than in employing language, as they did, which, identifying disease in the Empire, conduced to thinking about curative purges of various categories of persons in the body politic. In troubled economies such images are the stuff of expulsions, expurgations, and holocausts, as the earlier history of Spain and the later rhetoric of twentieth-century fascism in Germany well illustrates.⁵⁹

One of the lessons we learn is that the organic trope is a model for typologisation and categorisation of the body social or the body politic. By presuming the organic model for thinking about society Radcliffe-Brown and the many others who have employed it were already on their way to solving what the epigraph from his work for this section recognises as the problem of typology, its arbitrariness. Of course, just as the body may become diseased in its parts so may a social typology based upon it. It is that possibility which we now pursue in reflecting upon the language of disease.

Nisbet argues that the organic trope is virtually inevitable. Indeed we have employed it in our title. Other colleagues, working in cognitive studies of topology, argue that there is in this usage a kind of 'intuitive biologism'—an 'analogical mapping from biological knowledge onto social kinds'—that is an adaptive consequence of human evolution and therefore a categorising metaphor 'natural' to our biological species being, inevitably present in our thinking about the social order (Boyer, 1994: 161–5, 170–1; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: 17).

Such an argument, however, should not deflect our attention to the afflictions that can be produced by such usage and the frustration of categories they may produce. Nor does it obviate our attention to the possibilities of re-categorisation through the employment of more 'eunomic' tropes. We may point up the social pathology consequent to the

⁵⁸ The sun trope, such a favourite to Müller of course, is present here as Spain was, before the British, the first Empire on which the sun never set. It is also present in Spengler's title in German, 'Untergang des Abendlandes' ('The Setting of the Evening Lands').

⁵⁹ To be sure the barber surgeons of purgation of twentieth-century European body-politics do not and did not create their imaginations of corporeal expurgation out of whole winding-cloth. For, as Dundes (1984) has shown, European folklore and particularly the folklore of central Europe is plentifully supplied with cloacal tropisms, body imagery to which minority populations, in particular the Jews and the Gypsies might be assigned, exposed and more readily if not justifiably expurgated. To be sure the pernicious assignment of groups to parts of the body is not exclusively a European propensity as caste location by corporeal reference and the problem of untouchability because of cloacal location in the body politic in India makes clear.

use of the body trope, in German Fascism for example, or Indian caste systems, in locating and privileging or prejudicing social groups by body referents. More recently it is from the annals of affliction itself, from the 'nightside of life', from 'the onerous citizenship in the kingdom of the ill' as Susan Sontag figuratively put it, that we have a protest against the unexamined use of body metaphor and the categorical afflictions to which it can confine us.

Sontag's late seventies 'Illness as Metaphor' and a decade later her 'Aids and its Metaphors' (1989)⁶⁰ were powerful essays that have subsequently stimulated, in American anthropology at least, and particularly among our feminist colleagues⁶¹ a notable literature reflecting upon and condemning the inadvertent and exacerbating infection of the imagination brought about by the language of disease. Sontag, herself, inquires into the additional affliction imposed upon her as a cancer sufferer by the uses of illness as a figure or metaphor. 'My point', she says, 'is that illness is not a metaphor and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiness way of being ill—is one most purified of metaphoric thinking' (1989: 3–4). Her inquiry into all the ways the major diseases, tuberculosis, syphilis, and cancer, have been figuratively understood and the ways that they themselves in counterpart and in payback have been used to understand social disorder, is dedicated to elucidating such usages and thus liberating the sufferer if not from metaphor itself, hardly possible for a student of literature such as she,⁶² at the least from those uses that stigmatise and 'spoil' and are an additional burden to the sufferer. Her purpose, as she says, was 'to calm the imagination' (1989: 102) not to abolish it.

Most interesting in Sontag's 'exhortational essay' is her recognition of two dynamic reciprocals in the play of tropes: the reciprocal we have

⁶⁰ These two essays originally appearing separately and a decade apart are published together in Sontag (1989).

⁶¹ Notable here would be Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1986, 1987), Di Giacomo (1992), Martin (1987, 1990, 1994), and Van der Geeste and Reynolds Whyte (1989).

⁶² In *AIDS and its Metaphors* Sontag acknowledges that 'Of course, one cannot think without metaphor. But that doesn't mean there aren't some metaphors we might well abstain from or try to retire' (1989: 93). She also acknowledges her playfulness in prefacing her first polemic against metaphors of illness 'with a brief hectic flourish of metaphor in mock exorcism of the seductiveness of metaphorical thinking'. Unlike many commentators I do not read Sontag as radically dismissive of metaphor but selectively critical of the unfortunate metaphors employed in respect to certain illnesses. This is a reading that accords with that of Susan M. DiGiacomo, 'Metaphor as Illness: Post modern Dilemmas in the Representation of Body, Mind and Disorder' (1992).

already identified (see above, note 1) as Aristotelian pay-back and the reciprocal relation between the afflictions of the social order, the body politic as it were and the body corporeal. Of the former she points up that through metaphoric processes 'feelings about evil are projected upon a disease, and the disease (so enriched with meanings) is projected upon the world' (1989: 58). Thus towards the end of Nixon's fatally infected administration his chief counsel, Haldeman, could tell him that there was a cancer upon the presidency. More grisly was Hitler's harping, in *Mein Kampf*, on syphilitic presences in the German body politic. 'Any important disease whose causality is murky' says Sontag, 'and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to become awash in significance. First the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay pollution, anomie weakness) are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then in the name of the disease (that is, using it as a metaphor) that horror is imposed on other things' (Ibid. 58).

Importantly (in view of the recent attacks on Western materialism), Sontag addresses the current 'problem (the economic catastrophe she calls it) of unregulated, incoherent and abnormal growth' (Ibid. 62–3). Here her moral imagination plays on the tumour-like nature of this out-of control economic situation. Although the 'growth' metaphor is highly regarded in current neo-liberal economics, the growth rate of economies being a crucial sign of their health, the other valence of 'growth' may more and more resonate in third millennium societies struggling with the malignancies of denser and denser traffic jams, longer and longer rush hours, urban sprawl (not to say metastasis) and the forebodings of global warming—struggling, that is, with the problem of sustainability and mortality. 'Early capitalism' says Sontag, 'assumes the necessity of regulated spending, saving, accounting, discipline . . . a dependence on the rational limitation of desire. . . . Advanced or late capitalism requires expansion, speculation, the creation of new needs, buying on credit; mobility—an economy that depends on the irrational indulgence of desire, on endless growth!' There is, to echo Nixon's Haldeman, by this imaginative argument, a cancer upon our economies. Cancer conjures up images that sum up the negative behaviour of twentieth-century *homo economicus*: 'abnormal, obsessive growth'. There has been over the last quarter century, I might mention in this connection, a social-ecological movement in the United States lodged in the science of systems modeling at MIT, 'The Limits-to-Growth' movement which has had to struggle against the positive valence of this organic model in thinking about sustainability in society and

economy.⁶³ The negative valence is, perhaps, as Sontag implies waiting its historical moment, as the ‘hothouse in the garden’ trope which we have considered in Late Victorianism has experienced its particular historical moment.

In this everyday arena we see how the disease of language, the play of tropes, must take into account not only these figure ground reversals by which an inchoate subject of our concern, say cancer, in search of experiential understanding, undergoes various unfortunate predications and then becomes itself an image predicated upon another significant but difficult subject of thought, say the economy. But also we must take into account the possible multi valences of the tropes themselves, the contraries contained in them, and their capacity to betray the intentions of their users. The Federal Reserve’s good growth is Sontag’s and other’s—the ‘limits to growth’ community, very evidently—malignancy. There are matters of the moral imagination involved in the apprehension of these valences although the moral choices of interpretation that are before one are not always readily available to consciousness.⁶⁴

Sontag’s stimulus has been felt widely and has provoked, as we note, important commentary on the language of disease and its relationship to suffering in the person and as that person is integrated in the social and political order. This is the main issue raised in a series of important articles and works by Di Giacomo, Lock, Martin, and Schepher Hughes.⁶⁵ These students of the ‘language of disease’ address the ways that the bio-medical reification of disease, which is to say the treatment of illness in materialistic terms, ignores the many ways the body (and its illnesses)

⁶³ See Donella and Dennis Meadows’ two books: *The Limits to Growth: a Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (1972), and also, *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future* (1992).

⁶⁴ The cognitive linguists argue, after all, that considerable metaphoric choice goes on in the unconscious at a neuro-biological level (Lakoff and Johnson: 1999).

⁶⁵ First in a short trenchant article reacting to the reductive implications of Sontag’s argument: Nancy Schepher-Hughes and Margaret Lock, ‘Speaking “truth” to Illness: Metaphors, Reification and a Pedagogy for Patients’ (1986), and second a major compendium or ‘Prolegomenon’ by the same authors gathering extensive data from the anthropological archive on the many ways the body has been understood reciprocally as at once projected into the social and political world and as how those worlds are projected into it in times of illness. The purpose is to move away from the Cartesian mind-body dualisms of the west, so central in its biomedical thought, towards a new epistemology and metaphysics of the mindful body. N. Schepher-Hughes and M. Lock, ‘The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology’ (1987). For insightful commentary on this succession of arguments see Susan Di Giacomo, ‘Metaphor as Illness: Postmodern Dilemmas in the Representation of Body, Mind and Disorder’ (1992). Di Giacomo further clarifies, as we show, the notion of the reification of illness into named diseases schizophrenia for example, which are themselves metaphors taken literally.

is integrated in and reflective of the social and political world of which it is a part. To be sure this line of thought owes a great deal to Mary Douglas' work on the body as a natural symbol bound up in the reciprocal by which it is written into the cosmos and has the cosmos written into it. If Sontag is to be understood as deeply concerned with the transformation of organic disease into metaphor these authors are just as concerned to show the dangers in the way that the biomedical establishment transforms what are essentially metaphors like schizophrenia into real diseases.

This important point also owes a good deal to Michael Taussig's (1980) argument about reification in biomedicine as false consciousness. He suggests that, as a consequence of that reification, the social and political relations embodied in symptoms and suffering are mystified and obscured. What is reproduced, he argues, is the prevailing political ideology, a political ideology (or moral imagination) rooted in a 'metaphor we live by', namely that our world is a marketplace or market fair and our life is a commercial transaction at the fair. Insofar as these arguments are about the way that images are made real to the detriment of our understanding of the social and psychic sources of suffering, they are subject to analysis from the perspective of the moral imagination's apprehension of these forces. For social forces can also be reified at the expense of the patient's experience.

Susan Di Giacomo (1992) speaking from the 'Kingdom of the Ill' in the presence of ominous illness, addresses the 'existential dilemma' of the patient's medical experience in the presence of a variety of possible reifications, not only those of bio-medicine. She speaks, that is, of the ethical dilemma of a 'moral economy of illness that silences the voices of the afflicted as effectively as a political economy of illness in which the suffering individual disappears into class analysis, or as effectively as bio-medicine in which the sick person fades out of the picture . . . except for a single defining feature the diseased body part' (1992: 233). This focus on partness is a disease of language we can call 'metonymic misrepresentation' in which the part is taken for and supplants the whole.⁶⁶ This is a 'language of disease' of constant occurrence in biomedicine, and

⁶⁶ In the history of feminist studies the taking of the part of the female body, the volatile womb for example, for the whole person has been frequently pointed up. See Alice Kehoe's classic article on this part for whole thinking in respect to women doctors in the nineteenth-century and in respect to women's capacity for Shamanism among plains Indians. This 'metonymic misrepresentation' laid prejudicial debilities upon these women and limited their life options. Alice B. Kehoe, 'The Metonymic Pole and Social Roles' (1973).

in many other disciplines, in the modern world, practically all of which are obliged to specialise in parts rather than wholes. Anthropologists, such as those here referenced, generally see illness in a wider social context and are prepared to contest, as we see, not only biomedicine's specialisation and body part focus but any reigning partness of focus in order to present a vision of holistic healing.⁶⁷ As the ethnographic study of social life in culture is, most often, holistic by nature this is a vision which comes naturally to the discipline as a whole. So also natural to the discipline, therefore, is the sensitivity to the affliction of metonymic misrepresentation, the taking of the part for the whole.

Another important contribution to our understanding of the language of disease as an exercise of the moral imagination has been that of Emily Martin who in a series of ethnographic works has described how the disorders of the body, its trials and afflictions, have been affected by the language in which they have been described. In *The Woman in the Body* (1987) Martin inquires how the tropes which care givers predicate upon the body, so often proceeding from the male imagination of a patriarchal medical establishment, have acted to constrain and alienate women from their own bodies and bodily processes. In 'Toward an Anthropology of Immunology' (1990) she takes up the late twentieth-century interest in the body as an immune system and the interrelated anxieties over the AIDS and other contemporary viral epidemics (Ebola, Mad Cow, etc.) and the protection of immunity. She is particularly interested in how the body conceived as an immune system is projected upon the nation state doing, thereby, what she calls the 'ideological work', and I would rather call the imaginative work, of constructing both a restrictive immigration policy and an afflicted, that is to say, diseased, demi-monde underclass. She is also interested, as was Sontag, in the way the military metaphor is used to understand the immune system's battle against viral invasion and reciprocally how viral invasion is used in military and strategic thinking about defending the state. In *Flexible Bodies* (1994) she continues her inquiry into both the figuration of immunological process and the figuration of life process in immunological terms, particularly in the context of the AIDS epidemic. Again she highlights the consequences for social order of creating, for administrative purposes, afflicted and hence dangerous classes in contrast to those classes which enjoy immunological

⁶⁷ The presentation of anthropological materials from societies in which illness is understood more holistically so as to put Cartesian dualism in perspective is a major purpose of the Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 'Prolegomenon' (1987) discussed above, in n. 65.

purity. It is fair to say, though it is not an idea she forefronts, that her own moral imagination is involved in these studies not only in the empathetic ethnographic narratives of affliction that she presents but also in her critique of the unexamined zero-sum use, for example, of the military metaphor and the images of the war against disease. She suggests alternate images and less combative and more symbiotic and ameliorative figurations of immunological process (1990: 419–22).

We see in the work of these anthropologists the exercise of a responsibility to examine pathologies of language by which illness is grasped and made into disease together with the responsibility of suggesting, out of the anthropological archive, other more ameliorative images. Of course, this re-metaphorisation of experience,⁶⁸ is hardly uniquely anthropological though anthropologists managing in their professional work different languages and alternative vocabularies may have a special purchase here. It is, in any event, what these medical anthropologists are seeking to do in offering visions of wholism as replacements of Cartesian body-mind dualisms, or visions of the intellectual life and knowledge acquisition as communion and emergent understanding in place of acquisitive images of battle over territory and high ground (Salmond: 1982).

We shouldn't underestimate the challenge for those who wish to change diseased images. The human penchant for pathological presentiments is strong. Take, for example, current visions of viral takeover, which threaten to overthrow the food chain. The viral world and its threat to our confident sense of immunity has become a widespread idiom, a set of ominous images, a language of disease which recurrently puts us at risk and threatens us in everything from our control of our computer systems to the political frontiers of our public health. It is also a language which shapes the most contemporary strategic thinking about the importance of Information Warfare in a Cyber-world, an infestation of strategic language which turns the viral metaphor into strategic operations.⁶⁹ There

⁶⁸ Described in rather austere terms as *rescripting* at the present time.

⁶⁹ See the argument by Michael Geyer and Geoff Klingsporn, 'Threat Perception and Information Warfare' (unpub. ms) which argues the degree to which Information Warfare thinking in the highest echelons of the US government 'feeds into and derives power from' the trope of the virus. Quite besides the reality of the AIDS virus itself this trope has real world influence insofar as it influences federal budgeting and in its potential for identifying real world enemies that must be destroyed in the interests of protecting our so conceived 'immuno-political vulnerabilities'. These authors argue 'that strategic thought (that is thought that copes with anticipated conflict) is by its nature metaphorical' and also that the virus and immune system metaphor is currently of predominant influence. The language of viral disease, therefore, enters into geo-political argument

is an anxiety in these visions not so different from the anxiety provoked in late Victorians by the Darwinian doctrine, for both are unsettling to the established sense of teleological control.⁷⁰ And they have significant implications for the social order. Students in Cultural Studies, for example, have given us wide ranging explorations of viral discourse involving immunological vulnerabilities which show the impact of such discourse on hierarchies of place, that is the social sense of pure and privileged as contrasted with contaminated and condemned parts of the earth (Schell: 1997). 'Debates about the threat of viruses are debates about the orderings of human society' it is pointed out.⁷¹ In these narratives, the apocalyptic imagination delectating in the reversal of the food chain, raises the spectre of the dominant become the subordinate and the predator the prey.

But we should shudder back from these images of viral takeover and reversal of the food chain, indeed reversal of the Great Chain of Being itself, and from engaging our imaginations with this kind of ultimate 'language of disease'. We come back to the focus of our central interest here, the once and future struggle, which was Radcliffe-Brown's as well,

and shapes a predatory world for military and other strategic thinkers of the nation state to live in and take precautions against.

⁷⁰ This challenge in Darwinism lay in the suspicion that despite the confident stagelike thinking of classical evolution, from savage to civilised, in point of fact, the civilised might not be the best adapted creatures on this planet or at least that they were the beneficiaries of only an ephemeral adaptation, surely not guaranteed in perpetuity. In recent decades, although apparently controlled, such epidemics as AIDS or ebola or spongiform encephalitis once again raise the possibility that our hegemony in this world is much less certain than the various teleological narratives, whether theological or scientological would have it. If the 'sociobiologists' could argue semi-playfully that, corporeally speaking, the human being is simply the selfish gene's way of getting from one generation to the next, more anxiously it could be argued that we are simply the unwilling hosts guaranteeing the perpetuity of various rapidly evolving and ultimately lethal viruses who, as our subtle competitors, seek quite naturally and more efficiently to appropriate the world in their interest. See the Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg's Darwinian warning of 'possible catastrophes ahead. We live in evolutionary competition with microbes—bacteria and viruses. There is no guarantee that we will be the survivors.' Quoted by Heather Schell (1997) from Barbara J. Culliton's article in *Science*, 247 (1990): 279: 'Emerging Viruses: Emerging Threat'. I am indebted to Heather Kapplow for bringing to my attention this viral discourse and literature pertinent to it.

⁷¹ When the vulnerable body gets into the mind in relation to its thinking about the social order, hierarchies of purity and danger are created, as Emily Martin has argued, with oppressive consequences for certain groups, polities and regions of the world. 'Darkest Africa', for example, has once again become what it was in the Victorian Years, a scenario of contagion and a *tableau vivant* where virus hunters and disease control experts enact the old imperialist explorations of the heart of darkness. The tropes of exploration, dangerous adventure, treasure hunting, 'tracking wildness, bringing whatever it is back alive' are everywhere present.

with both the necessity and the problematic of establishing and maintaining the boundaries of social typologies, whether those of the analyst or of those that are at work in the social life he or she observes. So we return, on the cusp of our conclusion here, to that abiding disease of language which is always and already both the reification of categories and the constant effort at rectification and revitalisation by recategorisation.

The amount of anthropological effort that has gone into the study of classification cannot be underestimated from our discipline's early interests in totemism⁷² and systems of consanguinity⁷³ to the present interest in 'Intuitive biologism' (Boyer, 1994) It might well be said that the study of the dynamic of social kinds, classes and types, which is to say of categorisation processes, is the proper study of anthropologists if not of all of mankind itself.

But we have wanted to add to that enduring interest here an emphasis on the study of the possibilities of recategorisation in social life and a greater awareness of out of what reified matrices categories grow. We might argue, indeed, that in important part recategorisation is what history and political struggle is mainly about. There are many instances of this in religion and in political economy.⁷⁴ Most interesting to us here has been the Darwinian recategorisation in which humans are given brotherhood among the apes and made part and parcel of all of nature. It is a recategorisation that has provoked a variety of sympathetic and antagonistic moral narratives.

Perhaps I am showing a particular American awareness, not to say moral imagination. In the United States there is now an exceptional struggle, over the category of legal and illegal immigrant, and between citizen and native, and in respect to kinds of natives. In my own ongoing fieldwork in Europe, moreover, I study, accompanying the Celtic revival that is going on all around the Atlantic Fringe, the struggle in north-western Spain among the Galicians and the Asturians to recategorise themselves as members of that ethnic revival. In the most basic terms of human interaction we have the dynamic relation between the subject and the object and the struggle of those who feel themselves perpetual and

⁷² As eminently in Radcliffe-Brown's classic papers influenced by Durkheim and Mauss, notably 'The Sociological Theory of Totemism', chap. VI in *Structure and Function* (1952).

⁷³ As in L. H. Morgan's *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity* (1871).

⁷⁴ In religion we have the recategorisation of Christians in the Roman Empire from pagan outcasts into the beneficiaries of a state religion and vice versa for Roman polytheism. In political economy we have the recategorisations of the French Revolution and the Communist revolution. One might argue that recategorisation is what 'consciousness raising' is essentially about.

passive objects of other's action to escape that category and become active subjects in their own right. We live in an age now, as Radcliffe-Brown did not, in which the category claims of subalterns are particularly sharply heard, from the untouchables in India, and the aborigines in Australia to the Gypsies of Europe. These are claims for recategorisation and in some cases they are violently exercised. It is a dynamic of the categorical that anthropology can hardly ignore.

To be sure we already have serious anthropological work here. We have seen notable efforts in anthropology to examine the constitutive elements in social outcategorisation stimulated, in important part, by the feminist movement and feminist awareness of the arbitrariness of patriarchal 'marking' in gender relations. Virginia Dominguez for example in *White By Definition* (1986) has given us a historical ethnography of the arbitrary imposition of racial category in Louisiana and subsequently in *People as Subject, People as Object: Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel* (1989) gives us a study of the reification of categories, Arab and Jew, within the Semitic language tradition which is surely part of the internecine afflictions with which that part of the world presently struggles. One could only wish, it may be a naive exercise of my moral imagination, that embattled Arab and Jew might find it possible to recategorise themselves super-ordinately into a fraternal and prosperous Semitic near east?

There has also been a considerable literature examining the hegemonic dynamics of social typification in history influenced by the work of Raymond Williams and his definition of tradition as consisting of a radically selective and privileging, that is hegemonic, power of definition. In a word, tradition is to be understood here as the power of typification and of inclusion and exclusion by category.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Certainly this argument must be related to that of Gramsci on Cultural Hegemony in *The Prison Notebooks* (1992) (and to Alfred Schutz' reworking (in *Collected Papers*, vol. II, 1962-96) of Weberian 'ideal types' into 'social typifications'. And there are good recent studies of the dynamic of typification as hegemonic process and the social afflictions consequent to it, especially in situations of epidemic where existing differentiations of category may easily come to act as depositories for the afflicted. For example for Mexico see the work of David L. Frye, *Indians into Mexicans: History and Identity in a Mexican Town* (1996). The struggle to re-categorise in more favourable ways, in becoming Mexican, the Spanish typifications of the variety of Indian biological admixtures is one main theme of this book. For colonial North America see Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (1999). Turner Strong's study is of the 'Captivity Narratives' of English colonists among American Indians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At first hegemonic power of typification belonged to the colonists in their captivity narratives. It was they who followed traditional forms of typification in writing up their captivity. In recent years, Turner Strong

The late modern, then, has been characterised by work more concentrated on and critical of what Radcliffe-Brown had understood (but not emphasised) to be the discriminatory element in deciding on typologies. The recognition of the problems of typologies is ‘not new’ as he said. One hears impatient comments on the order of, ‘ideal types’ are little more than the ‘thinking man’s stereotypes’, or even paradoxical suggestions or categorical imperatives to the effect that one should not type other’s into categories that one does not wish to belong in oneself.⁷⁶ Max Weber, in respect to ‘ideal types’, stated the cautions too well—the need to constantly compare the parameters of the actual case with the parameters of the type—to accede to such scepticism. What is needed, however, along with the Weberian cautions and sense of proportion in the employment of any tool of social analysis, is a better grasp of the way that social categories are generated, why they prove attractive or convincing as well as the ‘disease process’ in all this. This necessarily, for reasons stated, involves us with a social science theory of tropology, which is to say a study of the body’s experience in the formulations of the social categories of the mind, and reciprocally a study of the mind’s presence, which is to say the categories’ presence in the experience of relationships, which is to say the comforts and discomforts of life in the body social. We have now in late modernism, as the late Victorians did not, and as Radcliffe-Brown did not, much greater knowledge of the workings of the disease of language and the language of disease, which is to say we have much greater knowledge of the body in the mind and the mind in the body. We have much greater knowledge as I would like to phrase it, of the dynamic of the categorical.

points out, Native Americans have recategorised themselves in their own narratives portraying themselves as those who have been the captives and the captivated, that is the colonised by Anglo-American culture (1999: 206). An important stimulus here is the work of Barnaud Cohn (1987) on ‘entification’ and ‘objectification’ in British colonisation in India and subsequently Richard Handler’s (1988) resistance to the typification in historical narratives of the English–French relationship in Canada.

⁷⁶ As, in fact, suggested by this author as a reverse version of the Groucho Marx paradox that he, Groucho, would not want to be a member of a club that would have him as a member, Fernandez (1986a: 199).

A Conclusion

In this lecture we have sought to show how the disease of language has 'infected' the language of disease and how this language, in turn, has infected the imagination of the body social and the body politic much more broadly. These processes, particularly as they implicate the moral imagination, are important to understand as they contribute to and detract from our social life in culture. The particular disease we have focused on here is reification and its associated symptomology: entification, objectification, essentialism, part for whole thinking, nominal realism, metonymic misrepresentation, etc. Underlying the symptomology of this disease syndrome are deeper causes: Human 'forgetfulness' of how it is we have come to understand something, as Max Müller said and, of course, Vico before him. It is a point that the social philosopher Nelson Goodman has recurrently brought to our attention in his studies of the uncertain and over determined workings of inductive logic and concept formation in our *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978). Tropology seeks to remember what has been forgotten and identify these uncertainties. And also there is the curious fact that when we are faced with a difficult subject of understanding we so very often look elsewhere to try to understand it, to gain or to grasp experiential body-anchored understanding as it were, by understanding something else analogous in some way to it.

Of course, we may wonder at this point if this synaesthetic capacity, as it were, this capacity to disambiguate by conjoining diversity, is really a disease at all but, in fact, is not a recreative and enriching capacity that enables us to deal with the uneasiness of categories. Indeed, for me the disease of language, I might now confess a certain mischievousness in my argument, might better be called 'the unease of language', the unease about the categories we have necessarily produced to organise our social lives in culture, that combination of necessity and uneasiness that energises the 'play of tropes' and itself produces what we have called the 'dynamic of the categorical'. This is a dynamic, anchored in an uneasiness, that occurs, on the interface between the rightness and the wrongness of categories, for categories are surely right in the sense that they are necessary to social order (Douglas: 1992b), but they can also be perceived by many interested parties as wrong and in need of recategorisation. And the pressure against categories is constant. Of course, that unease and these perceptions of rightness and wrongness are variable in cultures and at different time periods. At the present time in the United States we live in a pronounced period of recategorisation as the United States Census

Bureau will testify in its repeated attempts in the last quarter century to adjust its categories to the increasing diversity and category uneasiness of our inhabitants, an ethnic diversity that de Tocqueville nearly two centuries ago, in a time of lesser diversity, recognised to be a central, constant, and uneasy challenge to our democracy (Tocqueville: 1988).

This is the Radcliffe-Brown Lecture and so we have taken its name-sake seriously, as he must be, in our epigraphs and as a transitional figure between the late Victorian world and the struggles of its various 'moral imaginations', faith based, evolution based, language based, and the late modern period in which we live and do our anthropology amidst our own imaginations of order and disorder. We do not escape Radcliffe-Brown's problems: of finding an organising trope or, better, set of tropes to energise analysis and comparison; of understanding more fully the nature of the moral order; and of employing usefully and with a sense of proportion, ideal types, in our comparisons. Of course time has wrought changes in our concerns. Changed has been the dream of perfectly objective reason prevailing then in the social sciences, and surely in Radcliffe-Brown: the dream of the management of reason exercised by means of perspicuous language clearly in sight of its object and capable of entirely logical arguments about it. Of course his organic argument that every social system has a functional unity and combinatorial and compensatory regularity in which all parts work together with a sufficient and vital degree of harmony or internal consistency has long been brought under question. But the degree to which social reason itself as induction and conceptualisation is necessarily a choice filled activity full of forgetfulness and obviations is a more recent awareness which, at once, brings category under scrutiny and inescapably makes the place and function of the categorical in human relations truly dynamic.

While there is still, of course, everything to be said about perspicuous language, and we admire this in Radcliffe-Brown, we are much more aware now of the degree to which our reason, surely about the social world, is anchored in analogy, the degree to which many choices and much forgetfulness is involved in our inductive reason and concept and category formation in the social sciences. And there is awareness that where there is choice there are also moral issues involved in making choices. In short, as we put it rather elementally here to be sure, there is a dynamic between category making and recategorisation and that dynamic lies at the very heart of social life. The Platonic vision or dream of a realm of perfect and enduring forms is a narrative act of the imagination which is inspirational and edifying and uplifting but social science should not

confuse it with the obscurer vicissitudes and constant ambiguations and disambiguations of everyday life.

It is these vicissitudes and disambiguations and the dis-easy-nesses that cloud the vision of moral order, often to the point of affliction, that we are obliged to understand. Let me say a final word about narrative here if only because human beings are inveterate story tellers, and the moral imagination discovers the moral order mainly through narratives of exemplary action rather than on engraved commandments fallen from the sky (Johnson: 1996). We have tried to tell a few short stories here: about the struggle of Müller's language origins narrative with Darwinism, about Huxley's struggle to devise an evolutionary ethics more competent and persuasive to a competitive world than the faith based initiatives of the Salvation Army; about the many ways that illness is turned through imaginative language into disease and then itself projected imaginatively out upon the social and political order. In all these stories I have tried to point up the presence and potency of the moral imagination, a mainly residual but ever-present category in our discussion. One has to be careful in emphasising that presence lest one's own argument come to appear a 'faith based initiative'. But, hopefully, we have been able to avoid that conversion of our argument through inspirational conviction into a set of engraved commandments. Our inspiration is more simple: the long standing tradition in social science in trying to understand moral order, how it emerges and is maintained and how it is lost. Meaning in culture may be transitory and moral meaning may be relative but moral-meaning-making is constant and should be an object of our understanding. To paraphrase T. H. Huxley: Evolution may explain the emergence of meaning making but it cannot explain the complexity and vitality of its workings. That belongs to tropologically anchored anthropological narrative. That is to say it belongs to that exercise of reciprocal understanding we call ethnography, our most exemplary activity.

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