Chapter Four

From trust to domination
An alternative history of human–animal relations

Just as humans have a history of their relations with animals, so also animals have a history of their relations with humans. Only humans, however, construct narratives of this history. Such narratives range from what we might regard as myths of totemic origin to supposedly ‘scientific’ accounts of the origins of domestication. And however we might choose to distinguish between myth and science, if indeed the distinction can be made at all, they have in common that they tell us as much about how the narrators view their own humanity as they do about their attitudes and relations to non-human animals. In this chapter I aim to show that the story we tell in the West about the human exploitation and eventual domestication of animals is part of a more encompassing story about how humans have risen above, and have sought to bring under control, a world of nature that includes their own animality.

In this story, a special role is created for that category of human beings who have yet to achieve such emancipation from the natural world: known in the past as wild men or savages, they are now more politely designated as hunters and gatherers. I shall be looking at how hunter-gatherers have come to be stereotypically portrayed, in Western anthropological accounts, as surviving exemplars of the ‘natural’ condition of mankind, and more particularly at how this is reflected in the depiction of hunters’ relations towards their animal prey. I shall then go on to contrast this depiction with the understandings that people who actually live by hunting and gathering have of their relations with the environmental resources on which they depend: again, since our concern is specifically with relations towards animals, I shall concentrate on hunting rather than gathering whilst recognising, of course, that it is not a simple matter to determine where the former ends and the latter begins (Ingold 1986a: 79–100).

Taking the hunter-gatherer understandings as a baseline, I shall attempt to construct an alternative account of the transformation in human–animal relations that in Western discourse comes under the rubric of domestication. My concern, in particular, will be to contrast human–animal relations under a regime of hunting with those under a regime of pastoralism. And a leading premise of my account will be that the domain in which human persons are involved as social beings with one another cannot be rigidly set apart from the domain of their involvement with non-human components of the environment. Hence, any qualitative transformation in environmental relations is likely to be manifested similarly both in the relationships that humans extend towards animals and in those that obtain among themselves in society.
Let me begin, then, with the portrayal of the savage hunter-gatherer in Western literature. There are countless instances, especially in the writings of nineteenth-century anthropologists, of pronouncements to the effect that hunter-gatherers 'live like animals' or 'live little better than animals'. Remarks of this kind carry force only in the context of a belief that the proper destiny of human beings is to overcome the condition of animality to which the life of all other creatures is confined. Darwin, for example, found nothing shocking, and much to marvel at, in the lives of non-human animals, yet his reaction on encountering the native human inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, during his round-the-world voyage in the Beagle, was one of utter disgust. 'Viewing such men', he confided in his journal, 'one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures and inhabitants of the same world' (Darwin 1860: 216). It was not just that their technical inferiority left them completely at the mercy of their miserable environment; they also had no control over their own impulses and desires, being by nature fickle, excitable and violent. 'I could not have believed', Darwin wrote, 'how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man; it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch as in man there is a greater power of improvement' (1860: 208).

Now Darwin, like many of his contemporaries and followers, was in no doubt that these human hunter-gatherers were innately inferior to modern Europeans. This is a view that no longer commands acceptance today. If you wanted to compare, say, the innate capacities of humans and chimpanzees, it should make no difference whatever whether your human subjects were — say — Tasmanian Aboriginal hunter-gatherers or British airline pilots. Nevertheless the belief persists in many quarters that even though hunter-gatherers are fully human so far as their species membership is concerned, they continue to live alongside other animals within a pristine world of nature. Indeed this idea of hunters and gatherers, as the human inhabitants of such a world, is virtually given by definition. To see why this should be so, we need to return to that very dichotomy which Darwin used as the measure of the distance from savagery to civilisation, namely that between the wild and the domestic.

Hunting and gathering, of course, are terms that denote particular kinds of activities. How, then, are these activities to be defined? The conventional answer is that hunters and gatherers exploit 'wild' or non-domesticated resources, whereas farmers and herdsmen exploit domesticated ones (see, for example, Ellen 1982: 128). The precise meaning of domestication has remained a topic of scholarly debate for well over a century, and I shall return in a moment to examine some of the suppositions that underlie this debate. Suffice it to say at this point that every one of the competing definitions introduces some notion of human control over the growth and reproduction of animals and plants. Wild animals, therefore, are animals out of control. Hunter-gatherers, it seems, are no more able to achieve mastery over their environmental resources than they are to master their own internal dispositions. They are depicted as though engaged, like other animal predators, in the continual pursuit of fugitive prey, locked in a struggle for existence which — on account of the poverty of their technology — is not yet won. Indeed the ubiquity, in Western archaeo-zoological literature, of the metaphors of pursuit and capture is extremely striking. Hunters forever pursue, but it is capture that represents the decisive moment in the one of domestication (Ducos 1989: 28). Feral animals, in turn, are likened to convicts on the loose. Notice how the relation between predator and prey is presented as an essentially antagonistic one, pitting the endurance and cunning of the hunter against the capacities...
for escape and evasion of his quarry, each continually augmented by the other through the ratchet mechanism of natural selection. The encounter, when it comes, is forcible and violent.

Behind this opposition between the wild and the domestic there lies a much more fundamental metaphysical dualism – one that seems peculiar to the discourse which, as a convenient shorthand, we can call 'Western', to the extent of being its defining feature. This is the separation of two, mutually exclusive domains of being to which we attach the labels 'humanity' and 'nature'. All animals, according to the principle of this separation, belong wholly in the world of nature, such that the differences between species are differences within nature. Humans, however, are the sole exception: they are different because the essence of their humanity transcends nature; and by the same token, that part of them that remains within nature presents itself as an undifferentiated amalgam of animal characteristics (Ingold 1990: 210). Thus human beings, uniquely among animals, live a two-tier existence, half-in nature and half-out, both as organisms with bodies and as persons with minds. Now as Raymond Williams has pointed out:

> to speak of man 'intervening' in natural processes is to suppose that he might find it possible not to do so, or decide not to do so. Nature has to be thought of ... as separate from man, before any question of intervention or command, and the method and ethics of either, can arise.

(1972: 154)

It follows that when we speak of domestication as an intervention in nature, as we are inclined to do, humanity's transcendence over the natural world is already presupposed.

The same goes for the concept of production, classically defined by Friedrich Engels as 'the transforming reaction of man on nature' (1934: 34). In order to produce, humans have to achieve such command or mastery over nature as to be able to impress their own, calculated designs upon the face of the earth. Thus 'the further removed men are from animals, ... the more their effect on nature assumes the character of premeditated, planned action directed towards definite preconceived ends' (Engels 1934: 178). In other words, to the extent that the human condition transcends nature, so nature herself comes to stand as raw material to human projects of construction. In their realisation, these projects establish a division, within the material world, between the natural and the artificial, the pristine and the man-made, nature-in-the-raw and nature transformed. Hunters and gatherers, as the human inhabitants of a still pristine environment, cannot produce, for in the very act of production the world is irreversibly altered from its natural state. The virgin forest, for example, becomes a neatly ordered patchwork of cultivated fields, naturally occurring raw materials are turned into tools and artefacts, and plants and animals are bred to forms that better serve human purposes. The field, the plough and the ox, though they all belong to the physical world, have been engineered to designs that in every case had their origins in the minds of men, in human acts of envisioning.

Since our present concern is with the history of human-animal relations, or rather with a particular narration of that history, I want to stress the way 'domestication' figures in this account as a feat of engineering, as though the ox were man-made, an artificial construction put together like the plough. Of course the possibility of actually engineering animals has opened up only very recently, and remains more in the realm of fiction than fact. Darwin, to his credit, was at pains to stress that the power of humans to intervene in natural processes is in reality rather limited: above all, humans cannot create novel
variants, but can only select retroactively from those that arise spontaneously. 'It is an error', Darwin wrote, 'to speak of man “tampering with nature” and causing variability' (1875: 2). Nevertheless, and despite Darwin’s careful distinction between intentional and unintentional selection, the belief has persisted that the husbandry of animals, to qualify at all as productive activity, must necessarily entail the deliberate, planned modification of the species involved. Now for pastoralists and farmers, who cannot exactly engineer the forms or behaviours of their animals and plants, the nearest they can come to it is ‘controlled breeding’ (Bokonyi 1969: 219; 1989: 22). And so it is in the modifications brought about by such breeding – or more technically by ‘artificial selection’ – that the essence of domestication has been supposed to lie. Thus it came to be assumed that to husband animals was, in essence, to breed them, both practices being lumped indiscriminately under the concept of domestication. Instances where one appeared without the other, such as the reindeer of northern Eurasian pastoralists which fall within the range of variation of the ‘wild’ form (Ingold 1980: Ch. 2), were dismissed as unstable, transitional states of ‘semi-domestication’.

The separation of humanity and nature implicit in the definition of domestication as a process of artificial selection reappears in a competing definition which emphasises its social rather than its biological aspect. ‘Domestication’, Ducos writes, ‘can be said to exist when living animals are integrated as objects into the socio-economic organisation of the human group’ (1978: 54; 1989; see also Ingold 1986a: 113, 168, 233). They become a form of property which can be owned, inherited and exchanged. Property, however, is conceived here as a relation between persons (subjects) in respect of things (objects), or more generally, as a social appropriation of nature. Human beings, as social persons, can own; animals, as natural objects, are only ownable. Thus the concept of appropriation, just as the concept of intervention, sets humanity, the world of persons, on a pedestal above the natural world of things. As I have remarked elsewhere, in connection with the concept of land tenure, ‘one cannot appropriate that within which one’s being is wholly contained’ (Ingold 1986a: 135). It follows that hunters and gatherers, characterised in Western discourse as exemplars of man in the state of nature, ‘at or near the absolute zero of cultural development’ (ibid.), can no more own their resources than they can intervene in their reproductive processes. The advent of domestication, in both senses, had to await the breakthrough that liberated humanity from the shackles of nature, a breakthrough that was marked equally by the emergence of institutions of law and government, serving to shackle human nature to a social order.

Implied here is the evolutionary premise that the level of being that sets mankind above the animal kingdom had to be achieved, in the course of an ascent from savagery to civilisation, just as it has to be achieved in the development of every individual from childhood to maturity. That man’s rise to civilisation was conceived to have had its counterpart in the domestication of nature is evident from the interchangeable use of the concept of culture to denote both processes. Edward Tylor’s Primitive Culture of 1871, the first comprehensive study of human cultural variation, began with the words ‘Culture or Civilisation’, by which he meant the cultivation of intellectual potentialities common to humanity (1871, I: 1, see Ingold 1986b: 44). Darwin, for his part, introduced his equally compendious study, The variation of animals and plants under domestication, with the remark that ‘from a remote period, in all parts of the world, man has subjected many animals and plants to domestication or culture’ (1875: 2). The cultivation of nature thus appears as the logical corollary of man’s cultivation of himself, of his own powers of reason and morality. As the former gave rise to modern domesticated breeds, so did the latter...
culminate in the emergence of that most perfect expression of the human condition, namely civil society.

Let me conclude this section by returning to Darwin’s observation of the native inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. When it came to his own kind, Darwin remained forever convinced of the necessity and inevitability of progress towards civilisation, yet he was unequivocal in his estimation that the Fuegians had not made it. In the spheres of religion, law, language and technology, they fell far short of a truly human level of existence. Thus:

We have no reason to believe that they perform any sort of religious worship, . . . their different tribes have no government or chief, . . . the language of these people, according to our notions, scarcely deserves to be called articulate, . . . their [technical] skill in some respects may be compared to the instinct of animals, for it is not improved by experience.

(1860: 208, 217-18)

Biologically, Darwin seems to be saying, these people are certainly human beings, they are of the same species as ourselves, yet in terms of their level of civilisation they are so far from being human that their existence may justifiably be set on a par with that of the animals. That being so, any influence that they may have had on the non-human animals in their environment, and on which they depend, cannot differ in kind from the influence that such animals have had on one another.

HOW HUNTERS AND GATHERERS RELATE TO THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

So much for the construction of hunter-gatherers, as somewhat ambiguously human, within the framework of concepts bequeathed by Western thought. Let me turn now to the hunter-gatherers themselves. How do those peoples who derive a livelihood, at least in part, from hunting and gathering, actually relate to the manifold constituents of their environments?

Much of our information about the traditional ways of life of hunters and gatherers – prior to their transformation or destruction in the wake of European invasion of their lands – comes from the writings of early anthropologists, missionaries, traders and explorers. They tended to depict hunter-gatherer life as a constant struggle for existence. Equipped with the most rudimentary technology in a harsh environment, hunters and gatherers were thought to have to devote every moment of their lives to the quest for food. In this respect, Darwin’s description of the natives of Tierra del Fuego, apparently beset by hunger and famine and without the wit to improve their miserable condition, was entirely typical.

More recent ethnographic studies, however, have shown this picture to be grossly exaggerated, if not entirely false. The new view of hunter-gatherer economy that emerged from these studies was put forward in its most outspoken form in a now celebrated article by Marshall Sahlins, originally presented to the 1966 Symposium on ‘Man the Hunter’, and provocatively entitled ‘The original affluent society’ (subsequently revised and published in Sahlins 1972: Ch. 1).

Unlike the individual in modern Western society who always wants more than he can get, however well-off he may be, the wants of the hunter-gatherer, Sahlins argued, are very limited. What one has, one shares, and there is no point in accumulating material property that would only be an impediment, given the demands of nomadic life. Moreover,
Livelihood

for hunter-gatherers who know how to get it, food is always abundant. There is no concept
of scarcity. Hunter-gatherers fulfil their limited needs easily and without having to expend
very much effort. Two points go along with this. The first is an apparent lack of fore­
sight, or of concern for the future. Hunter-gatherers, in Sahlins’s depiction, take what
they can get opportunistically, as and when they want it. And what they have they consume.
The important thing, for them, is that food should ‘go round’ rather than that it should
‘last out’. Whatever food is available is distributed so that everyone has a share, even
though this means that there may be none left on the morrow. No attempt is made to
ration food out from one day to the next, as explorers do when they go on expeditions.
After all, for hunter-gatherers the ‘expedition’ is not time out from ordinary life but is
rather life itself, and this life rests on the assumption that more food will eventually be
found (Ingold 1986a: 211–12). The second point, which follows directly from this, is
that hunter-gatherers are unconcerned about the storage of food. Stored surpluses impede
mobility, and given that food is all around in the environment, hunter-gatherers treat the
environment itself as their storehouse, rather than setting aside supplies of harvested food
for the future.

One of the studies on which Sahlins drew for evidence in presenting this picture of
hunter-gatherer affluence was that undertaken by James Woodburn, of the Hadza of
Tanzania. But Woodburn himself, in a series of recent articles, has sought to qualify this
view by distinguishing between different kinds of hunter-gatherer economy (Woodburn
1980, 1982, 1988). The major distinction is between what he calls immediate-return and
delayed-return economies. In an immediate-return system, people go out on most days to
obtain food, which they consume on the day they obtain it or very soon after. The equip­
ment they use is simple and quickly made without involving much time or effort, nor do
they invest any effort in looking after the resources they exploit. Moreover, there is little
or no storage of harvested food. This picture, according to Woodburn, is consistent with
the Hadza data, and also with Sahlins’s general picture of hunter-gatherer affluence. In a
delayed-return system, by contrast, there may be a substantial advance investment of
labour in the construction of hunting or trapping facilities or (for fishermen) boats and
nets. People might devote considerable effort to husbanding their resources, and there may
also be extensive storage.

The significance of this distinction lies in what it suggests about peoples’ commitments
both to the non-human environment and to one another. Such commitments, Woodburn
thinks, are likely to be far greater in a delayed-return system than in an immediate-return
one. Obviously, people depend in an immediate-return system, just as much as they do
in a delayed-return one, both on the resources of their environment and on the support
of other people. But what is striking about the immediate-return system is the lack of
investment in, or commitment towards, particular resources or persons. An individual, say
in Hadza society, relies on other people in general, and on the resources of the environ­
ment in general, rather than building up relationships with particular people and particular
resources. As Woodburn puts it, ‘people are not dependent on specific other people, for
access to basic requirements’ (1982: 434).

The more, however, that we learn about hunter-gatherer perceptions of the environ­
ment, and of their relations with it, the more unlikely this picture of the immediate-return
system seems. If what Woodburn says about the Hadza is correct, then they appear more
as the exception than the rule. Over and over again we encounter the idea that the environ­
ment, far from being seen as a passive container for resources that are there in abundance
for the taking, is saturated with personal powers of one kind or another. It is alive. And
hunter-gatherers, if they are to survive and prosper, have to maintain relationships with these powers, just as they must maintain relationships with other human persons. In many societies, this is expressed by the idea that people have to look after or care for the country in which they live, by ensuring that proper relationships are maintained. This means treating the country, and the animals and plants that dwell in it, with due consideration and respect, doing all one can to minimise damage and disturbance.

Let me present one example, which will serve to direct our attention from the general context of hunters' and gatherers' relations with the environment towards the more specific context of the hunters' relations with their animal prey. The Cree of northeastern Canada, as we saw in Chapter One (pp. 13-14), suppose that animals intentionally present themselves to the hunter to be killed. The hunter consumes the meat, but the soul of the animal is released to be reclothed with flesh. Hunting here, as among many northern peoples, is conceived as a rite of regeneration: consumption follows killing as birth follows intercourse, and both acts are integral to the reproductive cycles, respectively, of animals and humans. However, animals will not return to hunters who have treated them badly in the past. One treats an animal badly by failing to observe the proper, respectful procedures in the processes of butchering, consumption and disposal of the bones, or by causing undue pain and suffering to the animal in killing it. Above all, animals are offended by unnecessary killing: that is, by killing as an end in itself rather than to satisfy genuine consumption needs. They are offended, too, if the meat is not properly shared around all those in the community who need it. Thus, meat and other usable products should on no account be wasted (see Feit 1973, Tanner 1979, Brightman 1993, cf. Ingold 1986a: 246–7).

This emphasis on the careful and prudent use of resources, and on the avoidance of waste, seems a far cry from the image, presented by Sahlins, of original affluence, of people opportunistically collecting whatever is on offer. Moreover the idea that success in present hunting depends on personal relationships built up and maintained with animal powers through a history of previous hunts, quite contradicts Woodburn's notion of immediate returns. For in the Cree conception, the meat that the hunter obtains now is a return on the investment of attention he put in on a previous occasion – when hunting the same animal or its conspecifics – by observing the proper procedures. Indeed it could be argued that in their concern to look after their environments, and to use them carefully, hunter-gatherers practise a conscious policy of conservation. They could, in other words, be said to manage their resources, as has actually been suggested in one recent collection of anthropological studies of North American and Australian hunter-gatherers, which was pointedly entitled Resource Managers (Williams and Hunn 1982).

Yet the environmental conservation practised by hunter-gatherers, if such it is, differs fundamentally from the so-called 'scientific' conservation advocated by Western wildlife protection agencies. Scientific conservation is firmly rooted in the doctrine, which I have already spelled out, that the world of nature is separate from, and subordinate to, the world of humanity. One corollary of this doctrine is the idea that merely by virtue of inhabiting an environment, humans – or at least civilised humans – are bound to transform it, to alter it from its 'natural' state. As a result, we tend to think that the only environments that still exist in a genuinely natural condition are those that remain beyond the bounds of human civilisation, as in the dictionary definition of a wilderness: 'A tract of land or a region ... uncultivated or uninhabited by human beings'. Likewise the wild animal is one that lives an authentically natural life, untainted by human contact. It will, of course, have contacts with animals of many other, non-human species, but whereas
these latter contacts are supposed to reveal its true nature, any contact with human beings is supposed to render the animal 'unnatural', and therefore unfit as an object of properly scientific inquiry. Juliet Clutton-Brock (1994) has drawn our attention to the way in which, by according to domestic animals a second-class status in this regard, the investigation of their behaviour has been impeded. Domestic animals, it seems, are to be exploited but not studied; wild animals to be studied but not exploited.

Scientific conservation operates, then, by sealing off portions of wilderness and their animal inhabitants, and by restricting or banning human intervention. This is like putting a 'do not touch' notice in front of a museum exhibit: we can observe, but only from a distance, one that excludes direct participation or active 'hands-on' involvement. It is consequently no accident that regions designated as wilderness, and that have been brought under externally imposed regulations of conservation, are very often regions inhabited by hunters and gatherers. Allegedly lacking the capability to control and transform nature, they alone are supposed to occupy a still unmodified, 'pristine' environment. The presence of indigenous hunter-gatherers in regions designated for conservation has often proved acutely embarrassing for the conservationists. For there is no way in which native people can be accommodated within schemes of scientific conservation except as parts of the wildlife, that is as constituents of the nature that is to be conserved. They cannot themselves be conservers, because the principles and practice of scientific conservation enjoin a degree of detachment which is incompatible with the kind of involvement with the environment that is essential to hunting and gathering as a way of life.

The sense in which hunters and gatherers see themselves as conservers or custodians of their environments should not, then, be confused with the Western scientific idea of conservation. This latter, as I have shown, is rooted in the assumption that humans - as controllers of the natural world - bear full responsibility for the survival or extinction of wildlife species. For hunter-gatherers this responsibility is inverted. In the last resort, it is those powers that animate the environment that are responsible for the survival or extinction of humans. Summarising the view of the Koyukon of Alaska, Richard Nelson writes:

> The proper role of humankind is to serve a dominant nature. The natural universe is nearly omnipotent, and only through acts of respect and propitiation is the well-being of humans ensured . . . In the Koyukon world, human existence depends on a morally based relationship with the overarching powers of nature. Humanity acts at the behest of the environment. The Koyukon must move with the forces of their surroundings, not attempting to control, master or fundamentally alter them. They do not confront nature, they yield to it.
>
> (Nelson 1983: 240)

For the Koyukon, as for other hunting and gathering peoples, there are not two separate worlds, of humanity and nature. There is one world, and human beings form a rather small and insignificant part of it.

Given this view of the world, everything depends on maintaining a proper balance in one's relationships with its manifold powers. Thus, rather than saying that hunters and gatherers exploit their environments, it might be better to say that they aim to keep up a dialogue with it. I shall turn in the next section to what this means in terms of hunters' relations with animals. At this juncture, the point I wish to stress is that for hunters and gatherers, there is no incompatibility between conservation and participation. It is through a direct engagement with the constituents of the environment, not through a detached,
FROM TRUST TO DOMINATION

Trust

It should by now be clear that the characterisation of hunting as the human pursuit of animals that are 'wild', though it speaks volumes about our Western view of hunters, is quite inappropriate when it comes to the hunters' view of animals. For the animals are not regarded as strange, alien beings from another world, but as participants in the same world to which the people also belong. They are not, moreover, conceived to be bent on escape, brought down only by the hunter's superior cunning, speed or force. To the contrary, a hunt that is successfully consummated with a kill is taken as proof of amicable relations between the hunter and the animal that has willingly allowed itself to be taken. Hunters are well-known for their abhorrence of violence in the context of human relations, and the same goes for their relations with animals: the encounter, at the moment of the kill, is - to them - essentially non-violent. And so, too, hunting is not a failed enterprise, as it is so often depicted in the West: a failure marked by the technical inability to assert or maintain control; pursuit that is not ultimately crowned by capture. It is rather a highly successful attempt to draw the animals in the hunters' environment into the familiar ambit of social being, and to establish a working basis for mutuality and coexistence.

For hunters and gatherers, animals and plants in the environment play a nurturing role, as do human caregivers. This is the kind of understanding that Nurit Bird-David seeks to convey by means of her notion, introduced in the previous chapter (pp. 43–4), of 'the giving environment' (Bird-David 1990). Focusing on peoples of the tropical forest for whom gathering is rather more important than hunting, Bird-David suggests that hunters and gatherers model their relationships with life-giving agencies in their environments on the institution of sharing, which is the foundation for interpersonal relations within the human community. Thus in their nurturing capacity, these non-human agencies 'share' with you, just as you share what you receive from the environment with other people. Both movements, from non-human to human beings and among the latter themselves, are seen to constitute a single 'cosmic economy of sharing' (Bird-David 1992a). However, while people may indeed draw an analogy between the relations with animals and plants activated in hunting and gathering, and the relations among humans activated in sharing, it seems to me that these two sets of relations are, at a more fundamental level of principle, not just analogous but identical. This principle which, I maintain, inheres equally in the activities of sharing and in those of hunting and gathering, is that of trust.

The essence of trust is a peculiar combination of autonomy and dependency. To trust someone is to act with that person in mind, in the hope and expectation that she will do
Livelihood

likewise – responding in ways favourable to you – so long as you do nothing to curb her autonomy to act otherwise. Although you depend on a favourable response, that response comes entirely on the initiative and volition of the other party. Any attempt to impose a response, to lay down conditions or obligations that the other is bound to follow, would represent a betrayal of trust and a negation of the relationship. For example, if I force my friend to assist me in my enterprise, this is tantamount to a declaration that I do not trust him to assist me of his own accord, and therefore that I no longer count him as a friend at all. Offended by my infidelity, his likely response will be to withdraw his favour towards me. Trust, therefore, always involves an element of risk – the risk that the other on whose actions I depend, but which I cannot in any way control, may act contrary to my expectations (see Gambetta 1988, for some excellent discussions of this point).

Now this combination of autonomy and dependency is, I believe, the essence of what is commonly reported in ethnographic studies of hunting and gathering societies under the rubric of sharing. People in hunter-gatherer communities do depend on one another for food and for a variety of everyday services, though these exchanges may be the surface expression of a deeper concern with companionship, characterised by Tom Gibson as 'shared activity in itself' (Gibson 1985: 393). Noteworthy in Gibson's account is the connection he draws between companionship and autonomy: 'a relationship based on companionship is voluntary, freely terminable and involves the preservation of the personal autonomy of both parties' (1985: 392). He contrasts this kind of relationship with the kind that is involuntary, non-terminable and places the parties under obligation (see Ingold 1986a: 116–17). Bird-David (1990) draws essentially the same contrast under the terms 'giving' and 'reciprocating', referring respectively to the relationships that hunter-gatherers and cultivators see themselves as having with the environment of the tropical forest. Clearly, both hunter-gatherers and cultivators depend on their environments. But whereas for cultivators this dependency is framed within a structure of reciprocal obligation, for hunter-gatherers it rests on the recognition of personal autonomy. In my terms, the contrast is between relationships based on trust and those based on domination. I shall turn to the latter in a moment, but first I should like to specify more precisely the meaning of trust in the context of relations between hunters and their animal prey.

I shall do so by drawing a further, analytic distinction between trust and confidence (following Luhmann 1988). Both terms are commonly and casually used in characterisations of hunter-gatherer attitudes towards the environment. Sahlins, for example, uses the terms freely and interchangeably in his account of the 'pristine affluence' of hunter-gatherer economic arrangements, marked, he claims, by:

a trust in the abundance of nature's resources rather than despair at the inadequacy of human means. My point is that otherwise curious heathen devices became understandable by the people's confidence, a confidence which is the reasonable human attribute of a generally successful economy.

(1972: 29, my emphases)

Now Sahlins writes as though, for hunters and gatherers, the environment existed as a world of nature 'out there', quite separate from the world of human society and its interests. In this he uncritically projects onto the hunter-gatherer way of thinking a nature/society dichotomy which, as we have seen, is of Western provenance. According to this view, nature – which the people make no attempt to control or modify – is seen to go its own way, subject to ups and downs regardless of human actions or dispositions towards it. If it yields a harvest, the hunter-gatherer has the expectation of a successful economy. But now all of us have come to regard this as an illusion; we may stop revolting against it, but we do not consider that it will continue indefinitely. Likewise, according to Sahlins, we do not consider the possibility of domination. And yet it seems to me that it presupposes real forces external to the 'outside world', underlying our every action. But with the attitude of confidence we presume an active intervention on our part. And my contention is that the attitude of hunters and gatherers characterises their attitude to their environment.

The animals in this case are supposed to act with the same irrepressible determination that we find and take as we walk along the landscape, guided by a moment in the unfolding world of nature (the animal kingdom, the environment). The hunter-gatherer sees himself as being a part of this world, a part that he must understand and develop. He then draws a further, analytic distinction between trust and confidence (following Luhmann 1988). Both terms are commonly and casually used in characterisations of hunter-gatherer attitudes towards the environment. Sahlins, for example, uses the terms freely and interchangeably in his account of the 'pristine affluence' of hunter-gatherer economic arrangements, marked, he claims, by:

a trust in the abundance of nature's resources rather than despair at the inadequacy of human means. My point is that otherwise curious heathen devices became understandable by the people's confidence, a confidence which is the reasonable human attribute of a generally successful economy.

(1972: 29, my emphases)

Now Sahlins writes as though, for hunters and gatherers, the environment existed as a world of nature 'out there', quite separate from the world of human society and its interests. In this he uncritically projects onto the hunter-gatherer way of thinking a nature/society dichotomy which, as we have seen, is of Western provenance. According to this view, nature – which the people make no attempt to control or modify – is seen to go its own way, subject to ups and downs regardless of human actions or dispositions towards it. If it yields a harvest, the hunter-gatherer has the expectation of a successful economy. But now all of us have come to regard this as an illusion; we may stop revolting against it, but we do not consider that it will continue indefinitely. Likewise, according to Sahlins, we do not consider the possibility of domination. And yet it seems to me that it presupposes real forces external to the 'outside world', underlying our every action. But with the attitude of confidence we presume an active intervention on our part. And my contention is that the attitude of hunters and gatherers characterises their attitude to their environment.

The animals in this case are supposed to act with the same irrepressible determination that we find and take as we walk along the landscape, guided by a moment in the unfolding world of nature (the animal kingdom, the environment). The hunter-gatherer sees himself as being a part of this world, a part that he must understand and develop.
towards it. If it yields, or fails to yield, this is not because it has the hunter-gatherer in mind. And the hunter-gatherer has to assume that it will yield, since life itself is predicated on this expectation. The alternative, in Luhmann's words, 'is to withdraw expectations without having anything with which to replace them' (1988: 97).

Now all of us have to make these kinds of assumptions all the time: they are what enable us to get by in a world full of unforeseen and unconsidered dangers. The world may stop revolving or be knocked off course by a meteoric collision, but we have to assume that it will not, and for the most part the possibility never enters our heads. Likewise, according to Sahlins, hunter-gatherers assume the providence of nature and do not consider the possibility of starvation. It is this attitude that I denote by the concept of confidence. And the crucial aspect of confidence to which I wish to draw attention is that it presupposes no engagement, no active involvement on our part, with the potential sources of danger in the world, so that when trouble does strike it is attributed to forces external to the field of our own relationships, forces which just happen to set the 'outside world', under its own momentum, on a collision course with our expectations.

But with the attitude that I denote by the concept of trust, it is quite otherwise. Trust presupposes an active, prior engagement with the agencies and entities of the environment on which we depend; it is an inherent quality of our relationships towards them. And my contention is that in this strict sense, trust rather than confidence characterises the attitude of hunters and gatherers towards their non-human environment, just as it characterises their attitude towards one another.

The animals in the environment of the hunter do not simply go their own way, but are supposed to act with the hunter in mind. They are not just 'there' for the hunter to find and take as he will; rather they present themselves to him. The encounter, then, is a moment in the unfolding of a continuing — even lifelong — relationship between the hunter and the animal kind (of which every particular individual encountered is a specific instance). The hunter hopes that by being good to animals, they in turn will be good to him. But by the same token, the animals have the power to withhold if any attempt is made to coerce what they are not, of their own volition, prepared to provide. For coercion, the attempt to extract by force, represents a betrayal of the trust that underwrites the willingness to give. Animals thus maltreated will desert the hunter, or even cause him ill fortune. This is the reason why, as I mentioned above, the encounter between hunter and prey is conceived as basically non-violent. It is also the reason why hunters aim to take only what is revealed to them and do not press for more. To describe this orientation as 'opportunism' is misleading, for it is not a matter of taking what you can get but of accepting what is given. The same applies in the context of intra-community sharing: one may indeed ask for things that others have, but not for more. 'Practically, would-be-recipients request what they see in the possession of others and do not request them to produce what they do not appear to have' (Bird-David 1992a: 30).

By regarding the relation between hunters and their prey as one of trust, we can also resolve the problem inherent in Woodburn’s distinction between immediate-return and delayed-return systems. Woodburn was concerned to discover the basis for the pronounced emphasis on personal autonomy in many hunter-gatherer societies, and he put it down to the lack of specific commitments and enduring relationships in an immediate-return economy. Yet we find that at least among hunters, people are enmeshed in highly particularistic and intimate ties with both human and non-human others. Contrary to expectations, however, their sense of autonomy is not compromised. Woodburn’s error, as we can now see, was to assume that dependency on specific other people entails loss
of autonomy. This is not necessarily so, for it is precisely in relations of trust that autonomy is retained despite dependency. But trust, as I have noted, inevitably entails risk, and this is as much the case in hunters' relations with animals as it is within the human community. Thus, of the 'other-than-human' persons that inhabit the world of the Ojibwa, Hallowell observes – taking up the perspective of an Ojibwa subject – that

I cannot always predict exactly how they will act, although most of the time their behaviour meets my expectations ... They may be friendly and help me when I need them, but, at the same time, I have to be prepared for hostile acts, too. I must be cautious in my relations with other 'persons' because appearances may be deceptive.

(1960: 43)

That is why hunters attach such enormous importance to knowledge and its acquisition. This is not knowledge in the natural scientific sense, of things and how they work. It is rather as we would speak of it in relation to persons: to 'know' someone is to be in a position to approach him directly with a fair expectation of the likely response, to be familiar with that person's past history and sensible to his tastes, moods and idiosyncrasies. You get to know other human persons by sharing with them, that is by experiencing their companionship. And if you are a hunter, you get to know animals by hunting. As I shall show in Chapter Sixteen, the weapons of the hunter, far from being instruments of control or manipulation, serve this purpose of acquiring knowledge. Through them, the hunter does not transform the world, rather the world opens itself up to him. Like words, the hunter's tools are caught up in chains of personal (not mechanical) causation, serving to reveal the otherwise hidden intentions of non-human agents in a world where, recalling Feit's remark concerning the Cree, it is 'always appropriate to ask "who did it?" and "why?" rather than "how does that work?"' (1973: 116). In short, the hunter does not seek, and fail to achieve, control over animals; he seeks revelation. Robin Ridington has put the point concisely in his observation that hunter-gatherers, 'instead of attempting to control nature ... concentrate on controlling their relationship with it' (1982: 471).

Domination

It is quite otherwise with pastoralists. Like hunters, they depend on animals, and their relationship with these animals may similarly be characterised by a quality of attentive, and at times even benevolent regard. Herdsmen do indeed care for their animals, but it is a care of a quite different kind from that extended by hunters. For one thing, the animals are presumed to lack the capacity to reciprocate. In the world of the hunter, animals, too, are supposed to care, to the extent of laying down their lives for humans by allowing themselves to be taken. They retain, however, full control over their own destiny. Under pastoralism, that control has been relinquished to humans. It is the herdsman who takes life-or-death decisions concerning what are now 'his' animals, and who controls every other aspect of their welfare, acting as he does as both protector, guardian and executioner. He sacrifices them; they do not sacrifice themselves to him (Ingold 1986a: 272–3). They are cared for, but they are not themselves empowered to care. Like dependants in the household of a patriarch, their status is that of jural minors, subject to the authority of their human master (Ingold 1980: 96). In short, the relationship of pastoral care, quite unlike that of the hunter towards animals, is founded on a principle not of trust but of domination. 8
These principles of relationship are mutually exclusive: to secure the compliance of the other by imposing one's will, whether by force or by more subtle forms of manipulation, is—as we have seen—an abrogation of trust, entailing as it does the denial rather than the recognition of the autonomy of the other on whom one depends. The very means by which the herdsman aims to secure access to animals would, for the hunter, involve a betrayal which would have the opposite effect of causing them to desert. The instruments of herding, quite unlike those of hunting, are of control rather than revelation: they include the whip, spur, harness and hobble, all of them designed either to restrict or to induce movement through the infliction of physical force, and sometimes acute pain (I return to these in Chapter Fifteen, pp. 306-8). Should we conclude, then, that while the concept of wildness is clearly inapplicable to describe the hunter's perception of animals with whom he enjoys a relation of trust and familiarity, the opposite concept of domestication—with its connotations of mastery and control—is perfectly apt to describe the pastoralist's relation with the animals in his herd?

The answer depends on precisely how we understand the nature of this mastery and control, and this, in turn, hinges on the significance we attach to the notion of physical force. Consider the slave-driver, whip in hand, compelling his slaves to toil through the brute infliction of severe pain. Clearly the autonomy of the slave in this situation to act according to his own volition is very seriously compromised. Does this mean that the slave responds in a purely mechanical way to the stroke of the whip? Far from it. For when we speak of the application of force in this kind of situation, we impute to the recipient powers of resistance—powers which the infliction of pain is specifically intended to overwhelm. That is to say, the use of force is predicated on the assumption that the slave is a being with the capacity to act and suffer, and in that sense a person. And when we say that the master causes the slave to work, the causation is personal, not mechanical: it lies in the social relation between master and slave, which is clearly one of domination. In fact, the original connotation of 'force' was precisely that of action intentionally directed against the resistance of another sentient being, and the metaphorical extension from the domain of interpersonal relations to that of the movements of inanimate and insentient things, like planets or billiard balls, is both relatively recent and highly specialised (see Walter 1969: 40 for a discussion of this point).

Now if by the notion of domestication is implied a kind of mastery and control similar to that entailed in slavery, then this notion might indeed be applicable to describe the pastoralist's relation with the animals in his herd. Richard Tapper argues, along precisely these lines, that where 'individual animals are taken out of their natural species community and subjugated to provide labour for the human production process, ... their feeding under the control of their human masters', one may reasonably describe the 'human-animal relations of production' thereby established as 'slave-based' (Tapper 1988: 52-3). In those societies of the ancient world in which slavery was the dominant relation of production, the parallel between the domestic animal and the slave appears to have been self-evident. The Romans, for example, classified slaves and cattle, respectively, as instrumentum genus vocale and instrumentum genus semi-vocale (Tapper 1988: 59 fn. 3), while Vedic texts, according to Benveniste (1969: 48), have a term pasu for animate possessions that admits two varieties, quadrupedal (referring to domestic animals) and bipedal (referring to human slaves). Perhaps the most extraordinary piece of evidence comes from the work of the Japanese scholar, K. Maekawa, on the temple economy of Sumeria in the third millennium BC. From his analysis of Sumerian texts, Maekawa shows that the temple-state of Lagash maintained one population of captured female slaves to work as...
weavers, and another population of cattle for the supply of milk. In each population, female offspring were retained to secure its continuation, while male offspring were castrated and put to work: the men in hauling boats up-river, the oxen in pulling the plough (cited in Tani 1996: 404–5).

In a remarkable extension of the argument for the parallel between the domestic animal and the slave, Yutaka Tani has drawn attention to a technique for managing pastoral herds of sheep or goats that is widely distributed in the Mediterranean and Middle East. A selected male animal is castrated and trained to respond to the vocal commands of the shepherd. On rejoining the herd, this animal, known as a ‘guide-whether’, acts as an intermediary between the shepherd (the dominator) and his flock (the dominated). For while obedient to its master, the whether also sets an example, in its behaviour, which is followed by all the other animals in the flock. Now barring a small number of males kept for breeding purposes, most of these animals are female. The position of the whether, a castrated male charged with the guidance of a herd of females, is thus functionally analogous to the position of the human eunuch, in the court of the emperor, charged with guarding the females of his harem. The reliability and trustworthiness of the eunuch, like that of the guide-whether, derives from his exclusion from the reproductive process. But despite his high rank, the eunuch remains a slave, wholly dependent on imperial favour for his position. Noting the similarity between the techniques of management employed, respectively, by the shepherd to control his flock and by the emperor to control his harem, Tani wonders whether the latter might be derived from the former (or, less probably, vice versa). The idea may seem far-fetched, and the historical evidence, as Tani admits, is inconclusive. Yet it seems more than coincidental that the technique of using the guide-whether is distributed 'in the same areas of the Mediterranean and Middle East as where the political institution of the eunuch first appeared and from where it diffused' (Tani 1996: 388–91, 403).

However obvious the parallel may have seemed, to people of the ancient world, between the domination and control of slaves and of pastoral herds, it is an idea that is deeply alien to modern Western thought. For viewing both kinds of relationship, with slaves and with livestock, through the lens of a dichotomy between humanity and nature, we are convinced that the master–slave relationship, occurring between human beings, exists on the level of society, whereas domestication amounts to a social appropriation of – or intervention in – the separate domain of nature, within which animal existence is fully contained. In a revealing comment, Marx argued that relations of domination, such as obtain between master and slave, cannot obtain between humans and domestic animals, because the latter lack the power of intentional agency: ‘Beings without will, such as animals, may indeed render services, but their owner is not thereby lord and master’ (1964: 102; see Ingold 1980: 88). Domination and domestication are here distinguished, on the premise that the one is a form of social control exercised over subject-persons, and the other a form of mechanical control exercised over object-things. But this is not, to my knowledge, a distinction that any pastoral people make themselves. They may rank animals hierarchically below humans, as in ancient society slaves were ranked hierarchically below freemen, but they are not assigned to a separate domain of being. And although the relations pastoralists establish with animals are quite different from those established by hunters, they rest, at a more fundamental level, on the same premise, namely that animals are, like human beings, endowed with powers of sentience and autonomous action which have either to be respected, as in hunting, or overcome through superior force, as in pastoralism.
To sum up: my contention is that the transition in human–animal relations that in Western scholarly literature is described as the domestication of creatures that were once wild, should rather be described as a transition from trust to domination. I have suggested that the negative stereotype of the hunter’s relation to his prey, marked by the absence of control, be replaced by a more positive characterisation as a certain mode of engagement. But I have also shown that the emergence of pastoralism does not depend, as orthodox definitions of domestication imply, upon humans’ achieving a state of being that takes them above and beyond the world in which all other creatures live. Thus the transition from trust to domination is not to be understood as a movement from engagement to disengagement, from a situation where humans and animals are co-participants in the same world to one in which they hive off into their own separate worlds of society and nature. Quite to the contrary, the transition involves a change in the terms of engagement. Whether the regime be one of hunting or of pastoralism, humans and animals relate to one another not in mind or body alone but as undivided centres of intention and action, as whole beings. Only with the advent of industrial livestock management have animals been reduced, in practice and not just in theory, to the mere ‘objects’ that theorists of the Western tradition (who, barring the occasional pet, had little or no contact with animals in the course of their working lives) had always supposed them to be (Tapper 1988: 52–7). Indeed this objectification of animals, having reached its peak in the agropastoral industry, is as far removed from the relations of domination entailed in traditional pastoral care as it is from the relations of trust entailed in hunting.

Moreover, as alternative modes of relationship, neither trust nor domination is in any sense more or less advanced than the other. It is important, in particular, to guard against the tendency to think of relations based on trust as morally, or intrinsically ‘good’, and of those based on domination as intrinsically ‘bad’. They are simply different. Trust, as I have shown, is a relation fraught with risk, tension and ambiguity. It is well to remember Hallowell’s point, apropos Ojibwa ontology, that ‘appearances may be deceptive’ (1960: 43). The underside of trust, as Hallowell shows so clearly, is chronic anxiety and suspicion. Thus to argue that hunter-gatherer relations with the environment are based on a principle of trust is not to present yet another version of the arcadian vision of life in harmony with nature. Nor, by the same token, should the movement from trust to domination be regarded as one that replaced harmony by discord, or that set humanity on the fully path of its irrevocable alienation from nature. When hunters became pastoralists they began to relate to animals, and to one another, in different ways. But they were not taking the first steps on the road to modernity.

CONCLUSION

Writing of Koyukon hunters of Alaska, Nelson remarks that, for them, ‘the conceptual distance between humanity and nature is narrow’ (1983: 240). On the evidence of his own account, and many others, it would be more true to say that there is no conceptual distance at all, or rather that what we distinguish as humanity and nature merge, for them, into a single field of relationships. And indeed, we find nothing corresponding to the Western concept of nature in hunter-gatherer representations, for they see no essential difference between the ways one relates to humans and to non-human constituents of the environment. We have seen how both sharing (among humans) and hunting (of animals by humans) rest on the same principle of trust, and how the sense in which hunters claim to know and care for animals is identical to the sense in which they know and care for
other human beings. One could make the same argument for pastoralism: I have shown elsewhere, in the case of northern Eurasian reindeer herdsmen, how the transition from hunting to pastoralism led to the emergence, in place of egalitarian relations of sharing, of relations of dominance and subordination between herding leaders and their assistants (Ingold 1980: 165–9). Evidently a transition in the quality of relationship, from trust to domination, affects relations not only between humans and non-human animals, but also, and equally, among human beings themselves. Hallowell’s observation that in the world of the Ojibwa, ‘vital social relations transcend those which are maintained with human beings’ (1960: 43) could apply just as well to other hunting peoples, and indeed to pastoralists as well.

This observation, however, plays havoc with the established Western dichotomies between animals and society, or nature and humanity. The distinction between the human and the non-human no longer marks the outer limits of the social world, as against that of nature, but rather maps a domain within it whose boundary is both permeable and easily crossed. It comes as no surprise, then, that anthropology, as an intellectual product of the Western tradition, has sought to contain the damage by relativising the indigenous view and thereby neutralising the challenge it presents to our own suppositions. Thus we are told that the hunter-gatherer view is just another cultural construction of reality. When hunters use terms drawn from the domain of human interaction to describe their relations with animals, they are said to be indulging in metaphor (Bird-David 1992a). But to claim that what is literally true of relations among humans (for example, that they share), is only figuratively true of relations with animals, is to reproduce the very dichotomy between animals and society that the indigenous view purports to reject. We tell ourselves reassuringly that this view the hunters have, of sharing with animals as they would with people, however appealing it might be, does not correspond with what actually happens. For nature, we say, does not really share with man.9 When hunters assert the contrary it is because the image of sharing is so deeply ingrained in their thought that they can no longer tell the metaphor from the reality. But we can, and we insist – on these grounds – that the hunters have got it wrong.

This strikes me as profoundly arrogant. It is to accord priority to the Western metaphysics of the alienation of humanity from nature, and to use our disengagement as the standard against which to judge their engagement. Faced with an ecological crisis whose roots lie in this disengagement, in the separation of human agency and social responsibility from the sphere of our direct involvement with the non-human environment, it surely behoves us to reverse this order of priority. I began with the point that while both humans and animals have histories of their mutual relations, only humans narrate such histories. But to construct a narrative, one must already dwell in the world and, in the dwelling, enter into relationships with its constituents, both human and non-human. I am suggesting that we rewrite the history of human–animal relations, taking this condition of active engagement, of being-in-the-world, as our starting point. We might speak of it as a history of human concern with animals, insofar as this notion conveys a caring, attentive regard, a ‘being with’. And I am suggesting that those who are ‘with’ animals in their day-to-day lives, most notably hunters and herdsmen, can offer us some of the best possible indications of how we might proceed.