



Dual classification revisited: Rodney Needham and vertical asymmetry aboard Scottish trawlers

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Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic data collected while working as a deckhand on two Scottish trawlers, this article analyses the spatialisation of social, religious, and economic inequalities that marked relations between crew members while they hunted for prawns in the North Sea. Moreover, it explores these inequalities as a wider feature of life in Gamrie, Aberdeenshire, a Brethren and Presbyterian fishing village riven by disparities in wealth and religion. Inequalities identified by fishermen at sea mirrored those identified by residents onshore, resulting in fishing boats being experienced as small floating villages. Drawing on the work of Rodney Needham, this article suggests that these asymmetries can be traced along a vertical axis, with greater to lesser wealth and religiosity moving from top/above to bottom/below. The article seeks to understand the presence and persistence of these hierarchies at sea and on land, by revisiting dual classification within anthropological theory.

Keywords Anthropology · Fishing · Scotland · Religion · Hierarchy · Classification

Introduction

My time at sea while working as a deckhand on two Scottish trawlers left quite an impression upon me. I only had the opportunity to make two trips, both in 2009, during my last winter in the field. Fishing occurred around the clock—averaging a hundred hours over 6 days—and involved a regular rhythm of hauling the nets, dumping the catch in the hopper, shooting the gear, and then ‘tailing’ tens of thousands of prawns while standing along a waist-high steel tray. The crew passed these long and often very dull hours doing one of the few things the constraints of their labour would allow, that is, by talking. While much of the conversation reinforced various stereotypes of the bawdy hyper-masculine fisherman, because several of the crew were born-again Christians, some of it did not. Stories of sexual conquest, drunkenness, and brawling were interspersed with time spent discussing salvation, debating creationism, and singing hymns. Sleeping and eating were not a priority and occurred only in brief snatches in between hauls. Even during this

‘down time’, the religious talk continued, merely relocating itself to the mess or crew quarters.

As well as these oral and aural experiences, life on board the trawlers was also marked out by its own kinetic peculiarities. If one’s speech designated one as ‘saved’ or ‘unsaved’, what most visibly marked one out as a capable fisherman was not the tongue but the state of one’s ‘sea legs’ (cf. Pálsson 1994). It was astonishing to witness the ease with which seasoned crew traversed the heaving and lurching of the decks and passageways, which felt to me more like a steel obstacle course than it did a boat. By (sometimes dramatically) altering the angle of their upper bodies, the crew were able to lean against whatever direction the boat ‘cowped’, and, in so doing, could continue walking almost as if the gratings beneath their feet were motionless. While it was rare to see a fisherman put his hand out to steady himself, for my part, before I was able to make much progress relearning how to walk, I first needed to relearn how to lie down by wedging my body in between my bag and the wall of the bunk so as not to crash from side to side with the unpredictable list of the boat. This was necessary even though the weather was not awful, but merely tolerably bad—nowhere near as bad as an earlier trip that winter, where one of the boats had had its wheelhouse windows washed in by a huge wave which shorted the electrics and left the vessel adrift and without proper means of navigation.

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These experiences—the social-spiritual verbal jousting and the embodied practice of stumbling around the boat—remain my clearest memories of my time at sea and gave me my earliest indications of the kinds of symbolic and material inequalities that frame so much of the lives of seafarers (cf. Sampson 2013). Working on the trawlers constituted a small but significant part of my wider ethnographic investigation into religion and fishing in Northeast Scotland (Webster 2013). Thus, before attempting more specifically to describe the vertical asymmetries I mention in the title, it seems important to briefly mention some of the wider context of my ethnographic research in order to better situate the analysis that follows.

The trips described above were undertaken while living in Gardenstown (locally and hereafter referred to as Gamrie), a small Aberdeenshire fishing village of 700 people and six churches, where I lived for 15 months, from 2008 to 2010. Life in Gamrie was dominated by two interrelated social phenomena—a fundamentalist, millenarian, and schismatic brand of Protestantism, collectively known as Brethrenism, and an industrial-scale, capital-intensive fishing industry which focused on trawling for prawns and herring for export to the continent. While it is true that Brethren theology and social life are framed by various interrelated dual oppositions between, for example, God and the Devil (Webster 2012), the saved and unsaved (Webster 2017), and the here and the hereafter (Webster 2021a), as will be demonstrated below, it is also true that oppositions within Gamrie's fishing industry—safety and danger, onboard and overboard, and alive and dead—closely resembled these religious dualisms.

Importantly, however, such (inter and intra) resemblances were not totalising. Indeed, both of these institutions—Gamrie's religion and its fishing—were also marked by important differences. Most obviously, while trawling for prawns was certainly not experienced as a straightforwardly profane or secular enterprise (Webster 2021b), Brethren Sabbatarianism ensured that time spent fishing at sea was primarily experienced as 'work' while time spent on land in church was experienced as 'worship'. In addition, while boats were almost always places of moral heterogeneity where saved and unsaved persons experienced close interaction, Brethren places of worship were almost entirely morally homogenous, as dictated by the doctrine of separation (Webster 2018). Importantly, Brethrenism, while dominant, existed alongside Presbyterianism, with the local Church of Scotland having split to form a Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster in 1998, with those remaining in the Kirk themselves leaving the national denomination to become an independent evangelical church in January 2015 before joining the Free Church of Scotland in October 2016. Fishing, too, was internally differentiated, with huge pelagic boats, mid-size prawn trawlers, and small inshore creel boats all owned by Gamrie

skippers. Furthermore, local experiences of religion and fishing could not easily be separated. While some skippers and crew described themselves as born-again Christians and others emphatically did not, both boats I worked on were owned and run by Christian skippers who organised their working week around the Sabbatarian imperative of being onshore for worship on Sunday—the 'Lord's Day'. Perhaps most strikingly, many local Christian fishermen regarded the European Union as the anti-Christ and the Common Fisheries Policy as part of a demonic plot to enslave humanity though the imposition of world-ending global famine (Webster 2013)—a view confirmed locally by the sense of betrayal felt by many Scottish fishermen as a result of a post-Brexit trade which has led to significant increases in bureaucracy and a concomitant decrease in sales (Webster 2021a, b: 17). It is this confluence of religion and fishing, then, which forms the contextual background of this article, and my research more generally.

By drawing on ethnographic data collected while working as a deckhand on two Scottish trawlers, I analyse the spatialisation of social, religious, and economic inequalities that marked relations between crew members while they hunted for prawns in the North Sea. I will argue that inequalities identified by fishermen at sea mirrored those identified by residents onshore, with boats coming to be experienced as small 'floating villages' in the process. I argue, furthermore, that these asymmetries can be traced along a vertical axis, with greater to lesser wealth and religiosity moving from top/above to bottom/below (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1963: 133, 142, 159–160). As I describe in what follows, the skipper's cabin and cliff-top 'fisher mansion' were (literally) places of lofty prestige, standing in stark contrast to the lower echelons of the crew bunkhouse and 'prefab' council house. Morality too, flowed from heights to depths, with Gamrie referring to the top of the village as 'heaven' and the lower Seatown as 'hell'—a view again echoed on and offshore by the strategically elevated placement of churches and wheelhouses, creating, in effect, a pair of downward looking all-seeing eyes. Thus, this article seeks an analytical conflation (as opposed to a polarisation) of humanity-at-sea and on land.

Needham and Hertz on dual symbolic classification

It needs to be noted at the outset that the 'hard graft' described above was only really engaged in by the crew, and contrasted strongly with the comparative ease and luxury of the skipper ensconced in his wheelhouse. Indeed, while recognised as carrying a greater burden of responsibility, the skipper was thought to be detached from both crew and catch, being taken up instead with piloting the

boat, giving orders, maintaining log books, and communicating with other skippers in the fleet. Beyond the extraordinary feats of manual dexterity and physical stamina displayed by the crew as they traversed the boat and processed the catch, it was this strong sense of hierarchy—especially visible between skipper and crew, but also between individual crewmembers—that gave life on board the trawlers its distinctive ‘feel’. These hierarchies, openly recognised as such by all the fishermen I worked with, were not just narrowly occupational, but also social, economic, religious, and spatial in nature. More than this, these hierarchies followed the fishermen home, shaping village and family life in the process. This article seeks to understand the presence and persistence of these hierarchies, at sea and on land.

I seek this understanding via what some in anthropology likely deem to be a rather old fashioned theory (more on this in the conclusion)—that of dual symbolic classification, as expounded by Rodney Needham. More specifically, I take as my theoretical point of departure Needham’s edited volume *Right and Left* (1973), which was itself inspired by Robert Hertz’s 1909 essay ‘The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand: A Study in Religious Polarity’. I do so however, by shifting the analytical emphasis from the horizontal relationship of right and left to the vertical relationship of high and low. Before explaining this further, it seems helpful to start with a brief survey of what Hertz and Needham have to say about right-handedness. I want to start with Hertz.

‘The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand’ opens on a strikingly poetic note:

What resemblance more perfect than that between our two hands! And yet what a striking inequality there is! To the right hand go honours, flattering designations, prerogatives: it acts, orders and *takes*. The left hand, on the contrary, is despised and reduced to the role of a humble auxiliary: by itself it can do nothing; it helps, it supports, it *holds*. The right hand is the symbol and model of all aristocracies, the left hand of all plebeians. What are the titles of nobility of the right hand? And whence comes the servitude of the left? (Hertz 1973 [1909]: 3)

After examining the late nineteenth century neuroscientific explanations for this ‘striking inequality’, and finding them lacking, Hertz turns to sociology and anthropology for answers. His summary is characteristically bold:

The whole universe is divided into two spheres: things, beings, and powers attract or repel each other, implicate or exclude each other, according to whether they gravitate towards the one or the other of the two poles... On the one side there is the pole of strength,

good, and life; while on the other there is the pole of weakness, evil and death (ibid.: 8–9)

Crucially to my argument here, Hertz extends these observations to the realm of the vertical:

There is the same contrast between high and low, sky and earth: on high, the sacred residence of the gods and the stars which know no death; here below, the profane region of mortals whom the earth engulfs; and, lower still, the dark places where lurk serpents and the host of demons (ibid.)

It is these most general themes—of dualism, polarity, and opposition ‘as manifested in symbolic classification’ (Needham 1973: xviii)—which Needham takes up in his edited volume *Right and Left*. Throughout his own detailed discussion of Meru symbolism, as well as by reflecting on papers by other contributors on topics ranging from Nuer spear symbolism (Evans-Pritchard 1973: 92–108) to Greek philosophy (Lloyd 1973: 167–186) to Bantu languages (Werner 1973: 427–430), Needham’s key anthropological claim is simply ‘that oppositions can be validly established, and that these can be systematically interrelated’ (1973: xviii). Yet Needham remains cautious when advancing this point, stating that ‘a method is not justified merely by the fact that it can frame a consistent account of otherwise disorderly particulars’ (ibid.). This is the case for Needham, because:

The essential fact is that it is not the function of analogy to establish a kind or degree of direct resemblance. The similarity between any two homologous terms does not depend on the common possession of any distinctive property: it is relational. Kant wrote long ago, after all, that analogy does not mean an imperfect similarity between two things, but a perfect similarity of relations between quite dissimilar things (ibid.: xxix).

Needham’s aim in *Right and Left*—and throughout his theory of dual symbolic classification more generally—is thus not to frame ‘disorderly particulars’ (ibid.) in an orderly manner, but to trace the connections and relationships that exist between those things that at first may not appear to be related at all. This focus on excavating unexpected forms of relatedness, which is strongly present across many of Needham’s essays (see, for example, ‘Reversals’ (1983) or ‘Psalmanaazaar, Confidence-man’ (1985)), is what makes his theory so thoroughly social in its approach, and thus so applicable, for those who wish to apply it, to comparative ethnographic analysis. In this sense, suggesting analogy, understood in terms of ‘a perfect similarity of relations’ (ibid.), is actually making a more modest claim than might initially be thought. For

example, by claiming, as Needham (1973: 116) does, that Meru symbolic classification can (in part) be visualised thus:

right	left
north	south
day	night
sun	moon
man	woman

is *not* to claim that day = man or that night = woman. Rather, it is to say that the connection between day and night is imagined in comparable terms to the connection between man and woman. The claim is thus not about *common attributes* (for example, by positing that men are somehow hot and light like the daytime, or that women are somehow cold and dark like the night-time) but about *common connections*. For Hertz and for Needham, this connection—this relational link—concerns assessments of status and prestige. Crucially, then, this relationship, like that between right and left, is said to be fundamentally unequal (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1963: 139 on the ‘necessarily unequal’ dualism of concentric opposition). Thus, right is to man is to day as left is to woman is to night insofar as the former series has a more dominant status and higher prestige than the latter. It is this symbolic inequality that constitutes their relatedness in analogic terms. The connection is said to exist, but exists on an asymmetrical basis, not because of shared substance, but because of differential placement within a shared value-hierarchy.

Needham’s theory, of course, still attracted critique, the lengthiest of which was offered by Serge Tcherkézoff (1983) in his monograph *Dual Classification Reconsidered*. Tcherkézoff’s central claim is that Needham offers an overly simple and decontextualized theory of the symbolic that excludes the possibility of classificatory contradiction (ibid.: 5) because of its ‘blatant refusal to relinquish Western European categories of equality and symmetry’ (ibid.: 8). The result, according to Tcherkézoff, is that ‘those analysing dualist classifications have sought to discover, behind empirical variety, a coherence based upon unity and upon the non-contradiction of the signifier-signified relation’ (ibid.: 6). Yet, this seems unfair, for it ignores Needham’s own careful delimiting of the scope of his theory (Needham 1973: xviii–xxx). As I have tried to show above, Needham’s project is not directed toward the discovery of a coherent symbolic system between a signifier and its signified (such as night-time and femaleness), but attempts to trace the links between series of signifiers *in relation to* their corresponding series of signified entities, that relation being differential assessments of value.

Oddly, one aspect that Tcherkézoff finds most lacking in Needham’s theory is its attentiveness to hierarchy, stating that ‘if one refrains from imposing a binary choice

upon the symbols (to the left *or* to the right), one becomes aware of *hierarchical* constructions [whereby] the poles of each opposition are not in the same relation to the whole to which they refer’ (Tcherkézoff 1983: 6). Thus, ‘a hierarchical analysis allows one to consider values’ (ibid.: 7). The reason this is odd is because Needham is in broad agreement with Tcherkézoff’s emphasis on hierarchy, as seen in his use of Hertz, whose central interest in the right hand concerns its ‘pre-eminence’ and thus the ‘striking inequality’ (Hertz 1973: 3) that exists between it and the left hand. Taking his cue from Hertz, Needham’s classificatory scheme, then, is principally concerned with hierarchical (that is, inequitable) attributions of value. Moreover, Needham makes this case through repeated recourse to ethnographic particulars (ibid.: 109–115), an almost obsessive tendency which—similarly found in one of Needham’s key influences, A. M. Hocart—can at times feel overwhelming and even wearisome. It is also worth noting, lastly, that Tcherkézoff launches this critique of Needham’s ‘binary method’ (Tcherkézoff 1983: 5) in a decidedly oxymoronic fashion, by avowing allegiance to Dumont’s dual classification of non-modern ‘holism’ and modern ‘individualism’ (ibid.: 9–12)—a theory that has itself been robustly critiqued for containing precisely those errors of Western-centric thinking (see for example Appadurai 1986 and 1988) that Tcherkézoff finds in Needham.

None of this is to say that Needham’s theory of dual classification provides an unimpeachable model for the anthropological analysis of symbols. As Tcherkézoff rightly points out, and as will become clear from my own data below, the scheme leaves less room for symbolic contradiction than the messy ethnographic realities of the field seem to require. Other theorists, too, provide ample opportunity for critique of Needham. In Lévi-Strauss (whose work had an immense—if turbulent—influence on Needham), we find the suggestion that within ‘dual organizations’ (1963: *passim*), we may observe how ‘all these binary forms are combined with ternary forms’ (ibid.: 149) which stand ‘for a reconciliation of the antithetical divisions’ (ibid.: 147) documented across the ethnographic record. According to Lévi-Strauss, such intervening third categories—such as ‘water’ in the earth/sky dualism (ibid.: 153)—force the realisation that dual organisations are ‘never found empirically other than in the form of an imperfect rationalization’ (ibid.: 151). If accepted in its entirety, Lévi-Strauss’ conclusion—that ‘apparent manifestations of dualism’ are merely ‘superficial distortions of structures whose real nature is quite different and vastly more complex’ (ibid.: 161)—appears to leave little room for agreement with Needham.

Yet, just as Needham’s already discussed claim that ‘the similarity between any two homologous terms does not depend on the common possession of any distinctive property [since] it is relational’ (1973: xxix), so too might the earth/water/sky triad be shown, in a different context,

to simultaneously form two distinct relational dualisms, namely earth/sky and earth/water. Indeed, as the ethnography will demonstrate in the pages which follow, for Gamrie's Christian fisher-families, it is precisely these dualisms which come to theologically frame much of everyday life, whereby, in soteriological terms *earth: sky:: human: God*, while in ecclesiological terms *earth: water:: place of worship: place of labour*. As such, while Needham would seem to broadly agree with Lévi-Strauss that dual symbolic classification was, by necessity, something of an imperfect model of resemblance (see also Prewitt 1986: 50), as I will argue below, this need not require that we conclude that such analysis is lacking a real empirical basis (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 151), or that it produces only 'superficial distortions' (ibid.: 161).

Alternatively, we might turn to Strathern's (1980) famous essay 'No Nature, no culture: the Hagen case' for a different critique of dualism—one that helped shape an entire generation of post-structuralist feminist anthropology after it. For Strathern, dual symbolic classification is built upon seemingly self-evident yet deeply misplaced cross-cultural comparisons 'between... 'our' (empiricist) notions' and those of 'other cultures' (ibid.: 216). By imposing the nature-culture distinction of 'the industrial west' (1980: 180) onto 'totemic societies' (ibid.: 182), for example, Strathern contends that dualist anthropology ignores 'the possibility of transformation from one column into another' (ibid.: 216). As a result of this error, we fail to notice how, for the Hagen, while 'women may be compared both to domestic pigs (biddable) and to wild ones (not), men [may] be regarded both as travellers... and as planted agents of society' (ibid.: 218). Importantly, while Strathern's objection to uncritically imposing a dualism from the industrial west onto Melanesian totemism cannot be made to apply to Scotland, we still cannot ignore 'the possibility of transformation' (ibid.: 216) within the classificatory dualisms of Gamrie's ultra-Protestant and hyper-industrial trawling society. As discussed below regarding the over-verticality of houses and hats, for example, while Gamrie's skippers and their wives often inhabit a heightened social position due to their wealth and religiosity, these same persons may find themselves 'brought low' by the sins of avarice and immodesty, for God—as well as many Gamrics—'resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble' and lowly (James 4.6).

To be clear, then, while it is my argument 'that oppositions can be validly established and... systematically inter-related' (Needham 1973: xviii), it is not my argument that, as a result, such oppositions are entirely static, impervious to reversal, or devoid of intersectionality. Yet, in contrast to Tcherkézoff's apparent aim—which seems to be less of a reconsideration and more of a rejection of dual classification—my own aim is thus more similar to that of Peter

Abell's, when, in a related critique of 'structural balance', he writes:

The theory of structural balance is relatively unique amongst theories in sociology in that it rests upon a set of clearly stated propositions from which flow some interesting theorems. The universal truth of these propositions may, of course, be brought into question... yet, nevertheless, the theory warrants our close attention... [in part] because of its formal elegance. It is, of course, all too easy to find counter-instances to the general theory and as a consequence reject it as a gross oversimplification. But such a course of action would seem to me to be unfortunate; the proper response to over-simply formulated models in sociology is elaboration by the introduction of additional complexity (Abell 1970: 389)

Thus, what Abell sought to do for the sociology of structural balance, I seek to do for the anthropology of dual symbolic classification, that is, to introduce additional theoretical complexity where required. I seek to do this initially by presenting new data drawn from a very different ethnographic context to the one which Needham and Tcherkézoff discuss. Importantly, by shifting the focus from the Meru of Kenya to Brethren fishermen in Scotland, not only am I relocating the classificatory scheme from East Africa to Northern Europe, but, as a result, am also attempting to show its applicability beyond an (ostensibly) 'holistic' and 'non-modern' society (Tcherkézoff 1983: 6) to one which is (again, not unproblematically) considered, in relation to its emic Protestant commitments at least, to be individualistic and modern. Before proceeding any further, some ethnographic data seems needful.

Humanity and hierarchy at sea

Cross-cultural comparison of symbolic dualism—and its patterning into hierarchically organised inequalities—appears particularly compelling within the field of nautical anthropology. Humanity at sea, it seems, is riven by polarity and opposition. The ethnographic examples of this are numerous (Ben-Yehoyada 2016; Cohen 1987; Johnson 1979; Markkula 2011; Marovelli 2014; Prattis 1973; Stiles 1972; for a historical perspective see Steinberg 2001). I only want to mention two examples here—one 'non-modern' and the other 'modern'. First, then, consider Howes' description of 'the seagoing inhabitants of the island world of the Massim Region... of Papua New Guinea... [where] men's bodies are conceived of as buoyant and mobile, like boats on the sea, whereas women... are identified with the heaviness and immobility of the land' (2003: 35–36). Here, not only do we

see male and female placed in a relationship of polarity, but also sea and land, boats and houses, buoyance and heaviness, and mobility and immobility. Similarly, the sea is conceptualised positively as ‘alluring’, ‘bountiful’, ‘expansive’, ‘smooth’, and ‘bright’, whereas the land is conceptualised negatively, being associated with ‘heaviness’, ‘lethargy’, and a ‘loss of vitality’ (ibid.). Bearing in mind the context, where livelihoods depend on boating and the sea, the (strongly gendered) attribution of differential value seems clear.

A second example, from Helen Sampson’s ethnography of international seafarers working on container ships, is also helpful—in this case due to her analysis of vertical symbolism:

The established hierarchy... generally plays a great role in the assignation of on-board physical space. Somewhat symbolically, it is commonplace for the most senior officers to occupy the highest altitude decks on board and as you descend to the lower levels of the vessel so does the status of the occupants of the cabins around you. Congruently the most spacious and comfortable accommodation is to be found on the highest decks (2013: 105)

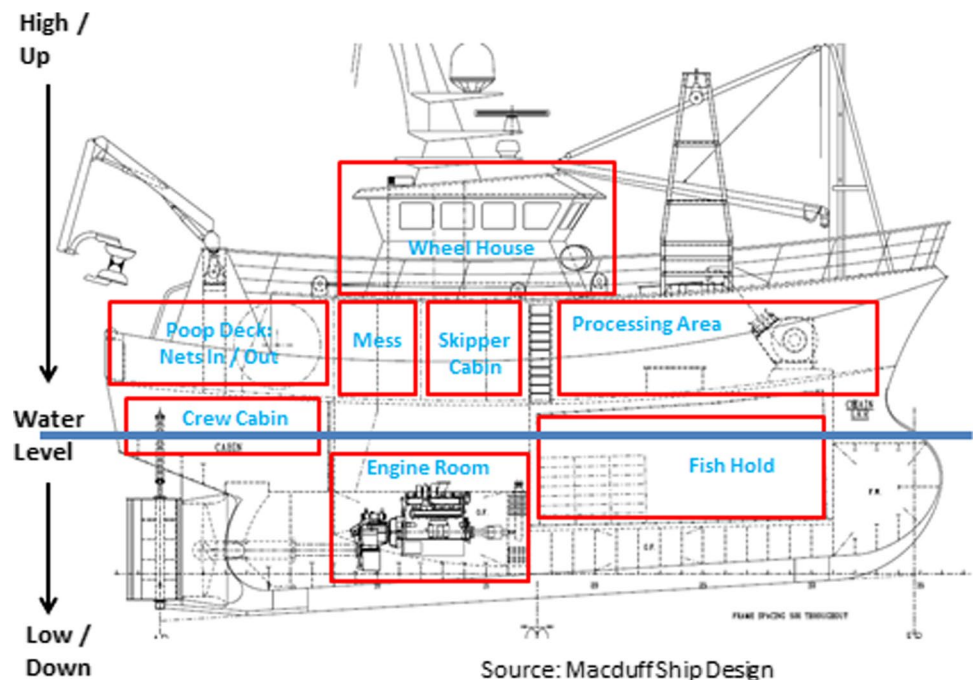
Here, the differential attribution of value is not so strongly gendered (in terms of any male/female binary), for container ships are largely male spaces. Instead, hierarchical inequality was primarily occupational, with senior officers occupying the highest levels of the hierarchy, followed by junior officers, petty officers, and ending with ratings (ibid.: 71). In this globalised capitalist industry—dependent upon migrant

labour and the use of ‘flags of convenience’—these occupational inequalities also mapped onto existing linguistic and national status differences, which typically placed Northern Europeans at the top of the symbolic hierarchy, and those from Africa and Southeast Asia at the bottom (ibid.: 55).

But what kinds of hierarchies existed on board Gamrie’s trawlers? In terms of physical space, the two trawlers I worked on had, roughly speaking, six distinct levels: (i) the wheel house; (ii) the open deck; (iii) the main level below deck, containing the skippers cabin, the mess, and the processing area; (iv) the crew cabin; (v) the fish hold; and (vi) the engine room. The strongest contrast was between the spacious, comfortable, quiet, and clean wheelhouse and the cramped, deafening, black grease covered engine room. Smell was also a factor, with the wheelhouse smelling more like home than anywhere else on the boat, and the engine room stinking of nauseating diesel. In between these two extremes, vertical asymmetry was still marked. The skipper’s cabin, as well as being private, was far more spacious than the bunks packed into the crew cabin, which also vibrated audibly with the roar of the engine. The processing area around the tray was clammy, dirty, and cramped, and unsurprisingly smelt strongly of fish. The mess, where meals were eaten, had seating and a television, but doubled as a kitchen, and was tight for space. The fish hold was (literally) freezing cold and was progressively swallowed up by mounting boxes of iced sea creatures.

The diagram below (Fig. 1) was given to me by local naval architect firm Macduff Ship Design and shows a standard blueprint of the type of mid-size trawler I worked on. I have overlaid the schematic with several boxes which show

Fig. 1 Standard blueprint of mid-size fishing trawler (key areas highlighted)



the location and use of each area. (NB: The open deck is not placed within such a box; its location can clearly be seen by the railings which extend either side of the wheelhouse.) I have also indicated where the boat would sit in relation to the waterline—if immobile, and in calm conditions. Lastly, along the left-hand side of the diagram, I have visually represented the direction of movement of the symbolic vertical asymmetry (from high/up to low/down) that I use to frame my analysis.

It may immediately be objected that there is actually considerable physical overlap between these levels, most particularly between levels four, five, and six—the crew cabin, the fish hold, and the engine room. While this is true, the overlap is only partial. Indeed, the crew cabin is almost entirely separate from the other two, and the overlap between the fish hold and engine room, while marked, needs also to be viewed alongside the fact that the engine room sits at the lowest possible point in the boat, while the lower parts of the fish hold are quickly filled in (and the floor-level physically ‘raised’) by the mounting boxes of fish they store. It may also be objected that what I have designated as level three contains two very different types of space, namely work space (the poop deck and processing area) and rest space (the mess and skipper’s cabin). How does this relate to the vertical asymmetries I have been discussing? The response to this is important, not only because it applies to all the levels I have identified, but also because it brings a material analysis of physical space into conversation with a symbolic analysis of social space. I have actually given part of the answer already, through my defence of Needham against Tcherkézoff’s critique, which has to do with the relationality of symbols.

Why, then, do I argue for an analysis of vertical symbolic asymmetry when so much activity on the boat occurs on level three, where the poop deck, mess, skipper’s cabin, and processing area are all found? Does this not suggest that an analysis of the horizontal plane might be more appropriate? I want to argue that it does not, since pursuing a horizontal analysis would eschew a properly analogical (that is, relational) approach to studying the social-symbolic dynamics of life and work on the trawlers. In essence, my point here is a simple one: in desiring to understand not the *common attributes of a single binary opposition*, but rather the *common connections between a whole series of oppositions*, we must begin by comparing like with like. This means beginning by comparing the skipper’s workspace with the crew’s workspace, and the skipper’s rest space with the crew’s rest space. Some more ethnography seems needful.

As already described, the skipper spends almost all of his work-time above deck, in the wheelhouse, that is, within the very highest (and cleanest and most

comfortable) space on the boat. In contrast, the crew spend the vast majority of their work-time below deck, in the (grimy and metal clad) processing area. Importantly, these spaces are inhabited at the same times, meaning that the skipper is constantly physically above the crew, the only exception being during brief periods for sleep, where, when it is their turn, a crewmember will take watch in their wheelhouse as the skipper sleeps below them. Far more frequent is the opposite situation, where crew will have to work further still down the boat, as they pack fish into the hold or monitor and maintain the engine. The residing of the skipper physically above the crew also continues during the majority of the (albeit limited) time spent at rest, as the skipper’s cabin is located above the crew’s cabin. The exception here is during meal times, when the skipper and crew sit together to eat. Yet, regardless of possible delays, the crew could only begin to eat once the skipper had climbed down from the wheelhouse and prayed a grace to give thanks for the food.

Comparable symbolic distinctions existed aboard the container ships Sampson worked aboard, where officers and ratings ate different foods at separate tables—and sometimes in separate mess rooms. Another example, this time found outside nautical anthropology, is that of formal dining in Oxford and Cambridge colleges, being notable for their physical and symbolic demarcation of space into ‘High’ and ‘Low’ Tables (cf. Dacin et al. 2010). Ho also notes this vertical asymmetry in her analysis of the physical space of investment bank buildings on Wall Street, as divided between the bank’s ‘back office’, ‘middle office’, and ‘front office’ staff, achieved via the configuration of separate ‘tiered elevators’ (Ho 2009: 77–79). Returning to Gamrie, and following Needham’s analysis, we might thus choose to visualise these binary pairs in this way:

High	Low
Wheelhouse	Processing Area
Skipper Cabin	Crew Cabin

Yet, to my mind, this still remains an insufficiently relational analysis. In order to more fully appreciate the emergence of the common connections *between* theses binaries, we need to organise them relationally, and in such a way so as to reveal their vertically asymmetrical inequalities, both material and symbolic. This approach is not new to anthropology. Sherry Ortner (1972) is well known for having adopted such an approach in her classic feminist analysis of the nature/culture binary (published one year before Needham’s *Right and Left*), when she asked ‘Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?’ Where Ortner’s question can be visualised thus:

Female: Male:: Nature: Culture

I find myself asking a similar question ('is crew to skipper as low is to high?'), but, unlike Ortner, seek to investigate this not through a *double* binary, but rather through the *multiple* material, social, and symbolic dualisms that I found to be present aboard the trawlers, three of which might be visualised as follows:

Low: High:: Processing Area: Wheelhouse:: Crew Cabin: Skipper's Cabin

As such, what we begin to see here is how a series of binaries may be placed in relation to each other, allowing a comparative analysis of that which conjoins them, namely complex assignations of status inequality. (We need not stop at three pairs; the above are merely illustrative). To be clear, it is this vertical expression of symbolic and material status inequality which I see as the common denominator here—as manifested in *relations between multiple binaries*, rather than through *substances within individual binary pairs*. To further evidence this, it is helpful to note how the vertical asymmetry described above also had strongly moral dimensions.

Indeed, aboard the trawlers I worked on, morality, like occupational status, went from heights to depths. The Fishermen's Mission Bible, for example, was kept in the wheelhouse, mounted alongside a day-by-day scriptural calendar. It was in the wheelhouse, furthermore—looking out to sea while alone on watch—where some of my informants had had powerful conversion experiences. One fisherman recounted to me how at the end of a long and unusually dark night-watch, he saw the sun rising over the calm waters of the sea. He recounted how, in that moment, the beauty of creation confronted him with both the reality of God and his need of redemption—a need which he resolved immediately by receiving 'born-again' salvation. In contrast to such experiences, passing time standing at the tray predominantly involved 'unsaved' crew swapping stories of drunken brawling or sexual exploits, told with great relish and much hilarity. During such retellings, swearing became a veritable art form, helping to index particularly acute moments of misogynistic pleasure or pugilistic pain, often in gruesome detail.

In such moments, 'saved' crew would respond with silence, by a simple shake of the head, or, most often, by venturing to offer a different set of words. This last option was achieved by 'speaking the gospel' to those seen as most in need of its 'saving power'. Thus, counter-stories of a previous 'life of sin' transformed by a present life of 'following Jesus' would be shared, often in an intensely personal manner. Not only did saved crew who 'gave testimony' in this way seek to 'raise' the tone of the conversation (cf. Fader

2009: 107; 114 on efforts to 'religiously uplift' English and Hasidic vernaculars in Brooklyn), they also sought—*literally*, in their own understanding—to elevate the final spiritual destination of their hearers from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven. Much to their frustration, however, such evangelistic efforts more typically provoked bitter arguments and renewed 'dirty talk' than any real 'soul searching'. Yet, in the midst of all the swearing and controversy, even 'unsaved' crew occasionally recognised the 'lowly' moral status of their discussions at the tray. One fisherman, for example, referred to his talk in terms that one might more typically use to describe a gutter—'we really are wading through a stream of shit, aren't we?', he said apologetically (Webster 2013: 133). Such was the moral vertical asymmetry of our discussion at the tray.

Vitality, too, seemed to ebb away the lower down the ship one went, as descending the decks took one further and further away from human action and life. When awake, the crew were almost always above the water line, only partially descending below it to sleep, to pack the hold, or, on rare occasions, to maintain the engine. Those things that permanently resided below the water line were either dead (the fish in the hold) or potentially deadly (the engine and its fumes). More than this, in moments of disaster, crew who found themselves overboard did so by falling down into the water. Descending into this cold, churning seascape, I was informed during my 'Sea Survival' training, would cause one to freeze to death in two to three hours during summer, or in two to three minutes during winter. In these circumstances, survival depended on several sources of (notably vertical) salvation, which included wearing a life jacket to keep one from sinking below the water; being spotted by the skipper or crew as they searched from the wheelhouse and top deck; being able to grab hold of a rope to be pulled back up to the deck; or, on rare occasions, being winched up from the water into a Coast Guard helicopter hovering above. Because of this, the poop deck, being closest to the open water, was the most dangerous place on the boat to work, and leaning too far down over the edge when shooting or hauling the gear attracted strong censure. Such warnings were often reinforced by cautionary tales of fishermen getting a hand or foot caught in moving nets which pulled them out to sea, and, fatally, down below the waves.

At the opposite end of the vertical spectrum, the wheelhouse and its associated gadgetry kept the crew physically safe, in part due to collision avoidance technologies, but also, crucially, because the wheelhouse was itself a place of lofty observation. Thus, while binoculars extended the horizontal gaze of the skipper many miles out to sea, CCTV cameras permitted that same gaze to be turned vertically downwards, into the poop deck and processing area, whereby the crew's safety—but also their work rate—could be effectively monitored. Additionally, these video cameras were used in

conjunction with a loud speaker system, allowing a similar downwards projection, in this instance of the skipper's voice. Such a state of affairs led some crewmembers to complain to each other with real frustration about the obvious power inequalities that existed between regular fishermen and skippers. Yet, such grumbling, when done publicly, was always couched in general terms, or with reference to previous skippers one had worked under. Thus, while criticism of one's current skipper was voiced, such comments were made indirectly, and thus remained deniable. Yet, the implied collective critique of 'all skippers'—even where one's present skipper was said to be 'not so bad'—was clear: they were people who sat (literally and metaphorically) above their crew as a figure of critical judgement, comfortable inactivity, and thus unjustified wealth. The occupational hierarchy, which was spoken of in these explicitly vertical terms, was thus understood as follows:

TOP	Skipper
	Skipper's Mate
	Engineer
	Cook
	Deckhand(s)
BOTTOM	Trainee Deckhand(s)

The skipper was located at the top of the hierarchy and was separated from the rest of the crew by an impermeable symbolic line of status differentiation—a line which was also made strikingly material, as discussed above, by the fact that he was the only person on board who did not work at the tray. Below the skipper came the skipper's mate, the second in command, who existed as the *de facto* head of the work crew, and thus the key mediator between the skipper and the rest of the crew (for a related analysis of the 'foreman' see Burawoy 1979; Thiel 2012). Below him were the engineer and then cook, placed in the hierarchy thus due to the extent and skill of these additional specialised roles, which took them beyond the communal tasks of shooting and hauling the gear, and processing the catch. Deckhands, having no such additional role, were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, and were differentiated only on the basis of their experience. Trainee deckhands thus occupied the lowest possible position, as indexed by the fact that they did not yet earn a 'full share' of the profits of the catch. Thus, while the crew did not exist as an undifferentiated mass, the key symbolic distinction was that between the skipper who managed and the crew who laboured.

Importantly, however, the social realities of the skipper/crew divide not only referred to a wide gulf in pay and conditions, but also to a more general sense of status inequality. This status inequality was most visible when specific decisions were being made by the skipper about where to fish, and for how long. Such decisions were frequently made

without any input from the crew, regardless of their level of experience. When advice was sought (or, more commonly, when it was offered *without* being sought), such counsel would be ignored more often than followed. Some fishermen commented to me that, in order to 'save face' by stubbornly asserting their status as prime decision maker, a skipper might disregard sound advice—for example to quit an area where no fish were being caught and trawl elsewhere—even where doing so would harm the economic interests of both skipper and crew. While such actions were deemed insecure, and often the product of youthful inexperience, all the fishermen I met still agreed on the general principle that the skipper was boss and that his word was law—and this, regardless of the wisdom of any particular decision he made.

Such deference also extended to the frequent but banal decisions the skipper made, which, when taken together, acted to set down shared patterns for meals, leisure time, conversation, and sleep. Meals were prepared according to the budget and preferences of the skipper, and only started once he had sat down, and it was generally he who directed conversation as the crew ate. It was he, further, who set the pace and duration of these and any other breaks, according to how much work remained. It was he who monitored the crew's progress as they processed the catch, and it was he who crew to speed up when he deemed necessary. And it was he, lastly, who advised the crew when they could sleep, and for how long, and it was his voice that called out over the loud speaker to rouse the crew when it was time to work again. Given this high level of control the skipper possessed, it seems important to note how such a state of affairs appeared to be both self-evident and uncontroversial from the crew's perspective. Indeed, while low-level grumbling about workload or working conditions were commonplace, I never once witnessed a crewmember 'getting above his station' by refusing to follow an instruction given to him by the skipper, for to do so would have directly contravened the established vertical status inequalities that framed relations on the trawler. Irritations were often taken out on fellow crew members—generally through bickering and name calling—but were also sometimes vented through rough handling of the catch. In this way, fish and fellow crew were fair game, but direct criticism of the skipper was not.

This is not to say, however, that the crew never resisted the power and legitimacy of their skipper in more subtle ways. Beyond constantly grumbling about their long hours of tiring labour, crewmembers also sought to gain a more direct form control over their work at the tray. One way this was achieved was by periodically pushing swathes of smaller (and thus more labour intensive) prawns down into the dump shoots, without bothering to tail them. This saved considerable time in processing the catch, but did not overly impact catch profits because smaller prawns attracted a lower price. To avoid the skipper's detection, this dumping was always

done as quickly as possible, and normally happened collectively, at the signal of a more experienced deckhand. Inexperienced crew caught dumping prawns were rebuked for wasting money, but their real offence was to ‘get above their station’ by acting out of turn. The effect of this was that all crew (and especially those who gave the signal) were able to raise their own status by exerting some (albeit limited) control over their work.

As well as this raising of the crews’ status, efforts were also made to lower the symbolic status of the skipper. Skippers were denigrated, for example, for being ‘out of touch’ with the ‘real work’ of fishing, that is, the ‘hard graft’ of hauling the gear and processing the catch. Jokes were often made (in his absence) that the skipper would ‘never cope’ with the work the crew had to do. In the hyper-masculine world of trawlermen, the skipper was emasculated through such humour, as one who was able to do little but sit in the comfort of his wheelhouse. Beyond the verbal play of joke telling, there were also common accusations made against skippers’ management and distribution of boat profits, the effect of which was to lower his moral standing in the eyes of the crew. When calculating crew pay after each trip, for example, a boat’s expenses were subtracted from gross profits to produce a net profit figure, half of which would go to ‘the boat’ (that is, the boat *owner*, who is usually the skipper) and half of which would be distributed among the crew on a ‘share’ basis. Normal expenses—paid for before profits were calculated—included diesel, rental fees for fish boxes, boat and gear maintenance, food, and insurance. However, a skipper could (and frequently did) include other ‘expenses’. These could include the purchase of a vehicle which was assigned to the boat to assist in its business—collecting supplies, holding tools for maintenance work on the pier, and taking crew home at the end of a trip. While, in theory, this was deemed to be a legitimate expense, skippers were frequently accused of taking advantage by purchasing top-of-the-range pickup trucks that they (and their family) used for leisure just as much as for work. The reality of this notably incomplete hierarchical ‘encompassment’ (Dumont 1978: 101)—whereby the skipper encompasses the boat but *not* the crew—was that crewmembers, who were already paid a fraction of the earnings which went to ‘the boat’ (i.e. the skipper), subsidised the luxurious lifestyle of the skipper and his kin through a further reduction in their own share. Thus, while some version of encompassment does seem to be occurring, Needham is also right that this need ‘not [be]... defined only in relation to something that constitutes a whole’ (1987: 125). Indeed, in the context of Gamrie’s profit share system, it *cannot* be taken as a whole, since the crew are—much to their annoyance—pointedly excluded from this fallacy of composition, and from the revenue stream it affords.

Yet, despite these occasional expressions of resistance, vertical asymmetry persisted, with skippers remaining at the top of the hierarchy largely by virtue of their possessing abundant economic and symbolic capital. This was all the more the case for skippers who were also boat owners (as was the case for both of the skippers I went to sea with), for such men managed not only the crew, but also the entire business of the fishing company for whom the crew worked. Where long-standing intractable disagreements arose between a skipper and a particular crew member, both sides agreed that the proper solution would not involve finding an equitable compromise—for their relations were not equitable but defined by vertical asymmetry—but would instead simply involve the crew member either quitting or being sacked. In this way, a stable crew roster generally indicated the boat in question had a skipper who was both economically and relationally successful, whereas a boat that had a high crew turnover, I was told, suggested the skipper was weak in one or both of these areas. Thus, while skippers received credit when the business ran profitably and harmoniously—and were also held responsible if longer term problems arose—it was the crew, in the short term, who were blamed for the boat’s problems. This vertical asymmetry left crew with two options; they could either ‘weesht’ or ‘win awa’, that is, hush up or go away.

Hierarchy on land

Importantly, wealth inequality on board the boats was mirrored by hierarchical asymmetry on land (Fig. 2). The Seatown dwellings—originally used to house poor fisher families—were storm battered, damp, hard to heat, overcrowded, and offered little privacy. Space was so limited that fishing related tasks like net mending (with all its associated grime and stink) constantly invaded the home. The Seatown itself also smelt strongly—not of fish but of kelp—a problem made worse by storms depositing large quantities of this heavy seaweed along the beach, which, when left to rot, attracted clouds of flies. It is for these reasons that the Seatown came to be associated with economic hardship and social backwardness. In the early 1900s, with the advent of steam powered boats, fishing became more intensive and profitable—but only for those who could afford the capital investment (see Knipe 1984: 62–63). Successful skippers built bigger houses further up the brae, thus becoming once-removed from some of the Seatown’s more unpleasant realities. After the Second World War, diesel powered steel hulled trawlers became the norm, and economic inequalities grew further. During the 1960s, to those who had, more was given, with newly wealthy fishermen making a second move, this time from the old village, further up the brae, into modern spacious ‘prefabs’.

Fig. 2 Photo of Gamrie showing key housing areas, with dates. © Lyn MacDonald 2009

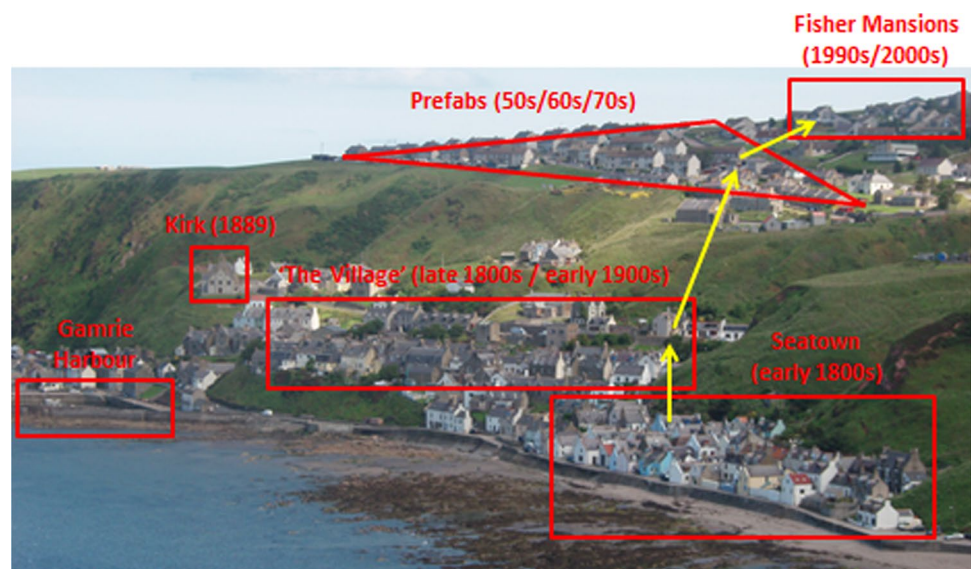


This process of (literal) ‘upward mobility’ began to reach its zenith a few years before I commenced my fieldwork, with the construction of enormous ‘fisher mansions’ built right at the top of the brae. These very large houses were set well back on spacious plots of land that were accessed by rising driveways. Such dwellings were particularly prized among the Brethren, who explained that such space was frequently needed to host sizable gatherings of believers after religious meetings, where fellowship and lavish spreads of food would be enjoyed. Thus, with each consecutive move up the brae came more space, greater luxury, and further distance from the Seatown (Fig. 3). A higher social status duly followed this move above sea-level. As in the wheelhouse, a greater altitude also afforded more opportunities for surveillance of those below. The site of the Gamrie Kirk

was chosen for this reason, watching over the entirety of the village with an all seeing eye until the arrival of the 1960’s prefabs. Similarly, in both the ‘prefabs’ and ‘fisher mansions’, binoculars typically rested on living room windowsills, ostensibly to watch boats out in the bay, but were also frequently used (in my presence) to monitor the comings and goings of villagers down the brae.

As on the trawlers, these inequalities were keenly felt by those of a more lowly position, who criticised the conspicuous consumption of Gamrie’s wealthiest skippers. Flashy cars driven down into the village for the briefest of errands, only to ascend up the brae again minutes later reinforced this stereotype. Holidays, too, were taken as such evidence, with certain fisher families said to be ‘always jetting off’ on luxury skiing holidays high up in the Alps. Even certain

Fig. 3 Photo of Gamrie showing key housing areas, with dates, showing upwards vertical movement. © Lyn MacDonald 2009



items of clothing were deemed to display an overly showy verticality. Women were generally required to wear head coverings in Gamrie's churches, and some were said to use this as an opportunity to display their wealth by dispensing with traditional and decidedly flat berets in favour of towering hats of the kind one might more typically see at 'Ladies Day' at Royal Ascot. 'It's aa a competition, ken' said one man of church goers; 'its aa aboot whase gwot the flashiest car an the bonniest hat!'

Even the notable exception to this vertical rule—the arrival of affluent 'English incomers' and holiday makers buying and renovating traditional fisher cottages in the depths of the Seatown—seemed to confirm rather than deny the classification system I have described. These incomers, while financially comfortable did not have anything like the wealth of Gamrie's successful skippers, nor did they generally enjoy a high social status in the village, largely due to their failure to observe local taboos on public drinking and Sunday work. Thus, over time, the Seatown had gained a reputation among locals for being full of unfriendly, godless strangers who did not bother to attend church, tidy their paths, or say hello to passers-by. So polarised was this vertical morality that both locals and incomers came to refer to the top of the village as 'heaven' and the Seatown as 'hell'—although both groups suspected the other of inventing this rhetoric, and taking it more seriously than themselves. 'We're quite happy down here in hell – we have a lot more fun than them up there in heaven!' scoffed one English incomer.

Conclusions

What of my opening suggestion that Needham's theory of dual symbolic classification is understood within contemporary anthropology as old fashioned? If I am right in saying so, then is what I have been arguing so far rather drab, perhaps even nostalgic? Clearly, my point in asking these questions is not to attempt a quick demolition-job of my own argument. Rather, my point is to indicate how asking such questions—about the 'old fashioned' or the 'drab'—helps us to confront the restrictions *contemporary* anthropological theory places upon the use of *less* contemporary theory by first confronting their contrasting theoretical-aesthetics, that is, their overall theoretical appearance. The difference I have in mind here concerns the currently unfashionable aesthetic-formalism of dualist structuralism, and the currently fashionable aesthetic-experimentalism (for want of a better term) of ostensibly non-dualist theories such as perspectivalism, posthumanism, and postpluralism. A case in point, I suggest, may be found in 'The Group for Debates in Anthropological

Theory', which in 2011 proposed the magnificently provocative (and inescapably dualist) motion 'Non-dualism is philosophy not ethnography' (Venkatesan et al. 2013). Michael Scott, in proposing the motion—and in repeatedly advocating for what he called 'methodological non-dualism' (Scott quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 303, 308, 340–342, 346–347, 353)—highlighted a key point of consensus among anthropological theorisations of non-dualism, namely that:

Non-dualism is the inverse of a modern Euro-American ontology often labelled Cartesian or Kantian dualism. Within this modern mode of being, people inhabit a world made up of two radically distinct categories: the immaterial and the material. Hence the familiar set of oppositions – subject/object, mind/body, idea/thing, culture/nature, etc (ibid.: 304–305).

Crucially, however, Scott goes on to suggest that 'our' non-dualisms are not necessarily 'their' non-dualisms:

If, however, we inadvertently conflate rather than compare our magical synthetic non-dualism with apparently indigenous non-dualisms, we can begin – in rather neo-dualistic ways – to seem to purify the world into two ontological types: a mainstream Cartesian-Kantian 'West' and its outposts versus an almost pre-lapsarian non-dualist 'Rest', situated in the places where we have tended to do fieldwork (ibid.: 306).

Here, Scott suggestively indicates how, in the anthropological purview of theoretical non-dualism, The Fall occurred not when Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, but when Descartes' writing on the pineal gland came to dominate the Western philosophical imagination (cf. Sahlins 1996). As such—and this is my point about the importance of attending to the aesthetics of fashionable and unfashionable theory—Mair was right in his summary observation that all four debaters 'started out from the position that non-dualism is somehow 'right' as an anthropological position' (Mair quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 351). That Mair's comment was, in part, an observation about the shared theoretical-aesthetic commitments of the four main debaters was further borne out, I suggest, in the critical contributions of other audience members:

There's a sense in which people have presented dualism as somehow kind of static and conservative and a little bit dull (Course, quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 344)

* * *

I sense anthropology has a kind of predominant aversion to the use of, say, continental philosophy in eth-

nographic analysis (Mookherjee quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 348)

* * *

We are in a predicament right now in anthropological theory, which is that things that we might heuristically brand, for want of a better word as ‘non-dualistic’, are very fashionable. So to talk about ‘process’ over ‘essence’ – that latter is a dirty word – ‘process’ is a wonderful word. ‘Relation’ is a wonderful word, ‘network’ is a wonderful word and so on... Why do we seem to end up with rather blinkered, perhaps, fashions of this kind[?] (Holbraad quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 352–353)

* * *

Talking about fashions is actually quite productive here... If we see dualism–non-dualism as aesthetics, what we really have are two kinds of different aesthetic ways of doing anthropology... It’s not accidental that reading the old fashioned, unabashed dualistic anthropologists like Gell and Evans-Pritchard is often so much more pleasurable and more easy to understand than reading some of our contemporary kind of high flying non-dualistic anthropologists out there. And I think the reason is because the old, unabashed dualists weren’t afraid of using dualistic methodology in a sense. They weren’t afraid of breaking things down into their component parts (Mayblin quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 354)

While Mayblin’s intervention most directly resonates with my own interest in interrogating the old fashioned, all four comments, I think, echo something of the spirit of my argument. Thus, while not wanting to hold any of these contributors hostage to comments made in the heat of debate, I read in their words a general—but also a real and insightful—challenge. This anthropological challenge—or, perhaps better said, this challenge to anthropology—involves, I think, the development of a greater intellectual willingness to engage with dualist theories which, in the light of a more contemporary and fashionable non-dualist anthropology, may be misrecognised (aesthetically and thus theoretically) as ‘static’, ‘conservative’, ‘dull’, ‘old fashioned’, or even ‘dirty’. With its seeming insistence on formal structural symmetry, Needham’s theory of dual symbolic classification would look to be an easy target in this respect. Yet, if the four contributors quoted above are on to something (and I think they *are*), then critiques of theoretical dualism (especially regarding mind/body and spirit/matter) seem to emerge not exclusively from conceptual arguments, but also from aesthetic preferences—in this instance from a fear of having one’s theoretical aesthetic contaminated by that exemplary and axiomatic (Needham 1983, 1985) dualistic bogeyman, René Descartes. In this sense, ‘process’, ‘relation’, and

‘network’ are aesthetically wonderful, whereas ‘dualism’ and ‘essence’ are aesthetically dull and dirty. However, the problematic result of strongly holding to the opposite (and currently fashionable) aesthetic, as Scott rightly points out, is not non-dualism but neo-dualism. What, then, is the solution?

The solution I have proposed in this article—the way out of this oxymoron—seeks to heed Abell’s call to develop ‘over-simply formulated models... by the introduction of additional complexity’ (1970: 389). My attempt, in essence, hinges on adding a vertical axis of analysis to Needham’s original construction of the horizontal axis seen in *Right and Left*—an attempt I have made by using both ethnography and theory. In terms of ethnography, to the extent that Anthony Cohen is right in his observation that on Whalsay, ‘the fishing crew should be regarded as ‘the-community-at-sea’ (1987: 145), it seems that within Gamrie, the opposite is also true, that is, the village can be regarded as a kind of fishing-boat-writ-large. Thus, I have tried to suggest how the wheelhouse and the fisher mansion existed as comparable sites of wealth, observation, and morality. So too, the wheelhouse and the Kirk, which were both explicitly sites of religious and industrial authority, a situation made all the more inseparable by the Sabbatarian principles that structure the working week, as enforced, particularly in the past, by skippers who also occupied the office of church elders.

However, in setting out the ethnography in this way, it has not been my intention to simplistically equate wheelhouses with kirks, skippers with elders, crew with congregants, skipper’s quarters with fisher mansions, crew cabins with prefabs, or the Seatown with the processing deck. Rather, I have merely followed the logic of the suggestion ‘that oppositions can be validly established, and that these can be systematically interrelated’ (1973: xviii). If such an exercise is to be convincing—if it is to effectively rehabilitate theoretical dualism—it must take note of the limits Needham places upon the scope of such interrelationships, whereby ‘dual symbolic classification is not a total and systematic depiction of a complete body of thought and imagery [but] a mnemonic and suggestive device’ (Needham 1973: xxii)—a point which Tcherkézoff, Lévi-Strauss, Strathern, and other more recent post-structuralist critics of dualism (see, for example, Latour 2009) seem to elide. In this sense, an analysis of Meru or Scots-Brethren symbolism ‘does not depend on an absolute and direct qualitative resemblance, but upon a relative and indirect analogical relationship to statuses, things, and ideas’ (Needham 1973: xxx). It is within this modest framework that I have attempted to show how, among the fishermen of Gamrie, morality and materiality, or, better said, ‘spirit’ and ‘space’, can be seen not only as polarised into a dual symbolic classification of high/low, up/down, above/below, but also conflated into a

double experience of humanity at sea and on land, whereby boats become villages-in-miniature and villages become boats-writ-large.

In terms of theory, one way to achieve this same rehabilitation, I suggest, is to push Scott's ideas about the 'elusive amorphousness' (Scott quoted in Venkatesan et al. 2013: 353) of methodological non-dualism to its limits, by including within its purview Needham's own (deeply relational) theory of dual symbolic classification. Thus, where Scott advocates for the *methodological* freedom to be 'able to travel between different positions... to morph [and] respond quickly to different situations' (ibid.), I suggest that this same freedom could be profitably applied to anthropological *theory*, thereby removing the 'blinker-fashions' critiqued above. Here, Scott's 'methodological non-dualism' would become inclusive not only of dualism as an *observable* ethnographic fact, but also, as my use of Needham has tried to practically demonstrate, of dualism as an *admissible* theoretical proposition. In doing so, it is my hope that one of the best known aspects of Needham's work, namely his writing on dual symbolic classification, would no longer be ruled out of the court of non-dualism – at least not on purely aesthetic grounds.

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