I. Rozprawy i analizy

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Looking at Europe through a Basque lens: Ethnolinguistic considerations of two worldviews

The main thesis of this article is that the Basque linguacultural complex provides a window onto conceptual frames reflecting a much earlier animistic worldview, reminiscent of the type of relational cosmologies characterizing ethnographically documented hunter-gatherers. In this respect, even though the Basque language is classed as pre-Indo-European, what that classification might mean from the point of view of the cosmological frames of thought entrenched in the Basque language is taken into consideration, especially the fact that, until the late 20th century, the orally transmitted belief that humans descended from bears was still circulating among Basque speakers. Ethnographic and linguistic evidence points to the possibility that a similar animistic linguacultural substrate was operating across much of Europe during the period in which Indo-European languages and their associated conceptual frames were gaining a foothold. Drawing on the methodological and theoretical tools of cultural linguistics and Habermas' concept of *lifeworld* (*Lebenswelt*), defined as a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns, a set of asymmetric polarities are analyzed. These are deeply engrained in the linguaculture of Western thought, namely, man/woman, human/animal and culture/nature. Moreover, all of them rest, ultimately, on the notion of human exceptionalism. When viewed from the indigenous frames of the Basque language, these oppositions disappear or are represented in ways more in accordance with the underlying animistic ontology and associated conceptualizations of relational personal identity. In short, the conceptual frames discussed in this study, understandings that are projected through the linguacultural nexus of the Basque language, often align with the ways that animism has been interpreted as expressing a form of relational ontology in which notions of kinship, mutual aid and reciprocity are emphasized and hence closely intertwined. Consequently, the resulting worldview provides a different vantage point for looking back at Western thought and what might have been going on in Europe in times past.

Key words: Basque (Euskara); asymmetric polarities; animism; gender; reciprocity; relational ontology

> Every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (Benjamin Lee Whorf 1956: 252)

> [...] the word does not forget where it has been and can never wholly free itself from the dominion of the contexts of which it has been part. (Mikhail M. Bakhtin 1973: 167)

1. Introduction

In this essay, the primary argument that will be made is that the Basque linguaculture complex can act as a window onto earlier conceptual frames that once existed in Europe and that derive, ultimately, from a hunter-gatherer mentality, that is, from an animistic worldview reminiscent of the relational cosmologies that have been increasingly documented in the case of historically attested forager populations (Bird-David 1999; Harvey 2006; Ingold 1995). Over the past twenty years there has been a resurgence of interest in theories of animism and an associated reformulation of its parameters. The concept of animism has been expanded to encompass relations with the non-human world in general and in this reformulation, it is taken as axiomatic that "the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others" (Harvey 2006: xi). Stated differently, within the framework of animism, "persons" are construed as "those with whom other persons interact with varying degrees of reciprocity" (Harvey 2006: xvii). Consequently, on this view, one of the core issues concerns the question of what a person is, the notion of personhood and the frameworks used to define human identity. And, according to proponents of the new approach to animism, discussions often center on the opposition, deeply engrained in Western thought, between persons and things as well as people and animals along with other dualities that have acted as fundamental pillars of Western thought for many centuries (Alberti and Bray 2009: 338–339).

Whereas it is well recognized that Euskara is a pre-Indo-European language, that it was in existence prior to the development of Indo-European languages in Europe, little consideration has been given to what that might mean from the point of view of the cosmological frames of thought entrenched in the Basque language. Rather, because it has been classified as a linguistic

isolate, for the most part, Euskara has been viewed as the Other, the outsider, and consequently as irrelevant to any attempt to reconstruct the life-ways of Europeans in times past. However, there is increasing evidence, ethnographic and linguistic in nature, that points to the possibility that there was a Basque-like linguacultural substrate operating across much of Europe during the period in which Indo-European languages and their associated conceptual frames were gaining a foothold (Frank 2008a, 2008c, 2009, 2010, 2015a, 2017).

Although outside the scope of this introductory essay, there is also solid evidence that Basques used to believe they descended from bears, a belief that resonates strongly with those of historically documented forager populations where forms of bear ceremonialism have been or continue to be practiced. And in the cosmology associated with bear ceremonialism, veneration and respect is expressed not just for bears, but for the rest of the creatures and plants inhabiting the same space as human beings. Central to cosmologies that undergird bear ceremonialism and the ontology that is inherent in that belief system is the fact that the human exceptionalism intrinsic to Western cosmologies is either not present or downplayed in ways that are unfamiliar to most Europeans. Nevertheless, evidence points to the strong possibility that remnants of bear ceremonialism have survived in the heart of Europe, not only in folk belief but in language, e.g., the *noa* terms used in Slavic and Germanic languages to avoid mentioning the name of the bear, a strong indication that this taboo, one shared by other cultures, came about because of a mindset and hence cosmology once similar to that of indigenous hunter-gatherer populations who also show deference to bears, often viewing them as kin or ancestors (Bertolotti 1994; Corvino 2013; Frank 2017; Lajoux 1996; Pastoureau 2007; Pauvert 2014).

When bears are viewed as kin or even ancestors, a fluidity of being is produced that ruptures the asymmetric dichotomies that are so firmly entrenched in SAE languages (Standard Average European languages) and, hence, our familiar ways of thinking (Whorf 1941). Indeed, two of the most pervasive dichotomies have been the nature/culture split and the apparently insurmountable divide between human and "other-than-human persons," the latter being a term that Hallowell (1960) used to call into question the human exceptionalism associated with Western thought. Moreover, as McNiven has shown: "Anthropological theorizing informs us that the human-animal duality of Western thought is limited in scope for most of humanity and most of human history, where the human-animal divide was more commonly seen as ontologically fluid and permeable and understood in terms of overlapping personhood" (McNiven 2013: 97).

Also, as is well known, although rarely kept in mind, the term *nature* as well as *culture* are conceptual frames of recent coinage, each having evolved out of quite different conceptual frames of understanding than those currently associated with them. Indeed, asymmetric polarities, such as that of nature/culture, which currently sit at the center of debates on the so-called "ontological turn" in ethnography, anthropology, and archaeology, are themselves in need of serious reflection, not simply because of what they stand for today, but also because until recently little attention has been paid to the processes that led to their current discursive instantiation in language (Paleček and Risjord 2013). In a certain sense, debates center on a semantically instantiated polarity and much earlier philosophical discussions that were taking place during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Indeed, the contemporary meaning attached to each of the terms in the nature/culture polarity and therefore assigned to modern philosophical and anthropological conceptual frames of thought, are simply the most recent iterations of them (Hadyn 1950: 461–554; Lovejoy, Boas, Chinard, and Crance 1935; Williams 1978: 11–20; 1980: 67–85).[1]

Speaking of the "ontological turn" that is sweeping through other disciplines, but not yet cultural linguistics, at the center of the debates is the notion of "relational ontologies," a concept that will be brought to bear in the present analysis (Hill 2011). This new relational framework has given strength to the ontological turn that has been taking place in ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological circles over the past twenty years, impacting both theory and practice. It can be expressed in two ways. One way is to recognize that other societies, past and present, live in different worlds, that they have different "lifeworlds"; that a key to understanding those societies is reconstructing their ontology, which in turn is an element of the underlying cosmology and is expressed linguaculturally. The other approach to recognize the ontological turn as a theoretical tool that requires us to assume a more reflexive attitude concerning our own core beliefs – a conceptual reorientation not seen since the postmodernist turn.

As Alberti (2016: 174) has put it: "the difference between the two [expressions of the ontological turn] lies in the degree to which an approach is willing to do ontology to itself, how much critique it is willing to direct at its own ontological assumptions." In short, this type of introspection allows for a new feature to be added to the toolkit of those working in cultural ethnolinguistics. Ontologies that involve animism, alternative definitions

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[1] It goes without saying that there is a connection between those processes that led to the modern asymmetric dichotomy of nature-culture and to its corollary, the asymmetric opposition setting humans apart from animals (Lovejoy 1960 [1936]; Lovejoy et al. 1935).

of personhood, and non-human agency are a challenge to the frames of reference and polarities firmly embedded in SAE languages and consequently Western thought patterns. Assuming that human animals descended from bears in and of itself requires a rethinking of the nature/culture divide as well as its partner constituted by the human/animal oppositional polarity.

2. Theoretical and methodological considerations

Over the past two decades, increasing attention has been directed toward analyzing the highly dynamic interactive relationship holding between language and culture, specifically the way in which language systems, conceived as supra-individual entities, both reflect and constrain processes of identity and selfhood, a field of study that has been referred to as *cultural linguistics* (Palmer 1996) as well as by the term *ethnolinguistics*, as represented by the Lublin School (Bartmiński 2009; Głaz 2017; Głaz, Danaher, and Łozowski 2013). In the case of language systems that share the same or highly similar cultural conceptualizations, the latter tend not to come into clear focus and are not viewed as inherently ideological. Rather our tacit – unreflective – approval of these cultural conceptualizations contributes to the implicit conceptual consensus shared by a given population of speakers, community or society.

At the same time, because of the socially situated nature of discourse, communication takes place from within this horizon of shared and generally unproblematically held convictions, what can be viewed as consensus-generating interpretative patterns (Habermas 1994: 66). Yet, the same sociocultural and linguistic situatedness that regularly constrains one's own *communicative conceptual horizon*, as Bakhtin (1981: 269–295) has called this aspect of communicative acts, can be disrupted by an encounter with speakers communicating from within a radically different conceptual horizon, based on a different cosmology and ontological foundation. An even more complex notion of situatedness comes into view when a speaker must move back and forth between two environments, two incommensurate linguacultural models, each with its own way of expressing ontologically coded metaphors (Olds 1992). This has been the case for Basque speakers who must move discursively, back and forth, between two systems, continuously readjusting their conceptual horizon to suit the language they are speaking, most particularly the root metaphors that, taken collectively, constitute a type of metaphysical common ground, the *lifeworld* (*Lebenswelt*) as Habermas has called it: "Communicative actors are always moving within the horizon of their lifeworld, they cannot step outside of it" (Habermas 1987: 126).

As Schattenmann has succinctly explained in his study of Habermas: "The lifeworld is the invisible and indispensable background of everything we do and of everything we are (of everything, to be more precise, that is not purely biological)" (Schattenmann 2002). Thus, the lifeworld can be understood as some sort of non-thematic knowledge that is characterized by an "unmediated certainty," a "totalizing power," and a "holistic constitution"; it is composed of cultural patterns, legitimate social orders and personality structures, forming complex contexts of meaning (Habermas 1982: 594; 1997 [1988]: 2 ff.). Moreover, we can think of it "as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns" (Habermas 1987: 124).[2]

In addition, "[t]his stock of knowledge supplies members with unproblematic common background convictions that are assumed to be guaranteed; it is from these that contexts for the processes of reaching understanding get shaped [. . .]. Every new situation appears in a lifeworld composed of a cultural stock of knowledge that is always already familiar" (Habermas 1987: 125). In this way the lifeworld represents the large but limited space within which communication and understanding are possible. It is the background of communicative actions and constitutes an inextricable part of the unarticulated cosmology and ontology of speakers (Habermas 1982: 593).

Others have spoken of "an inarticulated background metaphysics" or "foundational metaphysics" (Haila 2002) that informs this amorphously constituted, yet pervasive, entity referred to by Habermas as the lifeworld. The dominant structuring elements, produced and reproduced by cultural processes, are embedded in an ideological matrix that in turn derives from and lends support to the foundational metaphysics of the culture in question. In the case of the worldview associated with Western and Westernized patterns of thought significant attention has been paid, of late, to the presence of certain asymmetric dualisms that serve to structure these interpretive pattern grids, polarities such as: man/woman, human/animal, mind/body, culture/nature. These, in turn, are often elevated to the level of metaphysical postulates.

Stated differently, *foundational schemas* organize or link up a set of cultural conceptualizations, creating a network held together by the unarticulated background metaphysics to which the foundational schemas contribute and from which they draw their strength. Indeed, we could argue that sev-

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[2] This statement brings to mind Goodenough's (1957: 167) often-cited definition: Culture is "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members." Here the expression "communicative competence" could be substituted for "culture" without significant loss of meaning or applicability.

eral of the foundational schemas of the Western worldview act to license or sanction these asymmetric dualisms and, therefore, this type of dichotomous thought. However, these Western polarities only come into full view when speakers begin to reflexively question the validity of the dualisms themselves, or to find a way to step outside the ontological givens of Western thought and take up residence inside a radically different cosmovision. Hopefully, the material discussed in the sections that follow will allow readers to do just that.

The SAE polarities are attached to cultural conceptualizations that have emerged from prolonged interactions between the members of the cultural group and therefore, the members of the cultural group in question have acted to negotiate and renegotiate their *emergent cultural cognition* across time and space (Sharifian 2017). Hence, even though a set of cultural conceptualisations – frames of reference – is highly entrenched in a given worldview and forms an integral part of the foundational metaphysics of that culture, the conceptualizations are not frozen in place but rather subject to constant reformulation. Moreover, the discursively produced subjectivities resulting from these collectively held cultural conceptualizations along with the aforementioned asymmetric dualities are also subject to modification, as will become apparent shortly. In other words, on this view language and culture are fused together as a dynamic interactive whole forming an interlocking linguacultural matrix, as Risager, Silverstein and others have argued of late (Frank 2015c; Risager 2015; Silverstein 2004, 2005).

In other words, we are seeking to identify fundamental elements making up the cosmological system that across time ended up becoming entrenched in the language spoken by the community in question. Hence, the goal is to locate the culturally and linguistically-given templates that give rise to and give support to certain cultural conceptualizations and particularly the dualities commonly found in SAE languages. From a diachronic perspective, the templates can be understood to represent the linguaculturally engrained ontological and epistemological bases for particular habits of thought and perceptual propensities. It is both the former (the cognitive templates) and the latter (the cognitive habits and perceptual propensities) that are constitutive elements for the cosmology and ontology associated with it. We might conceptualize these templates as setting up cognitive grids. Perceptually, the resulting grid patterns act in a systematic fashion to filter out those elements that will not be attended to cognitively while capturing those that will be.

In this respect, Whorf's comments are pertinent, specifically, his remarks on how language as well as culture form a complex that has an *implicit metaphysics* built into it:

Every complex of a culture and a lge [language] (or every "culture" in the broadest sense, as including lge) carries with it an implicit metaphysics, a model of the universe, composed of notions and assumptions organized into a harmonious system which is valid for framing statements about what goes on in the world as the carriers of the culture see it. There are certain words for large segmentations that sum up a great deal of the cultural metaphysics [...], but the total picture is never given explicitly, not even in a grammar, but is a complex, semi-conscious thought form which is taken for granted, and acted upon without being brought into the front of consciousness for scrutiny. (Whorf and Tager 1996: 264)

Although Whorf speaks of the metaphysics implicit in the complex composed by culture and language as being organized into "a harmonious system," in reality the frames of reference that make up any cosmology are constantly being renegotiated, reinterpreted and often modified in significant ways. For instance, this has been shown to be the case of the Basque language, whose speakers have introduced cultural conceptualizations associated with certain SAE dualities, as evidenced by the presence of terms borrowed directly from the Romance languages that speakers of Basque have been in contact with for many centuries. As a result, the resulting cosmology is a kind of hybrid, having kept older frames of reference alongside newer ones.

3. Focusing on the gaps

In the sections that follow I will be focusing on how fundamental aspects of the worldview entrenched in the Basque language can be brought into focus and how its cultural implications can be highlighted. This will be done by comparing the frames of reference intrinsic to what is often referred to globally as Western thought or the Western worldview, cultural conceptualizations assumed to be reflected in European languages. To simplify matters, English will be the primary language of comparison although on occasion references will be made to other SAE languages whose dominance as templates for comparison of non-Western language was critiqued by Whorf years ago (Lee 1996; Whorf 1956; Whorf and Tager 1996).

Indeed, studying the linguacultural nexus on the basis of one language or only a few languages – often closely related ones – is dangerous, as Bernárdez (2008b: 25–84) has amply demonstrated. By keeping our database restricted, we could end up assigning a universal value to a certain language or culturally specific feature. Unless we are fully conscious of the dangers implicit in undue generalizations on the basis of one or only a few languages, our conclusions on human cognition and possible linguaculturally given frames of reference will be misled: "we shall be calling 'human cognition' what is in reality individual

cognition which depends critically on the circumstances of a particular social and cultural group and of a particular language" (Bernárdez 2008a: 141). In this case, the danger lies in assuming that the polarities entrenched in SAE languages have universal ontological validity.

The observations that follow are ones that I came to formulate through my own attempts to adjust my frames of reference to those that are firmly entrenched in Euskara. The comparison results from looking at the gaps that are present in the language when it is compared to my native language of English. That is, the focus is on what is absent rather than what is present in the Basque language. At the same time, these gaps or conceptual absences that can be detected, are also absences from the point of view of traditional frames of Western thought. Most striking are the gaps that can be identified in relation to the set of asymmetric polarities common to SAE languages. Most salient among them are the aforementioned dualities of man/woman, human/animal, mind/body, and culture/nature (Frank 2003, 2005, 2013).[3] Examined more closely, the polarities form an interlocking chain in which one duality engages with the other in a mutually reinforcing fashion. In contrast, the Basque language reveals a different type of ontological grounding.

In the past, the linguacultural implications of these SAE dualities went relatively unnoticed for they were part and parcel of the dominant frames of reference. In short, they were the accepted ways of thinking, authorized by the norms instantiated in Western thought. In contrast, in recent years at least some of them have become sites for heated debate and even controversy. As they have come under attack, their uncontested power of persuasion has weakened. As a result, they are no longer fully invisible to speakers but rather have been eliciting attention from across the disciplines, i.e., in ethnography, anthropology, and archaeology, as well as the social sciences and especially psychology.

Yet, the fact that these dichotomies operate on several levels simultaneously has not yet been fully explored. On the one hand, they are deeply entrenched in SAE languages and, consequently, they are intertwined with cultural conceptualizations: the ways that SAE speakers think about and conceptualize their world. On the other hand, rather than operating in some rarefied theoretical linguistic space, they are reflected in social practice and reinforced on a daily basis by their instantiation in discursive acts. Moreover, given that these dichotomies provide the ground upon which these current debates are taking place, the debates themselves become circular since the terms used to refer to the dichotomy being held up for analysis and criticism

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[3] In this chapter, the mind/body polarity and its absence in Basque will not be addressed, although it has been investigated previously (Frank 2013).

are the same ones that encode the very opposition that investigators are attempting to eliminate. In other words, it is often the instantiation of the concept in language that impedes the objective realization of a critique. And that problem involves not having a conceptual ground that allows for an analysis from the outside; a perspective that is afforded by a language that operates without relying on these dichotomies.

4. Gender related issues: Living in a genderless language

When I first began to learn Basque, I discovered that there was no way to mark natural gender. Moreover, the only noun class consisted of an animate/inanimate distinction. As a native speaker of English, only when I began to speak Basque did I realize how much I missed the linguistic clues afforded by the pronominal gender system inherent in English. I became aware of the fact that I felt an absence: that I was repeatedly looking for clues that would let me fall back into my comfort zone; that I was unconsciously seeking to discover the gender of the person being spoken about. I was hearing and using words that had no gender assigned to them at all and there were no gendered pronominal pronouns to fall back on as guides.

Rather I had to acclimatize myself to a discursive mode of being where the differences conveyed by the *he/she/it* pronouns and *his/her/its* possessives of English were not present. Eventually, I became accustomed to the cognitive world projected by Basque and no longer missed the gender-based crutches that I regularly use in English. As part of this process of acclimatization, I had to learn to use the three-part demonstrative system in Basque in which the proximal form *hau* refers back to the mental space of the speaker and/or a mental space shared by the speaker and collocutor; the medial demonstrative *hori*, when used expressively, opens up a mental space related to the collocutor, instead of the speaker; and the distal demonstrative, represented by *hura* as well as -*a*. It was the latter element, namely, -*a*, that was affixed to nouns and adjectives to refer to entities of common knowledge.

In addition, it was only through the manipulation of these three demonstratives that what were otherwise *transnumeral* nouns – viewed as more or less atemporal essences – could be assigned *number* and hence *individuated* and brought into the discursive world shared by the speaker and assigned a location in a dialogically shared mental space (Haase 1992, 2011; Iturrioz Leza 1982, 1985; Iturrioz Leza and Skopeteas 2004). In this sense, in Basque the work that the demonstratives do is different from what goes on in a language like English. And that work contrasts with the functions that

demonstratives have in Spanish and French, which have been the second languages of bilingual Basque-speakers. At the same time, from the point of view of English as well as these Romance languages, in Basque the demonstratives do double duty for they also function as pronouns, but without any reference to whether the entity referenced is male, female or neither; they have no gender assignment.

When viewed diachronically, in the case of Basque it was the distal demonstrative in the form of -*a* that came to function as an affix on nouns and adjectives and is used in what is called "citation forms," i.e., when the expression, rather than being transnumeral in nature, functions to refer not to essences but entities conceptualized as inside the discursive world of the speakers. This means that a word like *etxe* 'house' is regularly written as *etxea*, where -*a* is a suffix that fuses, in writing, with the noun or adjective that it modifies. When this is done, numeracy is also assigned to the noun, while the same is true when any of the Basque demonstratives is employed to modify the noun.

Even though opinions differ as to the ultimate origin of gender marking in IE languages, there is agreement that before gender entered the languages, noun classes were limited to a distinction between animate and inanimate. Yet there are different hypotheses concerning how the animate/inanimate opposition turned into a three-part gendered system with nouns being classed as masculine, feminine and neuter, e.g., German and Slavic, and eventually in some languages into a two-part system, e.g., Romance languages (Luraghi 2011). However, no attention has been paid to the possibility that there was any influence from a preexisting substrate that itself differentiated only between animate/inanimate.

Nonetheless, among the possible avenues that have been suggested to explain the transition from the animate/inanimate phase to a gendered one, we have the one laid out by Corbett (1991) and discussed by Luraghi (2011: 450):

> Corbett (1991) indicates demonstratives as the origin of gender agreement (Corbett 1991: 310–311), not only in pronominal usage, but even more when used inside NPs, as attributes: as such, they may undergo grammaticalization and become articles; a further step in increasing grammaticalization may lead them to become affixes.[4]

There is a significant tendency in Indo-European languages to mark nouns of the feminine grammatical gender with an affix in -*a*, a characteristic

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[4] I would emphasize that Corbett suggests that Proto-Indo-European might have had two different demonstratives, one of which would have produced the feminine affixes while the other one would have given rise to masculine endings.

especially prevalent in Western IE languages, e.g., Romance languages. However, there is a similar tendency to use affixes that contain -*a*, to mark nouns referring to sex-based feminine gender in Slavic languages, whereas the masculine counterpart is unsuffixed. Now if we were to imagine a scenario in which the rich agglutinative syntax of the Basque language was massively destabilized, and slowly reorganized itself into something similar to the structures found in Indo-European languages, say, Slavic languages, we might theorize that the high frequency of nouns and adjectives having the demonstrative affix -*a* attached to them might end up being misrecognized by subsequent generations of speakers and come to be viewed as mark of a class of nouns.

Nouns not carrying that affix would also have been available since in Basque that affix is not used with transnumeral forms[5] nor with nouns that are used in conjunction with an adjective – the adjective which follows the noun carries the demonstrative derived affix of -*a*. However, Basque never developed a gender system and, in fact, in that respect it has been little influenced by the gender systems of the two Romance languages which represent, for the most part, the second languages of Basque speakers. That is, even though the Basque language has been in close contact with these two Romance languages for well over a millennium, those contacts have not had any significant impact on the genderless aspect of Euskara.[6]

5. Questions of personhood and human identity

Another aspect of Euskara that caught my attention from the very beginning was the fact that there is no indigenous term that means 'people' or 'person.' Instead, speakers have imported terms from Romance. In the case of the collective concept of PEOPLE, the expression that has come to be employed is *jende*, a phonologically modified term based directly on the Spanish word *gente* 'people.' Although *jende* is relatively common, the loan word *pertsona*, from the Spanish *persona*, is used far less frequently by speakers of Euskara. Instead, either they do not mark the personhood

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[5] These forms are often referred to as *mugagabe*, a term that might be translated as 'unbounded' or 'unindividualized' (Azkarate and Altuna 2001; Rijk 2008).

[6] Although outside the scope of this preliminary essay, the demonstratives have also played a key role in maintaining the "dialogic" nature of discourse, the recognition that one is never speaking alone, but always with another present and this is marked by bringing into play the expressive functions associated with the three demonstratives. Even when one is engaged in self-talk, thinking silently to oneself, dialogically, the person thinking the thoughts acts as both speaker and addressee (Frank 2015b).

of the entities spoken about or they make use of the expressions that are indigenous to Euskara which do not require marking human agency; the phrases are understood to refer to human beings because of contextual clues that the speaker and listener pick up on.

As for the term *jende*, it, too, is regularly omitted in situations where English would include a reference to human agency. In English this marking of human personhood is often achieved by choosing the relevant pronoun form from the three available, namely, *he/she/it*, which mark not only gender (absent in Basque) but also whether the entity in question is a human being. In English there are a few exceptions to this rule of humanness, e.g., when certain animals are referred to as a *he* or a *she*, depending on the actual sex of the animal, a discursive practice that is slowly gaining traction in light of work being carried out in the area of animal studies in which agency is assigned not just to human animals but also to other-than-human animals. That discursive practice contrasts with older ways of speaking about animals in which when an animal was referred to, it was unmarked for gender and personhood, appearing in discourse simply as an *it*.

Whereas the asymmetric polarity of human/animal has played a major role in Western thought for several millennia, its penetration in Euskara has been quite recent given that there is no generic term in Basque for the English concept ANIMAL. The term used to refer to this conceptual category is a direct borrowing, namely, the word *animal* itself. Hence, we can argue that earlier there was no opposition between human personhood and that of non-human animals. Rather, the term *izaki*, derived from the verb *izan* 'to be', was and still is used to refer to different classes of entities, e.g., beings, creatures, or objects.[7]

In the dominant cosmology of the West, the concept of human exceptionalism, embedded both culturally and linguistically, has gone relatively unnoticed until quite recently. Indeed, even today the term *animal* is regularly used in a derogatory sense. Calling someone *an animal* is understood in a negative sense, although perhaps not as automatically as it was earlier. The comparison – drawing its persuasive strength from the human/animal polarity – is a way to demean the human being in question. This can also be

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[7] Mention also should be made of the compound *gizaki*, based on the stem of the word *gizon* 'man,' which is sometimes used to refer to human beings, but by reference to 'man, male (human).' Its semantic extension to 'human being' seems to date from the 19th century, while it became more common in the 20th, probably under the influence of Romance and other languages that employ words referring to the male of the (human) species as cover terms for HUMANKIND, which, in turn, previously was conceptualized as MANKIND. However, even though as this expansion did take place in Basque, it did so keeping its original meaning of 'man, male (human)' intact.

accomplished by describing the person using nouns and adjectives attributed only to animals.[8] Humans are "civilized"; animals are not; they are "bestial." Similarly, until relatively recently Nature continued to be portrayed as a war zone where rampant competition was the name of the game and where the survival of the strongest and most powerful was the rule, projecting pre-existing norms concerning the functioning of human society onto Nature.

For instance, in the 19th century, Nature was regularly described as "red in tooth and claw" reflecting the projection onto the natural world of the so-called "law of the jungle," in which creatures engaged in endless warfare with each other, a competitive scenario in which the physically more powerful individual was always destined to be the winner; predators were pitted against prey, just as human hunters were regularly portrayed standing, triumphantly, next to their kill. Indeed, the phrase *Nature, red in tooth and claw* appeared in a poem penned by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, published in 1850, several years before Darwin made public his *The Origin of the Species*, in 1859. The line was quickly taken up by those in favor of evolution as well as against it to express the brutality that during that time was projected onto the natural world. Even well into the 20th century Nature was conceptualized as a locus of strife, conflict and violence; rather than as being composed of complex networks of mutually reinforcing patterns of support.

Still today the notion of human exceptionalism is firmly entrenched in Western languages and culture, manifesting itself automatically, unreflexively, by means of the human/animal polarity. And although relatively unnoticed earlier, this way of thinking has undergone increased scrutiny in recent years, in part because of the realization that the planet is now facing a major environmental crisis that threatens the future viability not just of animals and plants, but of the human race itself.

6. Reciprocity

In the previous section I argued that there was no indigenous term in Basque corresponding to *people* or to *person* until one was borrowed from Romance, but that is not entirely true. There is a term that traditionally

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[8] Although outside the scope of this study, another avenue of investigation is that of two-tiered vocabulary, as is the case of English, where certain terms are only used with animals and their application to humans is demeaning, e.g., saying that someone has a *snout* rather than a *mouth* or *paws* rather than *hands*. Not surprisingly, given the other animistic components of the Basque linguacultural complex, the same words are used to describe the anatomy of humans and animals. For example, cattle are equipped with *oinak* 'feet' just as humans are.

was used, namely, *lagun*, a word that has a very special meaning. Some might translate it into English as 'friend' or, more broadly, even as the Basque equivalent of 'person.' However, that latter translation would betray the real meaning of the word, a word that, as we will see, has a transparent etymology in Basque. Moreover, its meaning reflects the central importance that the notion of reciprocity and mutual aid has had in traditional Basque culture (Ascher 1998; Frank 2013, 2015b). The term *lagun*, literally translated, means 'helper' while the verb *lagundu* means 'to help, to give aid.' Hence, the etymology shows that in the past the notion of friendship was not separate from the idea of someone who you could depend upon for help (and vice-versa). And that understanding of self and others carries with it an implicit recognition of a kind of kinship.

As a result, one might hear someone say *Atzo hiru lagun hil ziren*, but because of the semantic field covered by *lagun*, the sentence would be ambiguous from the point of view of English. One reading would be: "Yesterday three people died." Yet, it could also mean: "Yesterday three friends died." In both cases, the thread joining together both readings is that "people" are by definition "friends" and furthermore, that they are "helpers," willing to give mutual aid to each other. They collaborate.

Over the past thirty years, print media, radio, and television have increasingly reported the news in Basque but frequently relying on frames of reference typical of Spanish media. At the same time, the news stories that are reported often do not concern local happenings. In addition, in the process of establishing Basque-language print media, many news releases were often nothing more than quick translations of Spanish-language sources and today increasingly the translations come directly from English-language news outlets. As a result, the term *lagun* is being marginalized in its broad sense, i.e., as roughly equivalent to *person* in English. And this reticence is contributing to the use of paraphrases that avoid this use of *lagun* entirely and, as a result, this practice of avoidance has encouraged a narrowing of its semantic scope to 'friend.' However, in the case of Basque speakers talking about other Basque speakers and what has happened to them, the term tends to recover its broad sense, that is, from the point of view of English.[9]

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[9] In the case of speakers of Euskara, traditionally, the importance has been given to mutual aid, reciprocity in relationships and popular democracy – giving voice to each individual or household. They are concepts that represent deeply engrained conceptual frames which have had their counterparts in specific social practices. In recent years they have become topics of intense debate as certain organizational structures associated in the past with these concepts are being revitalized (Frank in prep.; Mitxeltorena 2011; Santos Vera and Elguezabal 2012; Sorauren 2010).

7. Questions of Basque self-understanding and identity: The role of language

In this section, two radically different understandings of Basque identity will be compared and contrasted. Moreover, the role played by Euskara in each of them is remarkably different. As will be shown, there are outsider and insider frames of reference depending on whether or not the person speaks Basque or only an SAE language. For example, the term regularly used in English for the language itself is *Basque* and that term is extended to the speakers of Euskara as well as to those who do not, i.e., those who only speak Spanish or French. Plus, the term is used with a geographical or territorial extension, as in the expression *Basque Country* (*País Vasco* in Spanish or *Pays Basque* in French). The term used in English can be traced back to the way that the French expression *basque* came to be adopted and popularized, a word, however, that does not exist in the lexicon of Euskara. Nonetheless, Europeans assume that the term *Basque* embodies the sense of identity that speakers of Euskara have. Suffice it to say that things are not as simple as they might appear at first glance.

Historically, it was not until the late 19th century that extensive discussions of this topic began to surface. These reflections on Basque identity are tied to the figure of Sabino Arana-Goiri (1865–1903), founder of the Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco or PNV), and a man considered by many still today as the father of Basque nationalist thought. However, Arana-Goiri was born into a non-Basque-speaking family and grew up in a working class urban environment. Indeed, he only undertook the task of learning Euskara as an adult in conjunction with his political activities. Consequently, his worldview was shaped by his contacts with the Spanish language and culture, which he then attempted to reshape into a formula that would promote Basque identity as part of efforts to foster his nationalist agenda.

Given the formation of Arana-Goiri, it is not surprising that in laying out the ground for Basque identity he drew on the same conceptual frames that were current in his time not only in Spain but also in the rest of Europe. The late 19th century was a period in which nation-state identities were being carved out and were typically expressed through the unity of "blood and soil" with the bridging component being language, the variety of the language spoken usually by the elite of the emerging nation-state in question (Frank and Gontier 2010). As a result of this background, Arana-Goiri ended up constructing what is viewed today as a xenophobic ideology that centered on the notion of the purity of the Basque *race*, the latter being based on his belief that Basques were genetically different, unrelated to Spaniards or for

that matter, other *races* (Frank 2002, 2008b). Living in a suburb of Bilbao, Arana-Goiri was disturbed by the high level of immigration he witnessed flowing into what was at that time a more industrialized and hence affluent region of Spain. These were primarily workers escaping from economically depressed regions of western and central parts of Spain. In addition, Arana-Goiri was driven by the realization that native political institutions had recently been suppressed, concretely, in 1876, by the central government. All these factors combined led him to believe unless immigration was stopped, it would result in the disappearance of the "pure" Basque race and its language.

Although in line with the dominant frames of reference of the times, when viewed from the perspective of today, the racialist aspects of his political agenda are clearly manifest: his fierce opposition to further migration into the region by "outsiders," his concern with preserving the purity of what was understood to be the Basque "race" and concomitantly, the Basque language itself. Indeed, Arana-Goiri launched efforts to purge from its vocabulary words perceived to be of "foreign" origin. In addition, he paid particular attention to deciphering the meaning of Basque surnames, which in turn were taken as proof of Basque blood and, hence, identity (Tovar 1980: 166–173). Consequently, the notion of Basque identity that he espoused was an exclusive one, open only to those of Basque descent, genealogically speaking, and it was only this group that had the right to occupy the territory in question. Nonetheless, his framework was perfectly aligned with the dominant frameworks of identity operating in Europe at the time, especially Germanic ones (Jáuregi Bereciartu 1985: 13–21).

According to Jáuregi Bereciartu, for Arana-Goiri the Basque language played a secondary role, as a mere collaborator in the project of preserving the Basque *race* in all of its original purity. As such, it functioned as a means of defending Basque society against the encroachment by "foreign elements." Consequently, to properly exercise this defense, all words and concepts that in one way or another were viewed by Arana-Goiri as coming from other languages were to be abandoned. This was to be done to achieve a rigorous non-contaminating linguistic purism that, in turn, was aligned with the importance assigned to insuring the purity of the blood-line. Again, it is a framework that did not differ significantly from the ideology fostering other nationalist projects in 19th century Europe (Jáuregi Bereciartu 1985: 17–19).[10] In short, the frames of reference embedded in this conceptualization of Basque identity are not particularly surprising or unfamiliar.

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[10] Obviously, Arana-Goiri's project and the subsequent political agenda embraced by the Basque Nationalist Party, at least in its early years, included other components, such as a strong religious flavor based on conservative Catholicism, veneration for traditional law codes, the *fueros*, and respect for local traditions.

In contrast to the way in which Basque identity was conceptualized and expressed by Arana-Goiri and his followers, namely, a type of identity tied to blood and soil, speakers of Euskara were and are privy to a far different kind of self-understanding. As I have stated, the term *basque* does not exist in Euskara. Indeed, the only way to self-identify as a member of the group when speaking Euskara is to use the term *euskaldun*, regularly translated into English as 'Basque speaker.' However, that translation fails to capture what is actually going on. The term *euskaldun* is a relative clause, *Euskara duen > Euskal-dun*, in which *du-en* is the third person singular of 'to have' affixed with the marker for the relative clause. It literally means: 'the one who possesses the Basque language.' The sense of identity is purely linguistic: if one knows Euskara, one is Euskaldun. There is no room for blood-lines, surnames, or genetics. Nor is the meaning of the term *Euskal Herria* necessarily limited to a geographical zone of Europe. Rather, the term can be applied to Basque-speaking communities in the American West or, say, in Argentina. In the case of the compound *Euskal Herria*, the second element is *herria*, which is sometimes translated as 'a people.' However, that translation does not really capture its deeper meaning, which might be closer to the idea of 'community' or 'neighborhood.' For example, the term for a farmstead is *baserri*, a compound based on *baso* 'forest' and *(h)erria* 'community.'

In short, one's passport is Euskara itself. Identity is conceptualized as inclusive, not exclusive. If one learns the language one becomes *euskaldun* and is treated as such, as a full-fledged member of that community. It does not matter where you were born, what your last name is or how you look. So long as you speak Euskara, you have obtained a new identity and self-understanding.

8. Concluding remarks

Viewed together, the conceptual frames that have been discussed in this study, understandings that are projected through the linguacultural nexus of the Basque language, often align with the way that animism has been interpreted as expressing a form of relational ontology in which notions of kinship, personhood, and reciprocity are closely intertwined. Indeed, Siberian and Amerindian peoples share a common propensity to extend to various non-human entities – animals, plants, objects, spirits – the personhood, agency, and intentionality that speakers of SAE languages would normally view as exclusively human characteristics. The animistic metaphysics of historically

documented hunter-gatherer peoples acts to destabilize the conceptual frames of Western thought and the polarities intrinsic to them:

> If others see animals, plants, artefacts and objects as social persons, how then can we square this with theoretical analysis founded on the assumption that "in reality" such entities are not persons at all but rather parts of one stable and invariant nature? If their animistic reality is not the same as our own naturalistic version, how we can understand through a theoretical apparatus that assume that it is? Do we compare epistemologies or world-views or are we dealing with different ontologies? And are ontologies opposed or can they co-exist? (Hugh-Jones 2012: xii)

The problem that arises in this case is the fact that when trying to understand these other ontologies, this is being done while moored inside a cosmology with radically different frames of reference. For example, employing the nature/culture polarity of Western thought as if it were a universally given ontological category greatly complicates attempts to understand these other "realities."

In summary, the frames of reference still identifiable in Euskara should not be understood as outdated oddities. Rather, taken collectively, they could be viewed as perhaps the best-preserved exemplar of linguaculturally entrenched frames of reference that quite possibly characterized this earlier, yet still recognizable animistic cosmology inside Europe itself. At the same time, we are witnessing attempts to find ways to move beyond the dualities inherent in Western thought. So rather than being an outdated conceptual framework, the datasets analyzed in this study could be understood as distinctly 21st century.

Moreover, there is reason to believe that the cosmology and ontological foundation discussed in the study are linked to an earlier hunter-gatherer mentality in which humans viewed bears both as kin and ancestors. While such animistic framing is relatively common among indigenous peoples in other parts of the world, in this instance we are talking about an ursine genealogy that arose in the heart of Europe and whose remnants are visible in European languages, folk culture and residual traditional beliefs (Frank 2008a, 2008c, 2009, 2010, 2015a). And, as has been noted, the ursine cosmology and related conceptual frames rupture the SAE polarity of nature/culture.[11]

Finally, at a point in time when English is rapidly being installed as the *de facto* language of international communication and the winds of globalization are sweeping across the planet, leveling cultural differences and making the imposition of a monoculture a real possibility, if not an

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[11] An article which analyzes this ursine cosmology and its related conceptual frames is currently under preparation for submission to a future issue of this journal.

inevitability, it is worthwhile to remember the words written by Benjamin Whorf many years ago, who also noted that there are many unconscious assumptions about Nature in the English language:

> But to restrict thinking to the patterns merely of English, and especially to those patterns which represent the acme of plainness in English is to lose a power of thought which, once lost, can never be regained. It is the "plainest" English which contains the greatest number of unconscious assumptions about nature. [...] For this reason I believe that those who envision a future world speaking only one tongue, whether English, German, Russian, or any other, hold a misguided ideal and would do the evolution of the human mind the greatest disservice. Western culture has made, through language, a provisional analysis of reality and, without correctives, holds resolutely to that analysis as final. The only correctives lie in all those other tongues which by aeons of independent evolution have arrived at different, but equally logical, provisional analyses. (Whorf 1956: 244)

In conclusion, there is no question that in recent years Western polarities have come under increasing scrutiny. Still, until now, the role played collectively by these dualities in the cosmology that is embedded in SAE languages has not been examined in depth. Consequently, the current study is only a prelude to what needs to be a much more exhaustive exploration of the foundational metaphysical ground of the older pan-European cosmology, whose basic outline has been sketched out, ever so lightly, in this chapter.

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Europa przez pryzmat lingwokultury baskijskiej. Etnolingwistyczne podejście do dwóch obrazów świata

W artykule stawia się tezę, iż lingwokultura baskijska daje wgląd w ramy pojęciowe odzwierciedlające dawny, animistyczny obraz świata, przywołujący kosmologie relacyjne, które – jak wiemy z danych etnograficznych – charakteryzowały społeczności zbieracko-łowieckie. W tym sensie, jeśli język baskijski określa się jako pre-indoeuropejski, powstaje pytanie, co to oznacza z punktu widzenia utrwalonej w nim kosmologii, zwłaszcza w kontekście wierzeń, obecnych wśród Basków jeszcze pod koniec XX w., jakoby ludzie pochodzili od niedźwiedzi. Dane etnograficzne i językowe wskazują na możliwość istnienia podobnego animistycznego językowo-kulturowego substratu na znacznym obszarze Europy w okresie, kiedy utrwalały się tam języki indoeuropjeskie i obecne w nich ramy pojęciowe. Wykorzystując metodologiczne i teoretyczne narzędzia lingwistyki kulturowej oraz pojęcie *świata społecznego* (*świata życia*, niem. *Lebenswelt*, ang. *lifeworld*) w ujęciu Jürgena Habermasa, definiowane jako przekazywany kulturowo i organizowany językowo zasób wzorców interpretacyjnych, poddano analizie trzy biegunowo ustrukturowane asymetrie, mocno zakorzenione w myśli zachodniej: mężczyzna/kobieta, człowiek/zwierzę i kultura/natura. Wszystkie opierają się na koncepcji wyjątkowości człowieka w relacji do

innych bytów. Jednak kiedy rozważa się je w perspektywie ram pojęciowych zakodowanych w języku baskijskim, opozycje te znikają lub nabierają innego kształtu, zgodnie z ontologią animistyczną i związanym z nią pojęciem relacyjnej tożsamości indywidualnej. Innymi słowy, omawiane w artykule ramy pojęciowe wyrastające z lingwokultury baskijskiej często pokrywają się z takim rozumieniem animizmu, wedle którego wyraża on pewnego rodzaju ontologię relacyjną, podkreślającą i ściśle łączącą ze sobą pojęcia pokrewieństwa, wzajemnej pomocy i ogólnie wzajemności. Wyłaniający się z tych kontekstów obraz świata umożliwia niestandardowe spojrzenie na myśl zachodnią i rozwój pojęć w dawnej historii Europy.

Słowa kluczowe: lingwokultura baskijska; asymetrie biegunowe; animizm; rodzaj gramatyczny; relacja wzajemności; ontologia relacyjna