Chapter Five

The Circularity of Unilinear Evolution 1898 — c. 1910

"I should see the garden much better", said Alice to herself, "if I could get to the top of that hill: and here's a path that leads straight to it — at least, no, it doesn't do that — " (after going a few yards along the path, and turning several sharp corners), "but I suppose it will at last. But how curiously it twists! It's more like a corkscrew than a path! Well, *this* turn goes to the hill, I suppose — no, it doesn't! This goes straight back to the house! Well then, I'll try it the other way."

Lewis Carroll

This chapter is primarily concerned with the anthropological image of Aboriginal religion from 1898 until about 1910. Despite its brevity, this period was vitally alive with anthropological controversies which at times focused almost exclusively upon the Aboriginal evidence. Two of these controversies are of concern to us; firstly the debate about the existence of the alleged Aboriginal Supreme Beings, and secondly, the question of the origin of Australian totemism. Between them, these two issues cover a wide spectrum of Aboriginal religious phenomena, and Maddock, for instance, has argued that what he calls 'transcendental' and 'totemic' powers constitute the two main categories for examining 'world-creative powers' in Aboriginal belief (1972, p. 112 and chap. 5 passim).

The one theme underlying this chapter is that the evolutionary approach to the study of Aboriginal religion was so conjectural and so arbitrary as to be rendered useless. Anthropologists were increasingly coming to recognise that, in the words of Popper,

> The idea that any concrete sequence or succession of events ... can be described or explained by any one law, or by any one definite set of laws,

is simply mistaken. There are neither laws of succession, nor laws of evolution (1944-5, p. 117; cf. Radcliffe-Brown, 1923, p. 4).

Nevertheless, such a realization was not achieved without considerable intellectual upheaval. In this chapter I will be concerned with problems incurred within the evolutionary 'paradigm' which partially led to the 'crisis' in evolutionary anthropology. I will have more to say about some consequences of this crisis in the final chapter.

One of the individuals who did most to undermine evolutionary anthropology was Andrew Lang. Lang had been introduced to anthropology through reading M'Lennan's articles on totemism. In 1872 he met Tylor and became a disciple of his school; his first book, *Custom and Myth* (1884) was dedicated to Tylor. After a period of silence on anthropological matters lasting from 1887 until 1897, however, Lang emerged as a staunch critic of the Tylorian approach to the study of Religion.

It should be made quite clear that Lang did not reject the idea of social evolution. What Lang rejected was the notion that religion evolved in parallel with social evolution. In fact, he took quite the opposite view, arguing that there was an inverse relationship between religious conceptions and social progress. He was a unilinear degradationist. The consequence of such a stance was illuminating, since it meant that Lang had to make precisely the opposite correlation of religious and social phenomena than other evolutionary anthropologists. The embarrassing thing was, as we shall see, that the Australian evidence made just as much sense when turned upside down.

Lang was an academic sportsman. 'There would be no pleasure in argument, cricket, or any other sport if we knowingly cheated', he said (1897, p. 93). In practice this meant he wanted to see fair play for all the ethnographic evidence. It also meant that he enjoyed the challenge of a good controversy. A journalist by profession, Lang had the acuity and wit to rapidly perforate his opponent's theories. Sadly, his opponents did not appreciate these challenges. Tylor could never be induced to respond, and the sensitive Frazer gave up work for several months after reading Lang's critique of *The Golden Bough*. We will see that Howitt violently opposed Lang, and apparently his last years were upset only by the thought of reading Lang's reviews and letters. In fact, E. Sidney Hartland was the only critic to give Lang a good tussle over the Australian evidence (cf. Lang, 1910c, p. 519).

To my mind, Lang's theories are of themselves of little value to the modern reader. However, in context his contributions were invaluable. He was 'the ironic gadfly' (Hays, 1958, chap. 14) who stung anthropologists into recognizing evidence that was disparate

to their theories. It matters little that Lang's theories were often little better than those he criticised. What is significant is that he could use the evidence available at that time to arrive at precisely the opposite conclusion to that of his opponents. With hindsight, we can say that this was because unilinear evolutionary assumptions were invalid, and because there is no legitimate hierarchical order by which we can arrange religions. It is difficult to assess exactly to what extent Lang contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with evolutionary theory, but his ideas at least provide an excellent illustration of the difficulties inherent in that approach.

In the following pages I will examine in detail some of the controversies about Aboriginal religion which were initiated by Lang. It will be necessary first, however, to briefly update the discussion of 'primitive' intelligence and religious universality in evolutionary thought.

1. Primitive Intelligence and Religious Universality

In chapter three we saw that the idea of social evolution tended to make biological evaluation redundant as an explanation of racial intellectual differences. We also saw that Tylor at times seemed to want to dispense completely with such explanations. The scholars discussed in this chapter were the heirs to Tylor's science. Gossett has said:

> The rise of cultural anthropology had the utmost importance for race theory because the close and detailed knowledge of the community life of primitive peoples showed how directly ideas and customs are interrelated, and how fallacious is the idea that any society can be meaningfully interpreted in terms of its racial inheritance (1963, p. 416).

This tradition culminated in Boaz's *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911). Frazer and Lang fell well within its bounds. Frazer said:

> The savage is not a different sort of being from his civilized brother: he has the same capacities, mental and moral, but they are less fully developed. His evolution has been arrested, or rather retarded, at a low level (1927, p. 26).

Lang, who disliked the term 'primitive', went further and said that the Aborigines' intellectual capacities were *actually* (not potentially) well developed. In a passage with which it is easy to sympathise, he said:

> I do not know if high mental powers were needed to frame these marriage laws, but to understand them demands powers unspeakably higher than mine (1899, p. 7).

On the empirical level, Haddon's Torres Strait expedition had provided further evidence of the essential identity of primitive and civilized minds. C.G. Seligman had tested Aborigines from the Fitzroy and McKenzie river districts and found that their sensory and perceptual skills were the same as European's. The full significance of this is evident only when it is remembered that members of this Expedition were particularly influenced by Galton's psychological theory which states:

> The only information that reaches us concerning outward events appears to pass through the avenue of our senses; and the more perceptive the senses are of difference, the larger is the field upon which our judgment and intelligence can act (1883, p. 29).

As for Tylor's doctrine of religious universality, it had itself become all but universal. In 1896 Jevons said that the proposition that there were non-religious races

> ... has now gone to the limbo of dead controversies. Writers approaching the subject from such different points of view as Professor Tylor, Max Müller, Ratzel, de Quatrefages, Tiele, Waitz, Gerland, Peschel all agreed that there are no races, however rude, which are destitute of all idea of religion (1896, p. 7).

I have deliberately noted the doctrine was 'all but' universal, however, and Jevons' statement was somewhat premature. The exception was, of course, Frazer, who reverted to the old pre-Tylorian definition of religion.

> By religion [Frazer said] ... I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life (1911-15, vol. 1, p. 222f.).

For all intents and purposes this meant belief in and worship of a God. Frazer says elsewhere that

> ... by a God I mean a beneficent supernatural spirit, the ruler of the world or of some part of it, who resembles man in nature though he excels him in knowledge, goodness and power. This is, I think, the sense in which the ordinary man speaks of a God, and I believe that he is right in so doing (1913, vol. 1, p. 10).

In Frazer's opinion, the Aborigines could not match such a criterion. They were not religious but magicians.

In fact, the Aborigines were magicians *par excellence*, and I suspect Frazer was primarily inspired to postulate an age of magic through reading about them. When Frazer published the first edition of *The Golden Bough* in 1890, he had merely referred to two co-existing world-views: the personalist view whereby the world is governed by supernatural agents, and

... another conception in which we might detect a germ of the modern notion of natural law or the view of nature as a series of events occurring in an invariable order without the intervention of personal agency. The germ of which I speak is involved in that sympathetic magic, as it may be called, which plays a large part in most systems of superstition (1890, vol. 1, p. 9).

Frazer's mature views seem to have developed around 1898. In that year he wrote Spencer: 'I am coming more and more to the conclusion that ... magic has everywhere preceded religion' (Marett & Penniman, 1932, p. 41). Frazer published his famous Comteian (or, more accurately Turgotian) trilogy of magic, religion and science for the first time in the second edition of *The Golden Bough* (1900). I think it is fair to say the theory would have seemed even less credible had Spencer and Gillen not published *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* in the previous year.[20] As it was, Frazer had empirical 'support' for his contention that magic had preceded religion:

The theory that in the history of mankind religion has been preceded by magic [Frazer said], is confirmed inductively by the observation that among the aborigines of Australia, the rudest savages as to whom we possess accurate information, magic is universally practiced, whereas religion ... seems to be nearly unknown. Roughly speaking, all men in Australia are magicians, but not one is a priest (1905, p. 141).

But despite his stature, Frazer was merely an exception to the rule of the anthropological acceptance of religious universality.[21] Few theorists were willing to follow in his footsteps. Anthropologists objected to his denial of Aboriginal religiosity for two main reasons. Firstly, they would not accept his definition of religion. 'It is only by limiting his definition of religion, as he does', said Lang, 'that he can establish his theory of the origin of religion' (1901, p. 69). Secondly, however, Lang was willing to tackle Frazer using his own definition. He said:

Mr. Frazer must either have overlooked all the evidence for an Australian belief ruinous to his theory of the origin of religion ..., or he must have reasons, not produced, for thinking all the evidence too worthless to deserve confutation or even mention (ibid., p. 53).

To the evidence to which Lang refers, I must now turn.

2. Baiame and Company

I have already mentioned (chapter three) that Tylor and Lubbock had refused to accept the early accounts of Aboriginal Supreme Beings. However, when Howitt began publishing evidence of a South-East Australian 'All-Father' in 1883, it became patently obvious that this was a real threat to the established theories of the

evolution of religion. What, for instance, would happen to Lubbock's scheme — whereby man

> From believing only in ghosts ... came gradually to the recognition of the soul: at length uniting this belief with that of a Beneficent and Just Being, he connected Morality with Religion; a step of importance, which it is scarcely possible to overestimate (1870, p. 386).

— if a Moral Supreme Being is found to exist amongst the Aborigines, who were supposedly the most primitive race on earth?

In 1891 Tylor admitted the serious threat this data presented to his theories by writing an article to account for the reports of Aboriginal Supreme Beings. He states that such beliefs

> ... if really of native origin, would show the despised black fellow as in possession of theological generalizations as to the formation and conservation of the universe, and the nature of good and evil, comparable with those of his white surplanter in the land (1891, p. 290).

Yet, as we might guess from the title of Tylor's article — 'On the Limits of Savage Religion' — he had no intention of allowing such a conclusion. Instead he maintained that all instances of Aboriginal Gods were found amongst natives who had been influenced by missionaries. Thus, was not Salvado's *Mitogong* merely a Christian rendering of the demon *Mettagong*, whom Grey had said was associated with a phosphoretic fungus? Was not Salvado's mistake caused by communication to the blacks through broken English?[22] Turning his attention on *Baiame*, Tylor argues that since neither Backhouse, Buckley or Threlkeld, all in the area prior to 1840, had referred to the Deity, then it seems as though his divine attributes were introduced by missionaries after this date.[23] In Tylor's words:

> If then Baiame, unknown to well-informed observers till about 1840, suddenly appears then with markedly Biblical characteristics, the natural inference is that he arose from the teachings of the missionaries (1891, p. 294).

Similar rationalizations were provided for other Beings. Daramulun and Bunjil may have been the names of traditional spiritual beings, but when, says Tylor

> ... with references to them the terms Great Spirit and Supreme Spirit are used ... there are reasons to show that they only attained this divine eminence under Christian missionary influence (ibid., p. 295).

In 1911 Lubbock wrote *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion: An Answer to Critics* where he attempted to substantiate his theories in the face of criticism from every quarter. Besides maintaining the opinion that the Aborigines had no religious conceptions, he said, 'I ... agree with Mr. Tylor that the mere

acceptance of Baiame as having made the world was an idea derived from the missionaries' (1912, p. 108).

These apologies by Tylor and Lubbock are excellent illustrations of the resilience of old theories to new facts. In 1898, however, these facts received new patronage when Lang published *The Making of Religion.*[24]

Lang used a double-edged sword to commit anthropological patricide. He struck at the head and feet of Tylor's ghost. In Lang's opinion, the ghost-theory was invalid at both ends. At the 'bottom', he denied the necessity of the primitive belief in a soul-ghost being an illusion.[25] He said:

> We hold that very probably there exists human faculties of unknown scope; that these conceivably were more powerful and prevalent among our remote ancestors who founded religion; that they still may exist in savages as in civilized races, and that they may have confirmed, if they did not originate, the doctrine of separable souls (1898, p. 66f.).

However, what is more important for our purposes is that Lang also attacked the 'top' of the theory of the evolution of religion. He denied that the idea of God could have evolved from a belief in spirits for the simple reason that these Gods were not of a spiritual nature.

> They take it for granted [he said], that God is always ... regarded as a spirit ... But, if we can show that the early idea of an eternal, moral, creative being does not necessarily or logically imply the doctrine of spirit, then this idea of an eternal, moral, creative being may have existed before the doctrine of spirit was evolved (ibid., p. 176).

Howitt's All-Fathers were precisely the kind of evidence that Lang required to support his case. He said, 'we can best describe Daramulun and Nàpi and Baiame as "magnified non-natural men", or undefined beings who were from the beginning and are eternal'. Lang could see no way whereby such beings could be developed out of ghosts or dead chiefs.[26]

The first and most important critic of Lang's Australian evidence was E.S. Hartland. In the same year in which Lang's book was published, Hartland wrote a long review article entitled 'The "High-Gods" of Australia' which attempted to discredit the Aboriginal Deities. Hartland simply could not see that there was evidence to back Lang's extravagant claims. This is how Hartland summarised his reading of the same sources:

> We have not found these Supreme Beings eternal. Of Daramulan, it is expressly asserted that he died; he is 'a confessed ghost-god'. Bunjil, whatever he was once ... is now a star. Baiame 'went away' ... and now has his camp above the clouds. Mungan-ngaur, who used to live on the earth, 'ascended to the sky, where he still remains'. In no case was

> heaven, or the sky, the god's first home. Hence it is the reverse of correct to say that 'they were, naturally, from the beginning, from before the coming in of death, immortal Fathers in Heaven' ... We must be on our guard, too, against the expression 'Father in Heaven', and against many other expressions rhetorically used by Mr. Lang anent gods of the lower races. They convey to our minds reminiscences of Christian teaching of which the savage mind is guiltless (1898, p. 312).

Hartland's chastisement was a necessary corrective. Lang had been careless with his terminology, and he later said, 'I have dropped 'High-Gods' ... and say 'superior beings' so as not to anger needlessly my sensitive brethren' (quoted in Marett, 1929, p. 8).

There was more to Hartland's criticisms, however, than a quibble over semantics. Lang had followed a long tradition in making a sharp distinction between 'myth' and 'religion' (see chapter one).

> There are two currents [he said], the religious and the mythical, flowing together through religion. The former current, religion, even among very low savages, is pure from the magical ghost-propitiating habit. The latter current, mythological, is full of magic, mummery, and scandalous legend (1898, p. 198).

Using this distinction, Lang had sieved every piece of 'scandalous legend' out of his 'High-Gods', and the consequence was a caricatured god which Hartland could not recognize. Hartland quite rightly objected.

> But what is the distinction between religious belief and myth? Where does one begin and the other end? Myths are told in the mysteries as well as outside them. They are part of the rite, part of the religious belief (1898, p. 296).

Lang's inadequate answer was, to paraphrase it crudely, that religion is what we commonly call religion and myth is everything else (1899, p. 15). However, this inadequacy was not detrimental to Lang's thesis, and it ultimately did not matter that there was ambiguity in the All-Fathers' characters. Later, a more conservative Lang recalled his central issue, when he wrote to Marett, 'I only said that the superior beings of some savage beliefs were not animistic — which is true' (quoted in Marett, 1929, p. 8). I think we must concede that Lang was indebted to Hartland for compelling him to be faithful to the available ethnographic data.

Hartland, however, was also critical of the data itself, and he drew Lang's attention to Tylor's paper on 'The Limits of Savage Religion'. It might be mentioned (as Lang indeed did mention) that this criticism is a strange bed-mate for Hartland's previous criticism. If Hartland suspected that Christian doctrine had influenced the Aborigines' beliefs, then it seems inevitable that he must admit that the two religious systems have some thematic similarities.

Lang replied to Hartland, and more specifically to Tylor (of whose article he was previously unaware) in a paper entitled 'Are Savage Gods Borrowed from Missionaries?' (1899). This was one of many such articles which tried to prove that the All-Fathers were an indigenous Aboriginal conception. These articles typically proceeded by searching through obscure books and documents to find the earliest reference to the Deity in question, and then arguing that this date was so early as to preclude the possibility of missionary influence. These investigations are too tedious to warrant retelling, and were never conclusive, since the historical data were quite inadequate (see for eg. Thomas, 1905a, Howitt, 1904, pp. 501-4ff.). Opponents to Australian Gods could always find good counter-evidence. The defenders, if honest, could never be certain. Lang once wrote

> Missionary infiltration is not impossible, but from all I know of blacks and missionaries it is precious unlikely. One can get no further than that (quoted in Marett, 1929, p. 10).

Baldwin Spencer was never convinced that his friend's evidence for these 'All-Fathers' represented an indigenous belief. He wrote to Frazer:

> It is so easy to render into English what a native tells you with regard to an individual such as Baiame or Daramulun so as to give an idea of a belief in a Supreme Being. Howitt, who Lang quotes time after time, only made his statements on this matter as a result of talking to natives who were so civilized that they said the young men were spoilt by their intercourse with the whites, and therefore required to be brought under proper control. I do not believe any native Australian has the slightest idea of anything like an 'All-Father (in Marett & Penniman eds, 1932, p. 75).

Nonetheless, Spencer took the controversies over these All-Fathers seriously — seriously enough to include a chapter on 'Beliefs in Beings Endowed with Superior Powers' in *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*. Spencer and Gillen maintained that while the *alcheringa* ancestors certainly had 'superior powers', they were never appealed to for help and thus could not properly be called 'deities'. They said the tribes of Central Australia 'have no idea whatever of the existence of any Supreme Being who is pleased if they follow a certain line of what we call moral conduct and displeased if they do not so' (Spencer & Gillen, 1904, p. 491). The Arunta did acknowledge a being named *Twanyirika* who was, like Howitt's All-Fathers, associated with the sound of the bull-roarer, but he was merely a 'bogey' to scare away the women and uninitiated youths. Spencer and Gillen concluded:

> ... we searched carefully in the hope of finding traces of a belief in such a being, but the more we got to know the details of the native beliefs, the

> more evident it became that they had not the faintest conception of any individual who might in any way be described as a 'High God of the Mysteries' (ibid., p. 503).

This conclusion was not uncontested. In 1903 Lang had sent Spencer a copy of a letter written by the Lutheran missionary, Carl Strehlow. Strehlow was stationed at the Hermannsburg mission in Central Australia, which brought him into contact with the south-western Arunta, a people that Spencer and Gillen had never seen. Strehlow argued that Spencer had mistranslated the word *altjira (alchera)* as 'dream', and that it was, in fact, the name of a Supreme Being. Spencer wrote to Frazer: 'The paper only occupies 1½pp. foolscap, but has more utter misleading nonsense packed into a small space than I recollect having come across before' (in Marett & Penniman eds, 1932, p. 96). Later in his life, Spencer actually returned to Central Australia to verify his original claims. In *The Arunta* he maintained his first opinion, and suggests that Strehlow had been misled because he had relied on a few Christian informants and had never witnessed a ceremony (1927, p. 589 and 'appendix' passim). Strehlow's description was as follows:

> The Arunta have a supreme good (*mara*) being called Altjira. He is eternal (ngambakala) and looks like a big, strong, red-skinned man with long hair. His feet are like the feet of an emu and therefore his name is *altjira iliinka* — the emu-footed altjira (quoted in Róheim, 1934, p. 65).

One curious fact is that Gillen had recorded a not dissimilar belief amongst other Arunta tribes in his contribution to the reports of the Horn expedition.

> The sky is said to be inhabited by three persons [wrote Gillen] — a gigantic man with an immense foot shaped like that of the emu, a woman, and a child who never develops beyond childhood. The man is called *Ulthaana*, meaning spirit. When a native dies his spirit is said to ascend to the home of the great *Ulthaana*, where it remains for a short time (1896, p. 183).

Why Spencer and Gillen never referred to *Ulthaana* is a mystery, but they certainly incurred suspicion by not explaining why their later views were not in accordance with Gillen's early report.

Leaving aside this ambiguity in the works of Spencer and Gillen, the fact is that even Strehlow's alleged Supreme Being never rose to the status of Howitt's All-Fathers. If there were Arunta deities they were more *otiose* than those of the south-east Australian tribes. They were not creators, and they had no interest in mankind. Nor did they bring into being the totemic ancestors, who were the true focus of Central Australian religious conceptions. Even Lang conceded their uncertain character, saying, 'I do not insist on the alleged sky dwelling being of the Arunta' (1905c, p. 81).

A polarity was thus developing out of the Australian evidence. On the one hand, there were the Central tribes who had only the vaguest notion of a deity, if indeed they had such a notion at all. On the other hand, there were the south-eastern tribes who were universally recognised as having 'higher' (though not necessarily earlier) religious conceptions. Even Frazer, who would not accept the authenticity of Howitt's All-Fathers (1905, pp. 148-152ff.), said these tribes 'hold beliefs and observe practices which might have grown into a regular religion, if their development had not been cut short by European intervention' (ibid., p. 142) — and if Frazer were consistent with his own definitions and theories, 'regular religions' begin with gods.[27]

Now, the vital question was which of these Aborigines were the more primitive? Had the All-Fathers grown out of lower religions like that of the Arunta, or was the emu-footed sky-being and the animistic beliefs of Central Australia a degenerate All-Fatherism? I will return to this question presently, but before this it will be necessary to turn once more to the subject of totemism. We will see how evolutionary theories of totemism also revolved around this central problem: were Spencer and Gillen's or Howitt's natives more primitive?

3. Kobongism[28]

At the end of chapter three I briefly examined some of the earliest theories of totemism. M'Lennan's subject was taken up by a friend and fellow Scot, William Robertson Smith, who argued that the Semitic system of sacrifice had developed out of totemism. Robertson Smith's ideas were made the basis of an ethnographically broader theory proposed by the Anglican theologian, F.B. Jevons. According to Jevons, totemism, while not quite the origin of religion, was a necessary first step in religious development. He argued that religion began with a belief in animating forces *plus* a sense of the mysteriousness and uncontrollability of these forces. Because these powers could not be manipulated, it was necessary to attempt to make friendly alliances with them. Now, to early man all friends were kin. They assumed this was true for all creatures, and the obvious 'kin' group in nature was the species. Clans thus made alliances with species possessing supernatural power. These totemic species became kinsmen, were respected as brothers, and basically were believed to be of one flesh. The totem 'became a permanently friendly power; in a word it became a god, whereas all other spirits remained evil' (1896, p. 104). The sacramental meal developed out of totemism. It was based on the belief that the supernatural (not

natural) powers of a totemic plant or animal could be acquired by consuming its flesh.

This was quite a remarkable theory. When Robertson Smith and Jevons published their ideas there was no evidence that the Aborigines, or any other totemic societies, actually partook of the flesh of the totemic species. Tylor realized this and chastised Jevons accordingly (1899a, p. 145). But in the same year Tylor wrote these criticisms, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) was published. In light of this new evidence Jevons replied to Tylor that

> Arguments to show that, if we confine ourselves to actual objective facts, we must say that the sacramental meal is only found in connection with pastoral cults, are now seen to prove only that the sacramental meal had not been found amongst totemists, not that it never existed amongst them (1899, p. 380).

Spencer and Gillen radically changed our understanding of totemism. Spencer wrote that 'If we had never chanced to come across the intichiuma ceremonies, we should have regarded the Central tribes as agreeing with and corroborating Grey's well-known statement about the totem not being eaten' (in Marett & Penniman eds, 1932, p. 143). Prior to Spencer and Gillen's discoveries, Grey's statements had been considered normative. The *intichiuma* ceremonies revealed that Grey had merely scratched the surface, and that, in fact, the Aborigines were obliged periodically to partake of the totemic species to ensure its increase.

Frazer has quite rightly said of Robertson Smith's theory that

> ... for many years, it remained a theory and nothing more, without a single positive instance of such a sacrament being known to support it. Then came the great discoveries of Messrs. Spencer and Gillen which made an era in the study of primitive man (1910, vol. 4, p. 230).

Of course, we need not condone the evolutionary emphasis of such theories whereby the origin of 'higher' sacramental beliefs was sought in totemism. What *was* of lasting value was the recognition of the structural similarities between these two phenomena. In this sense W.E.H. Stanner has relatively recently re-affirmed the view that '[t]otemism is the foundation as well as the frame of the sacramental plan' (1963, p. 31).

The subject of totemism, which began with M'Lennan and was inherited by Robertson Smith, was, in turn, passed on to a close friend of Robertson Smith — J.G. Frazer. It has been remarked that 'totemism as a subject of scientific enquiry may be said to date from the appearance in 1887 of Frazer's diminutive *Totemism*' (Goldenweiser, 1915-16, p. 953). This book developed out of an article Frazer had written, at Robertson Smith's request, for the ninth edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. However, Frazer

had no theory of the origin of totemism at this stage. Three years later, when the first edition of *The Golden Bough* appeared, he offered what he thought might be a solution to the problem. Following some evidence collected by Edward Clodd (in 1884, but see also Clodd, 1885, pp. 188-198ff.), Frazer conjectured that totemism was rooted in the idea of an external soul. He argued that primitive man regards the body as a mannikin which is operated by the soul. The soul could run the body from within, or alternatively, by the law of sympathy, it might equally well control it from a distance. Since the soul was believed to be material, it was thought advisable to keep it in a 'box' for safe keeping. Now, if an animal was chosen as the 'box' for the soul, the owner of the soul would have to refrain from killing any of the species, since it would be impossible to remember the specific individual animal. Thus, Frazer said, 'the totem, on this theory, is simply the receptacle in which a man keeps his life (1911-15, vol. 11, p. 220).

Whereas Spencer and Gillen's findings had supported Robertson Smith's and Jevons' hypotheses, they proved detrimental to Frazer's first theory of totemism. Frazer later said:

> It is true that amongst the most primitive totemic tribes known to us, the Aborigines of Central Australia, there are traces of a doctrine of external souls associated with totemism: for there is some evidence that the ancestors of the present totemic clans are supposed to have transferred their souls to certain sacred implements of wood and stone which they call *churinga* and *nurtunjas*. But the evidence is ambiguous and the connection of sacred implements with totems is far from clear (1910, vol. 4, p. 54).

A theory not unlike Frazer's had been published by Tylor in 1899. However, he was dissatisfied with Frazer's views on several counts (it would not account for why a man's relatives and friends eat his totem and thus risk his life) and consequently Tylor went back to a theory by Wilkens, which had also influenced Frazer. According to Wilkens and Tylor, totemism was based on the belief that men's souls pass into animals when they die. But once again, Spencer demolished this theory, stating:

> I do not really see any support for this in the system of the Central tribes. Among these, while animals and plants changed into men, there is no idea of the soul of the ancestor ever passing at death into an animal or plant; indeed the traditions, so far as they are worth anything, are quite opposed to any such idea (in Marett & Penniman eds., 1932, p. 36).

Many old theories of totemism dropped like flies in the face of the new evidence. It was as though 'heaven, to punish the sins of the learned, permitted Messrs. Spencer and Gillen to discover and describe the institutions of the Arunta' (Lang, 1907a, p. 210).

Meanwhile, Frazer and Spencer were simultaneously, and independently, developing a new theory based on this Arunta evidence itself. In 1898 Frazer wrote to Spencer:

> In going through the second proofs of your book, I have been more than ever struck by your account of the intichiuma ceremonies. Such ceremonies for the multiplication of the totem plant or animal have not been ... reported from any other part of the world, and taken in conjunction with other facts that you mention, seem to set totemism in an entirely new light, at least so far as the central Australian tribes are concerned. It almost looks as if among these tribes totemism was a system expressly devised for the purpose of procuring a plentyful supply of food, water, sunshine, wood, etc. (in Marett & Penniman eds, 1932, p. 24f.).

Frazer conjectured that each totemic group was responsible for the magical rites to increase a particular species. They would avoid killing these animals so that they should become trusting of man, and thus easily caught by others in the tribe. But on some occasions the totemic animal must be eaten, since it is only through participation of, and thus identification with, the totemic species that the clan could perform the magical increase ceremonies. Following his old master Robertson Smith, Frazer says

> The ceremonial eating of the totem by the men of the totem ... seems to me a true totem sacrament (the first authentic example of such a sacrament that has come to light, I believe) the object of which is to identify the man with his totem by imparting to him the life and qualities of the totem animal (ibid., p. 27).

Besides eating the totem, the Arunta turned out to be a surprise in yet another way. Their totemic groups were not exogamous. Totems were not inherited, but were rather determined by the place where a mother first felt the pangs of pregnancy. Consequently, each totem was shared (although not equally — but I cannot enter a discussion of this fact here) by all the exogamous groups. The importance of this situation for theories of totemism could hardly be overemphasized, since it represented an instance where totemism was clearly not an institution designed to regulate marriage. While all early theories of totemism had as a prerequisite a 'religious mentality', they differed as to whether totemism itself had actually begun as a social or a religious phenomenon. Herbert Spencer (and no doubt M'Lennan himself) had offered social explanations. Robertson Smith and Jevons had opted for religious theories. This latter stance was now apparently supported by the new evidence about the Arunta. Frazer likewise proposed a religious explanation, saying 'if my new theory of totemism ... is correct, it seems to follow that the original and fundamental side of totemism is the religious, not the social' (ibid., p. 28).[29]

Spencer applauded Frazer's theory, and said that, except for a few minor discrepancies, he had to come to exactly the same conclusion. He agreed that totemism was originally a religious phenomenon which preceded the social divisions of the Australian tribes. When these divisions developed, one of two things could happen: the totemic group might be exclusively allocated to one clan, as was usually the case, or the totems might be freely distributed throughout all of the clans, which had happened amongst the Arunta (in Marett & Penniman eds., 1932, pp. 30-34ff.). Frazer immediately adopted this account which he reproduced in some of his later articles (1899a, pp. 113-115ff.)

Frazer urged Spencer to publish the theory, generously giving him precedence regarding it since he had collected the facts. Spencer and Gillen published their views in an article entitled 'Some Remarks on Totemism as Applied to Australian Tribes' in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute* for 1899. Frazer's paper, 'Observations on Central Australian Totemism' followed immediately on from Spencer and Gillen's article. In the same year Frazer published a fuller version of the theory in two articles entitled 'The Origins of Totemism'. Spencer said they were 'simply splendid, and I read them two or three times, appreciating more and more your wealth of knowledge and power of intuition' (in Marett & Penniman eds, 1932, p. 53).

Before moving on to say something about Lang's theories of totemism, I will briefly summarise Frazer's third and final theory of totemism. This 'conceptual theory' was based on yet another new fact uncovered by Spencer and Gillen amongst the Arunta. The Arunta were (allegedly) ignorant of the relationship between sexual intercourse and procreation. They believed in eponymous ancestors who had once transformed natural objects and half-formed creatures into humans. These ancestors deposited *churinga* at certain spots, and then themselves entered the earth at other places. The Arunta identify certain natural features of the Central Australian landscape as the places where these *churinga* were located and where the ancestors had descended below the earth's surface. At each of these places, a number of ancestors belonging to the same animal or plant group from which they had been originally transformed, are always to be found. When a woman passes these areas she might be entered by one of the 'spirit-children' and thus rendered pregnant. It is consistent with this view that the child belong to the totemic group of the ancestors at the spot where the mother feels the first sign of pregnancy, that is, where she is entered by the spirit-child.

According to Frazer, if it is accepted that the Arunta actually believe that the species itself has impregnated the woman, then we have an explanation of totemism. Totemism would be

... nothing more or less than an early theory of conception, which presented itself to savage man when he was still ignorant of the true cause of the propagation of the species (1905, p. 160).

I will examine some of the critical responses to Frazer's theories in the next section (see Brown, 1911). Meanwhile we must turn to examine Lang's hypothesis of totemism. Lang first published his theory in 1902, and he still held it, in an almost totally unmodified form, at his death in 1912. The principal difference between the conjectures of Spencer and Frazer, and those of Lang, was that the last author conceived of totemism as a social development. Of course, Lang did not deny that totemism had certain religious manifestations; that 'myths give a "religious" origin to totemism' (1905c, p. 138), but he maintained that its initial impetus was social.

The roots of Lang's matured theory go back to his first book, where he gave his approval to a notion he attributed to M'Lennan, which stated that

... people united by contiguity, and by the blind sentiment of kinship not yet brought into explicit consciousness, might mark themselves off by a badge, and might thence derive a name, and, later, might invent a myth of their descent from the object which the badge represented (1894, p. 262).

Like Herbert Spencer, Lang believed that totemism developed out of a system of naming, but unlike Spencer he argued that it was a group's rather than an individual's name.

Following Darwin (and anticipating Freud), Lang suggested that the earliest human societies constituted a cyclopean family. These small bands had no name for themselves, and merely referred to themselves as 'us' or 'we'. However, while there was only one 'we' there were many 'them', and consequently, plant and animal names were chosen to distinguish between various foreign groups.

Now these small bands were ruled by a jealous eldest male who was unwilling to share his wives. Being less rebellious than Freud's savages, the sons simply took their wives from other groups. From their wives they learned their own totemic name, that is, the names their wives' horde used. In support of this supposition, Lang draws attention to the fact that Spencer and Gillen had said ' it is possible that the names of the tribes were originally applied to them by outsiders' (Spencer & Gillen, 1904, p. 10, n.2; Lang 1905c, p. 128).

Lang was quite aware that a great deal of his theory was highly conjectural, and he ultimately only insisted on the point that somehow the groups had received their respective names, and had then forgotten how they got them.

Unessential to my system [said Lang], is the question *how* these groups got animal names, as long as they got them and did not remember how they got them, and as long as names, according to their way of thinking,

indicated an essential and mystic *rapport* between each group and its name-giving animal (1905c, p. 125).

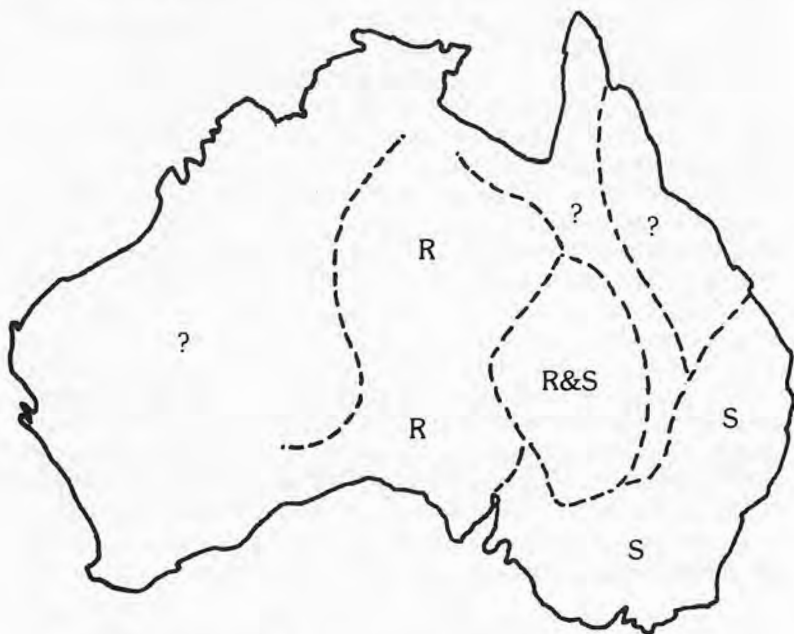
Lang found abundant evidence of the mystical nature of Aboriginal names, such as the secret *aritna churinga* of the Arunta, which was solemnly guarded from the women and uninitiated youths.

The 'mystic rapport' between a group and an animal name was necessary to explain totemism, but it was not totemism *per se*. It was the presence of such names within the context of the earliest social developments that produced the totemic complex. A young man from the 'emu' horde was forced by his jealous father to take a non-emu wife. Since (as was commonly held by early anthropologists) descent was initially matralineal, a man's wife's children would share her horde name. Thus the emu horde would eventually come to include many non-emu groups. Eventually, intermarriage led to alliance, and the names became mere survivals. Nonetheless, the prohibition against marrying someone of the same totemic group prevailed. Even though emus were now found outside the local group they were still tabooed as marriage partners, and similarly, even though non-emus were found within the local group, they too must not be married to a man of the emu totem. Finally, it should be mentioned that this scheme had to polarize into only two local groups to give the moiety divisions found amongst the Aborigines. Lang summarizes his theory as follows:

> Our scheme gives us, naturally, and on Dr. Darwin's lines, first, many small local groups, perhaps in practice exogamous; then these local groups invested with animal-names; then, the animals become totems, sanctioning exogamy; then by exogamy and female descent, each animal name *local* group becomes full of other animal names by *descent*; then an approach to peace among all the groups naturally arises; then pacific *connubium* between them all ..., and lastly, the allies prevailing, the inhabitants of a district become an harmonious tribe with two phratries ... and with the other old local group-names represented on what are now the totem kins within the phratry (ibid., p. 150f.).

Having surveyed the main theories of totemism offered around the turn of the century, it is time briefly to accentuate their major point of difference. We have seen that there were two basic approaches towards the explanation of totemism. One approach, which was advocated by Robertson Smith, Jevons, Baldwin, Spencer and Frazer, emphasized the religious origin of totemism. The other approach, adopted by Herbert Spencer and Lang, saw totemism as being principally a social phenomenon. Now, I have also mentioned that unlike other tribes, Arunta totemic groups were not exogamous, which tended to support a 'religious' explanation. However, other tribes seemed to have a totemic organization which favoured the 'social' model. Spencer divided the ethnographic

evidence available at the time as follows (from Marett & Penniman eds., 1932, p. 32).



R = religious aspect of totemism predominant
S = social aspect of totemism predominant
R&S = both religious and social aspects well developed
? = unknown

Thus there were Australian tribes which seemed to have either predominantly 'social' or predominantly 'religious' forms of totemism. Likewise, there were 'religious' and 'social' theories of the origin of totemism. For an evolutionist, the only way to decide which of these theories was correct was to establish which form of totemism, the 'religious' or the 'social', was the earlier. As Lang said:

> The crucial question for the students of the evolution of totemism is — which of the many stages of totemic society comes nearest to the beginning? Till we settle that problem, it is in vain to try to find the origin of totemism (1905a, p. 315).

And so, as was the case with the All-Father evidence and its implications for theories of the origin of religion, the theories of the origin of totemism revolved around one central question: were

Spencer and Gillen's or Howitt's (and other's) natives more primitive? I will examine some answers to this question in the remainder of this chapter.

4. The Crisis in Evolutionary Social Theory

We might conveniently begin with the publication of Frazer's 'The Origin of Totemism' in 1899. Here he adduced two proofs of Arunta primitiveness. Firstly, although the Arunta were regularly cold, they had not discovered the use of clothing, and secondly, they were ignorant of the relationship between sexual intercourse and reproduction (1899a, p. 93f.). Lang responded immediately to Frazer's arguments in his critique of 'Mr. Frazer's Theory of Totemism' (1899). Concerning the Arunta's lack of clothing, Lang pointed out that there were other Aborigines, supposedly more advanced, who had not only failed to invent clothing, but had also discarded clothes that were given to them.

The second alleged proof of Arunta primitiveness was to become a particularly thorny problem, and indeed it is a problem that scholars are still debating (see chap. 6). We have seen that it formed the basis of Frazer's third theory of totemism. Having read this theory, Lang once again took up his pen against Frazer. Frazer had suggested that the time lapse between intercourse and the first pangs of pregnancy had led to the nescience of the father's role in procreation. But more than this, he said that the Arunta completely denied all ties of blood, which helped account for their non-hereditary totems. Lang retorted:

> When the Arunta 'ignore the tie of blood in the maternal side', they prove too much. They ignore that of which they are not ignorant. Not being idiots, they are well aware of the maternal tie of blood; but they do not permit it to affect the descent of the totem (1905c, p. 190).

Thus, in Lang's opinion:

> denial of procreation is not a 'proof of pristine ignorance', but a philosophic inference from philosophic premises ... It is a theory logically drawn from the philosophic conception that each unceasing spirit was originally a totemic spirit, and continues to be the same totemic spirit throughout all its reincarnations (1907a, p. 190).

This is not unlike the modern ethnographic interpretation. Thus, R.M. Berndt has said that the Central Australian tribes are not ignorant of physiological paternity and maternity, but 'the physical aspects were submerged by the belief in spiritual association' (1974, fasc. 4, p. 1). Lang argued that:

> The proof of 'primitiveness' in the Arunta is rather a proof of something else: namely, of the extraordinary extent to which the Arunta have developed an unflinching system of Animism, of spirits' (1899b, p. 1014).

If we recall Lang's famous dictum: 'the more Animism the less "All Fatherism"' (1907c, p. 11), we can easily see the internal consistency of his arguments. The abnormal non-exogamous totemism of the Arunta was due to their animistic beliefs. Now Lang had maintained, since he wrote *The Making of Religion*, that it was possible that 'the crude idea of a "Universal Power" came *earliest*, and was superseded, in part, by a later propitiation of the dead and ghosts' (1898, p. 186). Thus, the departure of the Arunta All-Father, and the consequent rise of animism, had, in fact, been responsible for the development of their totemic anomality. If this was so, then the Arunta were not the most, but the least primitive of the Aborigines.

However, this argument depended on the supposition that All-Fatherism was more primitive than animism: a supposition which was, to put it mildly, not uncontested. Even those who accepted that Howitt's All-Fathers represented a genuine indigenous belief were reluctant to condone Lang's theory that the High-Gods revealed the origin of religion or, for that matter, the earliest form of Aboriginal religion. Even R.R. Marett, to whom Lang had written, 'you alone, I think, gave my poor "All-Fathers" a hand' (quoted in Marett, 1929, p. 10), did not think these beings were the earliest manifestations of Aboriginal religion.

Marett was introduced to anthropology through reading Lang's *Custom and Myth*. Like Lang, he opposed Tylor's animistic theory, as might be guessed from the title of his paper on 'Pre-Animistic Religion' (1900). Marett believed that religion was rooted in a sense of awe, which he once described in a rather Otto-like manner as 'a fear charged with an overtone of wonder' (1910, p. 157). The sound of the Australian bull-roarer induced just such an emotion, and Marett developed the argument that the All-Fathers were merely personified bull-roarers.

> I have to confess to the opinion with regard to *Daramulun, Mungan-ngaur, Tundun* and *Baiami* [he said] ... that their prototype is nothing more or less than the well-known material and inanimate object, the bull-roarer (1900, p. 16).

We cannot be detained here by a more detailed investigation of this theory. It must suffice to note that Lang replied that 'there are, even in Australia, plenty of bull-roarers where there is no All-Father' and conversely, 'the All-Father is found all over the world, in places where the bull-roarer is unknown' (1909a, p. 890).

The most serious attack on Lang's hypothesis that the All-Fathers revealed a very early religious development came, however,

from Howitt himself. Howitt believed the All-Fathers represented beings which might have developed into fully fledged deities, and also argued that they represented an indigenous conception. With these points he was in essential agreement with Lang. Where they differed was in that Howitt thought All-Fatherism had grown out of far 'simpler' religious systems, such as those of the Central Australian tribes. In an almost (Herbert) Spencerian fashion, Howitt suggested that the All-Father was the personified dead chief. Given the doctrine of a spirit or soul which departed to another world upon earth, it seemed an obvious inference that the deceased headman or medicine-man would lead them in the next life. 'From this', said Howitt, 'it is not a long stretch to the idea of the All-Father of the tribe' (1904, p. 507).

Thus Howitt, with most other anthropologists, maintained that the religious beliefs of the south-eastern tribes were more developed than those of the Central tribes. He made his position on this point quite explicit in what was to become one of the most controversial passages of the period. I apologize for its length, but it seems wisest —both because of its importance and because Howitt scolded Lang for editing it — to give it in full.

> It seems quite clear that *Nurrundere, Nurelli, Bunjil, Mungan-ngaua, Daramulun* and *Baiame* all represent the same being under different names. To this may be reasonably added *Koin* of the Lake Macquarie tribes, *Maamba, Birral* and *Kohin* of those of the Herbert River, thus extending the range of this belief certainly over the whole of Victoria and of New South Wales, up to the eastern boundaries of the tribes of the Darling River. If the Queensland coast tribes are included, then the western bounds might be indicated by a line drawn from the mouth of the Murray River to Cardwell, including the Great Dividing Range, with some of the fall inland in New South Wales. This would define the part of Australia in which a belief exists in an anthropomorphic supernatural being, who lives in the sky, and who is supposed to have some kind of influence on the morals of the natives. No such belief seems to obtain in the remainder of Australia, although there are indications of a belief in anthropomorphic beings inhabiting the sky-land. *That part of Australia which I have indicated as the habitat of tribes having that belief is also the area where there has been the advance from group marriage to individual marriage, from descent in the female to that in the male line; where the primitive organization under the class system has been more or less replaced by an organization based on locality*; in fact, where those advances have been made to which I have more than once drawn attention in this work (ibid., p. 499f., italics added).

This was precisely the kind of evidence anti-Langians needed, since it correlated belief in All-Fathers with social phenomena almost incontestably acknowledged as indicative of higher evolutionary stages. Thus, Frazer quickly seized upon

Howitt's evidence, arguing in a paraphrased version of the previous quote 'That progress in Australia is marked by two great steps: individual marriage has been substituted for group marriage, and paternal descent of the totem has prevailed over maternal descent' (1905, p. 154). Frazer went on to provide two environmental explanations for the comparative lack of social development of the Central Australian Aborigines. Firstly, the coastal tribes had a more bountiful environment, which meant they had less reason to have recourse to magic. The relatively fertile coastal regions also provided greater sustenance which rendered these Aborigines biologically fitter (but not in the hereditary sense) and thus intellectually sharper. Secondly, the regular and dramatic seasonal changes in Central Australia convinced these natives of the efficacy of their magical rites. Both factors bound the Central tribes to a magical mode of thought which prohibited their progress to religion, and ultimately, to science (ibid., pp. 167-172ff.).

E.S. Hartland also made good use of Howitt's correlation of religious beliefs and social institutions. When he reviewed Howitt's book, he took the opportunity to renew his attacks on Lang's theory that Aboriginal deities were early religious manifestations. Hartland emphasized Howitt's point that:

> ... the area of belief in this important Being seems to be confined to the south-east. The tribes which hold it are precisely those in which the greatest advance has been made in social organization (1905, p. 105).

It is perhaps worth noting that Hartland, who believed that magic and religion had a common origin, did not accept the Frazerian explanation for the backward state of the Central tribes. While Hartland felt the south-eastern tribes were less primitive than the Arunta, he also considered the Arunta, in turn, to be less primitive than the tribes of northern Central Australia. He argued that the rites of the northern tribes were 'not magical but religious, using that term in a wide sense' (1904, p. 472), and that the 'magical *intichiuma* ceremonies of the Arunta had developed *after* their northern equivalents. He proposed that this transition from religion to magic had 'been evolved by the climatic conditions acting upon the necessities of the people' (ibid., p. 471f.). For Hartland, necessity was the mother of the invention of magic. For Frazer, magic was the mother of detention.

Leaving the discrepancies between Hartland and Frazer aside (although these are certainly quite interesting), it is evident that they both agreed with Howitt that All-Fatherism was a relatively late development in Australia. Lang obviously had to either abandon his theory of the origin of religion or defend it against this apparently contrary evidence. He chose to defend, and in doing so, brought the

problems of High-Gods and totemism to the same evolutionary head. In 1905, he made four main defences of his hypothesis that the south-eastern tribes were more primitive than the Central Australian tribes. These are found in *The Secret of the Totem*, the 'Introduction' to Parker's *The Euahlayi Tribe*, 'The Primitive and the Advanced in Totemism', and the brief, but highly controversial reply to Hartland and Howitt entitled 'All-Fathers in Australia'. His 1907 paper called 'Australian Problems' is also relevant.

The simple fact of the matter was Lang could not see any evidence to support Howitt's claims. The subject of so-called 'group-marriage' is too extensive to discuss here, and it must suffice for me to mention that Lang — like N.W. Thomas, who published *Kinship Organization and Group Marriage in Australia* in 1906 — rightly denied that *pirraurau* was a form of group marriage (cf. Montagu, 1937, pp. 233-238ff.). Matrilineality and a simple two class social division, however, were commonly agreed to be more primitive than patrilineality and four and eight class divisions. Like Frazer and Hartland, Lang 'supposed Mr. Howitt ... to mean that the All-Father belief is a concomitant of advance from "group marriage" to individual marriage, and from female descent to local organization'(1906, p. 289). If this was Howitt's meaning, then, Lang said, it seems that Howitt had overlooked his own collection of facts. In *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* Howitt had given five instances of belief in All-Fathers in patrilineal societies, and seven instances in matrilineal societies. Furthermore, the All-Father was not found in the Central Australian tribes, all of which were patralineal. Thus, Lang concluded:

> ... it is perfectly certain that social and ceremonial advance is not the cause of the All-Father belief. The opinion that it is the cause is merely the result of a hasty generalization, made in defiance of the known facts (1950a, p. 320).

I imagine that this, and similar statements, was simply the last straw for Howitt's tolerance. Lang was suspected of being a critic of Howitt ever since the appearance of an unsigned review of Howitt's first article (published in Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria*). Lang had been his chief opponent ever since. Following these attacks in 1905, Howitt and his supporters lost all sense of moderation in taking their revenge.

Howitt replied in the pages of *Folk-Lore* that he had not overlooked his own facts. Apparently, Howitt had not meant to imply that social development was a necessary concomitant to a belief in All-Fathers. He wrote:

> The fact that the All-Father belief is held by tribes which have not got beyond the two-class organization, or who have developed four sub-

> classes, while others hold it who have got so far as to be organized upon locality, means no more than, that some tribes have progressed in social development more rapidly than others (1906, p. 176).

Howitt had meant to identify a broad social development from Lake Eyre to the coast, but it was not detrimental to this scheme if some tribes apparently lagged out of phase. Only a total perspective revealed the relevant pattern.

In my opinion, Lang's misinterpretation was quite understandable, and it seems that Frazer and Hartland fell into the same trap. Lang pleaded: 'I ask the reader whether this was not a natural, if erroneous, interpretation. In 1906 he published apologies in *Folk-Lore*, the *Athenaeum*, *The Academy* and in a corrigendum to *The Secret of the Totem*.

This was virtually the end of serious anthropological discussion between these individuals. The story is not quite ended, however, and its conclusion, though unscholarly, is particularly revealing. Howitt was dissatisfied with Lang's apologies. His real concern was not in debating the Australian data, but rather with the fact that Lang had rearranged his passage about the correlation of All-Father beliefs and social development. To my mind, Lang's version was admittedly a re-organized (and probably better organized) quotation, but the meaning was still intact. Nonetheless, Howitt wanted blood. Spencer wrote to Frazer:

> ... it is [Howitt's] sacred duty to punch, pound and pulverise him until he hasn't a whole bone in his body. I do not think that Andrew Lang, arch-wriggler that he is and past master of making black look white — can escape from Howitt's clutches (quoted in Howitt Walker, 1971, p. 246).

Lang was justifiably bewildered by this quibble over the arrangement of a quotation. He wrote to *The Academy* in response to Howitt's criticisms:

> Sir — Mr. Howitt ... appears (if I understand him this time) to ask me to clear myself of 'an unpleasant suggestion of manipulation' — of his text. How can I reply? If I am capable of intentionally garbling a passage, to be then 'used as the ground for a charge' (against Mr. Howitt) of 'overlooking his own facts' I am also capable of falsely denying that to which I seem to be suspected. I leave Mr. Howitt to the enjoyment of his own suspicion — if he suspects me (19-1-1907, p. 75).

If matters were not tense enough, Lang then wrote a review of Thomas' book on group marriage in Australia in the next edition of *The Academy*. The review concluded with the words

> Mr. Thomas' book is a severely critical and much needed essay in restraint of the making of hasty theories. A similar work by him on Australian Magic and Religion would satisfy a want acutely felt by students (26-1-1907, p. 88).

The point of this statement, of course, was aimed at Howitt. Spencer wrote to Howitt suggesting he write by way of reply to Thomas and Lang that:

> What I have written is true and that inasmuch as my work is the result of personal observation and not a matter of guesswork I see no reason to alter my opinions and I beg to state that the two individuals abovementioned are a couple of unscrupulous unutterable idiots (quoted in Howitt Walker, 1971, p. 247f.).

In the following year Lang ended his clash with Howitt with the writing of his obituary. Always the sportsman, Lang wrote: 'Dr. Howitt's patience, his eagerness to verify his facts, and to withdraw whatever he had reason to suspect as incorrect statements, are universally and gratefully recognized' (1908, p. 85).

In the years following Howitt's death the debates over the Australian evidence cooled down. Frazer and Lang published further works, but these lacked the innovative boldness of their earlier writings. The days of evolutionary social theory were rapidly coming to an end. Their issues were to become superseded, and their theories went to the grave with their authors.

Why was this? I think if we take the preceding discussion as representative of evolutionary debates, then the answer is fairly obvious. Unilinear evolution only worked as long as everyone obeyed the rules. But as soon as its basic premise or, to use Kuhn's term, its 'paradigm', was questioned, it became a chaotic and unmanageable theory. According to Kuhn, there will always be certain anomalies within a paradigm: 'The recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that governed normal science' (1962, p. 52f.). Most anomalies are accommodated by making minor theoretical adjustments. Tylor's and Lubbock's treatment of the All-Fathers would be a good example of this. Some anomalies cannot be so easily dealt with, however, and they threaten the very foundation of the paradigm. Kuhn says that 'when ... an anomaly comes to seem more than just another puzzle of normal science, the transition to crisis ... has begun' (ibid., p. 82). As we saw, Lang took the same Australian ethnographic data and literally stood it on its head. What was worse, it made just as much sense upside down. But the truth of the matter was that neither of these unilinear organizations was legitimate. We saw how Howitt retracted the idea that there was a strictly necessary correlation between social and religious development. This is quite true — but it is not evolution.

If the debates about Aboriginal religion are representative of problems incurred by the evolutionary paradigm, then it seems a fair conclusion that it ended with a crisis. Evolutionary theories had initially been adequate, but the vast qualitative improvement in

ethnographic evidence unleashed an abundance of anomalies, some of which were potentially fatal. Perhaps the new data might have been accommodated within the old paradigm if it had not been for individuals like Lang who showed that one man's evolution could be another's degradation. Ultimately, there could be no solution to such disputes for the simple reason that there was no legitimate hierarchical order by which the Australian (or other) evidence could be categorized. It was probably inevitable that the only conclusion would be a stalemate, and that the authors would express their intellectual frustration in personal hostilities. Of course, we must be careful in generalizing from these Australian examples to the whole of anthropoligical theory, but considering the important part played by the Aborigines in theories of social evolution, then it seems that we have a representative sample of the problems incurred by this paradigm.