COMING INTO BEING AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS

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οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔρως, ὡς σὺ οἴει.
Ἀλλὰ τί μήν; Τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ
τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ.
Diotima

1. PROLOGUE: PROCREATIVE BELIEFS

Together with puberty and death, birth belongs among the major physiological events in the life of man, and in view of its importance, physiological and other, it is hardly surprising that it should always have been at the centre of popular interest. In the light of our advanced physiological knowledge about what is going on when a child comes into being (in the as yet conventional manner), some popular beliefs about this subject prevalent in exotic but also in not-so-exotic cultures and societies must appear peculiar. Typical modes of reaction to such peculiar beliefs include the following. These beliefs may be accepted as 'serious', i.e. as having the same epistemological status for those holding them as our own 'objective' physiological knowledge, reflecting, however, a comparative lack of empirical knowledge. Alternatively, they may be taken for fiction, characteristically occurring in folk-tales, superstition, myths and similar contexts, and co-existing with less fanciful views of the same phenomena, or perhaps also reflecting a certain unawareness of the proper methods of establishing 'objective' knowledge. Needless to say, the distinction between collectively accepted objective truth and fiction (or non-objective truth) is anything but categorical, and is often primarily in the eye of the beholder. Beliefs concerning the role of the parents, specifically of the male parent, in procreation are a notorious case in point.

Apparently it still happens in some European societies (especially in Germany and the Netherlands) that children, being told by their elders that their little brother or sister has been brought by the stork, honestly believe this for a while. Living in an appropriate rural area,

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they may in fact chance upon empirical phenomena fitting in with this explanation quite nicely: storks, being birds of passage, and rather large ones at that (i.e. seemingly capable of carrying burdens of the weight of a baby), may arrive in the neighbourhood, or even build their nest on the roof of the house concerned, more or less simultaneously with the appearance of the baby. Where the stork in turn gets the baby is of course another question which many children apparently are not curious enough to ask. At any rate, one traditional mythological account, which can be offered on demand, has the stork, an aquatic bird and a fisher, fetch the embryo from the waters, the *prima materia* and source of all existence, perhaps from the watery womb of Mother Earth. Marshlands, clouds, certain trees, or even stones are traditionally mentioned as alternative original surroundings of the unborn, or at least of their souls, often conceived of as bird-like and thus not requiring the help of a stork or similar bird in the journey to their worldly destination (cp. PLOSS 1911: 574—90). Unlike children, adults nowadays are not supposed to take the story of the stork for a serious, true account of the origin of children — even though many of them may, no doubt seriously, reckon with the possibility of virgin births, at least in such extraordinary situations as unions of the human and the divine. As a piece of fiction, contradicting the widely accepted assumption that children are begotten by a man (their physiological father) and conceived and borne by a woman (their physiological mother), the story of the stork is rather different from genuinely mythological accounts: it certainly does not endeavour to render the unintelligible, unstructured, and meaningless intelligible, structured, and meaningful — at least not as far as those are concerned who transmit the story to their children. For those who are told, and believe, it, it presumably serves this purpose, as long as they are unable, or rather not supposed, to grasp the empirically more satisfactory adult explanation of the origin of children.

Turning to more exotic parts of the world, certain Australian, Melanesian, and, less prominently, Micronesian aborigines (the Aranta, Trobriand Islanders, and Yapese are perhaps the best known cases) have attracted considerable interest and controversy among anthropologists for their supposedly genuine ignorance of physiological paternity, and — in the case of the Aranta and other Australian tribes — of physiological maternity as well.[1] According to the orthodox conception doctrines of these peoples, there is no causal connec-

tion between sexual intercourse and eventual childbirth in humans (and perhaps other animals, in case they are considered to possess souls). Instead a child is supposed to be the result of a spirit individual entering a woman at some totem centre, through an article of food, in a whirlwind, or on another quite specific occasion, these spirit children (the *kuruna* of the Aranta, and the *waywaya* of the Trobrianders), which further develop in the maternal womb, being associated, as their reincarnations, with particular mythical or actual ancestors. Whoever or whatever is held causally responsible for pregnancy and actual childbirth (most likely the reincarnated ancestral spirits themselves), it is definitely not the father — the social father (mother's husband), to be more precise, since the very concept of physiological fatherhood is thus claimed to be lacking.[2] He may at best be considered an accessory carrying out mechanical tasks such as 'opening the way' or 'stopping the blood', which in the opinion of the Trobrianders and Aranta are usually accomplished in intercourse, but could in principle be accomplished in other ways as well. The orthodox doctrine of the Aranta, furthermore, denies any generative role of the mother (of the social mother, that is: she is apparently not thought to be physiologically related to the child). The child, quite obviously, comes out of the mother at birth, but her contribution is only seen as that of a passive medium through which the child enters the proper moiety, class, or section of the tribe.

Now, are these doctrines, which may have partly given way to more secular beliefs in the wake of intensive white contacts, elaborate fiction or serious beliefs which happen to be wrong due to defective physiological knowledge? Note that among the Trobriand Islanders, there exists an additional account of procreation which surely comes closer to what in our minds qualifies as the truth about this matter. Their more informal 'women's talk' has the father play a more active, co-contributing role: in this version, his semen supposedly causes the menstrual blood to coagulate, the resulting clot in the womb of the mother then being caused to grow by the entry of a *waywaya*. To the Trobrianders, however, this women's talk, although different, appears to be just as true as the men's talk version not crediting the mother's husband with any creative capacity at all, as sketched above. Analogously, old men among the Aranta are claimed to know that intercourse is more than a probably necessary condition for childbirth. It seems doubtful whether they simultaneously subscribe to the more orthodox doctrine; they, at any rate,

were not supposed to have passed on their superior knowledge to the younger generations. In general, it would probably be rash to conclude that a seemingly fantastic account of childbirth must have the status of pure fiction if a different, and to our minds more realistic, account is potentially available to the members of a culture or society as well, if only at the level of the suppressed subconscious. And notice, in particular, that the orthodox conception doctrines of the Aranta, Trobrianders, and Yapese have considerable explanatory force in that they serve to reduce the amount of cognitive disorder concerning an issue of utmost social importance: they explain, among other things, that some girls or women (e.g. girls before puberty, who are not yet married) are hardly ever getting pregnant in spite of frequently having intercourse with men. In fact, the extent to which these doctrines are confirmed by everyday experience is unequalled by our own physiological knowledge. Just imagine what kind of empirical evidence would be required to establish, to the satisfaction of the average layman, that conception takes place through fertilisation of female ova by male sperm following intercourse — and recall also that it was only in 1853 that the key phenomenon buttressing our scientific procreative beliefs, viz. the penetration of the ovum by the spermatozoon under its own movements, was discovered by Newport.[3]

People not only hold opinions about birth, and probably about its individual phases or aspects (such as intercourse, begetting, conception, pregnancy, parturition), they also talk about such matters, to the extent that taboo constraints allow them to do so. And, quite trivially, what they are actually talking about depends upon the opinions they happen to entertain about the world — not so much upon the world as it 'really' is. As long as people avail themselves of expressions referring to the coming into being of children rather generically (cp. phrases comparable to Modern English *Mr. and Mrs. McGonigle had a baby*), it presumably does not make much difference what exactly one knows or believes about birth. The meaning of such generic expressions seems to be pretty much the same whether one believes or denies that conception, for instance, takes place through fertilisation of female ova by male sperm following intercourse. That is, in order to specify the meaning of an expression such as *to have a baby*, it is by no means necessary to include any detail of the beliefs or knowledge about the origin of babies shared by those using such expressions. Analogously, an equally generic

expression such as *Mr. and Mrs. McGonigle drove from Glasgow to Edinburgh* is not likely to be misunderstood even if the addressee and the speaker hold entirely different opinions, for instance, about the route the McGonigles took or about the functioning of car engines. These details are irrelevant for the message to be communicated, which requires only that speaker and addressee agree about a particular aspect of the manner of the McGonigles' travelling, viz. that they travelled from one place to the other in a car, carriage or similar vehicle at their own disposal (operated and directed by themselves or perhaps their chauffeur) rather than in a bus, train, or other public vehicle. Notwithstanding the relative irrelevance of eventual differences in knowledge like those just alluded to, the meaning of expressions such as *to have a baby* or *to drive from Glasgow to Edinburgh* must be specified in terms of the speaker-addressees' beliefs or knowledge about the world, not in terms of 'the world as it really is'. Even though *to have a baby* or *to drive from X to Y* would seem to refer to relatively concrete events, or series of events, the meaning of these phrases surely could not even in principle be shown by pointing or by acting out, nor could it be recorded photographically or on film.

That meanings are relative to beliefs about the world is perhaps more obvious in the case of less generic expressions. Although the crucial physiological details of procreation are the same all over the world, expressions corresponding to *Abraham begat Isaac*, containing a predicate with an existential causative meaning and a subject identifying the physiological father as causer, are unlikely to be found among people whose views of procreation and conception resemble those of the Aranta or Trobriand Islanders, or of true believers of the story of the stork. Nor would one expect that fathers on the coral islands of Trobriand, when referring to their children, should employ classificatory possessive affixes categorising the children as entities owing their physiological existence to the personal activity of their possessor (at least not in the context of the men's talk version of conception).[4] There exists in Dyirbal a transitive verb *bulmbinyu* which DIXON (1968) glosses as 'to be the male progenitor of' and which, according to DIXON, refers to a particular act of copulation inducing conception, thus proving that the Dyirbalŋan of North Queensland were aware of the causal relationship between intercourse and conception although they have been reported to be among those Australian tribes ignorant of physiological paternity.

More specifically, DIXON proposes to distinguish a 'basic' and a 'mystic' level of belief, and admits that at the mystic level, which appears to be explicitly acknowledged much more readily in normal conversation, intercourse is not held to be solely responsible for conception. Irrespective of whether at the basic, more implicit level intercourse is really regarded not only as a necessary but also as a sufficient condition of conception among the Dyirbalŋan (which is what MONTAGU 1974: 148 denies), and irrespective also of whether co-existing but not obviously compatible systems of belief can always be neatly compartmentalized without distorting the mental reality of the believer, I would rather not go along with DIXON in assuming that it is only the basic level of belief which is implicit in the structure of language. Certainly the structure of a language ought to be suitable for expressing whatever mystical/mythical beliefs its speakers may hold — and occasionally the structure of the language may even be directly responsible for the form such beliefs take. I do not know under which circumstances Dyirbalŋan are prepared to use the verb *bulmbinyu*, but when conversing at the mystic level there would not seem to be some such meaning as 'to beget' which this verb could truthfully and literally express. In principle, determining the meaning of expressions such as *The stork brought the McGonigles a baby*, when these are used among people who are known to share the belief that children are begotten by their father and conceived and borne by their mother, poses the same problem. Who utters such expressions in this context of belief may be lying or, alternatively, may use them non-literally, being quite aware of the difference in epistemological status between a world where children are brought by the stork and one where children eventually result from sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. If language itself is to be the sole arbiter, it may prove difficult, though, to draw firm distinctions between non-literal meanings and literal meanings differing from those encoded in a language expressing a world view more familiar to the analyst. And it indeed is unavoidable at times, in some respects at least, to reconstruct the systems of belief and knowledge of a culture or society on the basis of the lexicon, the morphology, and the syntax of the language spoken.

The Anglo-Saxons, the Germanic inhabitants of large parts of the British Isles during the second half of the first millennium A. D., are generally assumed to have been aware of some causal connection between intercourse and childbirth, irrespective of how seriously

they believed that supernatural forces were also involved as causal agents in procreation, in heathen as well as in Christian times.[5] Naturally the biological details of this connection were not understood as profoundly as they are today (by the majority of the adult population, one would hope); and quite likely certain beliefs about biological details (e.g. concerning the factors influencing the sex of the child, viz. the origin of the seed from the left or right testicle of the male parent, or the position of the embryo on the right or left side of the mother's womb) were more popular which today would count as definitely superstitious despite their respectable tradition in early Greek and some later scientific authorities (cp. LESKY 1951). Disregarding the causation of spiritual existence, the domain allocated to beliefs in supernatural agencies now as well as in earlier times, and also, for the moment at least, the beginning of a person's social existence, the beliefs of the average Anglo-Saxon about physiological paternity and maternity would not seem particularly outlandish by the standards of their present-day descendants insofar as both parents were held responsible for bringing about, through sexual intercourse, the bodily existence of their children. Passages such as the following, which may be found in all sorts of Old English texts and certainly in genres intended for popular consumption, clearly attest to this awareness.

(1) Ða ðe rihtlice healdaþ hyra æwe and on alyfedum timan for bearnes gestreone hæmed begaþ (Ælfric, Hom.) 'those who rightly observe their marriage and at the permitted times for procreation of children have sexual intercourse'; Sindon sume gesceafta þe tymað buton hæmede ... ðæt sind beon (Ælfric, Hom.) 'there are some creatures which have young without sexual intercourse ... that are the bees'; ðæt ic þolian sceal bearngestreona: ic wið bryde ne mot hæmed habban (Riddles) 'that I shall lack child-procreation: with a bride I may not have intercourse'; þæt geryne ... hu þu eacnunge æfre onfenge bearnes þurh gebyrde ond þone gebedscipe æfter monwisan mod ne cuðes (Christ) 'the mystery ... how you ever conceived the child and knew no intercourse after the manner of men'

If there were metaphorical references to children in the manner of the biblical 'fruit of the father's loins', this would presumably point in the same direction. As far as I know, however, the corresponding

Old English expression *wæstm innoþes* usually translates as, or rather translates the biblical, 'fruit of the (mother's) womb', although *innoþ* per se may also be used with reference to certain inner parts (stomach, intestines, heart (literally or figuratively)) of the body of a male. In the following passage, the fruit metaphor might seem to be used in connection with a male progenitor: *þæt he weorðlicne wæstm gesette, ðe of his innaþe agenum cwome, ofer ðin heahsetl* (Metrical Psalms) 'that he set the noble fruit, which came from his own bosom, over your throne'; but the male interior at issue is not exactly that of an ordinary human progenitor. And one might also wonder whether *wæstm*, when referring to offspring, is still transparently metaphorical in Old English, to begin with. At any rate, it should in principle be possible to draw on a variety of cultural practices as additional evidence of an awareness of the basic physiology of procreation. The very fact that an immaculate conception is emphasised as a distinctive feature of the coming of Christ in the religious doctrine officially accepted by the Anglo-Saxons since the first half of the seventh century, surely indicates that virgin births were not supposed to be the rule among ordinary mortals. The prominence of phallic symbolism in fertility cults among the Germanic peoples likewise points to an awareness of the essential role of intercourse in procreation, although it would also seem to indicate that fecundity and procreation were not regarded as belonging entirely to the sphere of purely physical processes.[6] Another, quite incontrovertible, piece of evidence would be the practice of contraceptive techniques such as *coitus interruptus*. Unfortunately, however, it seems that the Anglo-Saxons traditionally preferred other measures of limiting the number of their children (notwithstanding Tacitus' claim that their Germanic ancestors steadfastly renounced the deadlier of these measures), such as abortion, infanticide (e.g. through neglect), exposure, or simple refusal of the physiological father to recognise a child (i.e. its social existence), none of which can be relied on as proof of any particular kind of knowledge about the physiology of procreation.

Even if their procreative beliefs may not appear to be overtly spectacular, coming into being among the Anglo-Saxons is, nevertheless, of considerable linguistic interest; and, conversely, a closer linguistic analysis of the Anglo-Saxon ways of talking about having children might help elucidate the nature of the beliefs likely to be held about procreation. Many aspects of this vast subject matter

would deserve linguistic attention; those which will attract our particular interest in § 3 of this paper are brought out into strong relief by an account of the Old English system of object case marking. And since "eine betrachtung der casus ohne erkenntnis des satzes und, enger gefasst, des verbs, ist ein unding, unmöglichkeit" (WINKLER 1887: 28), questions concerning Old English verbs and their meaning will also figure in this outline account presented in § 2. If we do not seriously misinterpret the morphosyntactic system of object cases and the lexical subsystem of verbs having to do with childbirth, there are reasons to suspect that some supposed Modern English translation equivalents of Old English expressions for talking about having children, and especially about begetting them, are not entirely adequate renderings of the underlying system of beliefs. Although it could seem that this is a minor philological issue, I believe it has major implications, especially for those interested in what cases may possibly encode and what predicates may possibly mean, in Old English and elsewhere — and, incidentally, in how to go about finding out (see § 4).

2. OBJECT CASES AND VERB MEANING IN OLD ENGLISH

Old English is one of the languages where the traditional notion of case government is rather inappropriate. Instead of being meaningless markers arbitrarily governed by individual predicates, the cases in this language do have semantic, and (at least the nominative) partly pragmatic, content, which enables them to contribute in particular ways to the meaning of the clauses in which they occur. It might be assumed that case forms have content insofar as they encode syntactic relations — the accusative encoding (perhaps among other things) direct objects, and the dative indirect objects, for instance. However, there are good grounds to suspect that this equally traditional view of cases as syntactic-relation markers is not really well founded either (at least as far as the non-subject cases are concerned) — for the simple reason that genuinely syntactic relations such as direct and indirect object, in contradistinction to semantic relations, can, or need, not be defined in a language like Old English.[7] To approach the question of what cases do encode, then, it is perhaps best to consider what has occasionally been taken for an anomaly, for an indication of the disintegration and imminent decay of the Old English case system: verbs with variable object

marking. It suffices for our purposes if we concentrate on simple clause patterns, with dative/accusative alternations in one-object clauses; the genitive will occupy us a little later.

The object marking of a great number of Old English verbs is variable, and the alternative markings often occur in the same text, and sometimes even in one and the same sentence:

(2) gefylgdon hine vel him (Lindisf. Gosp.) 'they followed him (acc) or him (dat)'

(3) se fæder wið-soc his bearne, and þæt bearn wið-soc þone fæder, and æt nextan ælc freond wið-soc oðres for ðam micclan egsan þe hi ðær gesawon (Ælfric, Saints' Lives) 'the father renounced his child (dat), and the child renounced the father (acc), and then all friends renounced each other (gen) because of the great horror that they had seen there'

Occasionally there may be real uncertainties in the use of the dative, accusative, or other object markings, especially in relatively late texts and spreading from northern dialects; but such alternations, on the other hand, are an extremely pervasive characteristic even of the earliest stages of Old English (and, similarly, of the other early Germanic languages), where there are no other signs of a thorough disorganisation of case morphology. And, what is of particular interest here, with a great many verbs the choice of alternative object markings indeed is not as purposeless as could be inferred from the above examples, but instead correlates with differences in meaning. It is not easy to demonstrate that there is a pattern underlying these differences without adducing a mass of examples. The following tiny sample of pertinent data, therefore, can only be suggestive, and is supposed merely to illustrate the point I wish to make subsequently.

(4) a. ne mæg nan mon twæm hlafordum hieran (Ælfred, C. P.) 'no man can obey two lords (dat)'; þa noldan Crecas þæm bebode hieran (Ælfred, Oros.) 'then the Greeks would not listen to/obey/follow the order (dat)'; Inc hyraþ eall (Genesis) 'all shall be subject/belong to you two (dat)'

b. Ær he domdæges dyn gehyre (Solomon & Saturn) 'before he'd hear doomsday's din (acc)'; þa þæt se ealdormon hierde (Ælfred, Oros.) 'when the alderman heard (of) that (acc)'; Gif þu wilt gehyran þone apostol, ne swyltst þu on ecnesse

(Ælfric, Saints' Lives) 'if you will listen (attentively)/give ear to the apostle (acc), you will not die in eternity'; Gehyr mine stefne (Blickl. Hom.) 'listen (with compliance) to/hear my voice (acc)!' (i.e. 'accept my supplication!'); Georne gehyreð heofoncyninga hyhst hæleða dæde (Be Domes Dæge) 'gladly the most exalted of heavenly kings hears (judicially)/tries the deeds (acc) of warriors'

(5) a. He þearfum arede (Ælfred, Bede) 'he cared for the poor (dat)'; nænegum arað (Beow.) 'he spares no one (dat)'; God wolde arian eallum ðam synfullum (Ælfric, Saints' Lives) 'God wished to pardon/forgive all the sinful (dat)'; Ara nu onbehtum (Christ) 'pity now thy servants (dat)!'

b. He araþ ða godan (Ælfred, Boeth.) 'he honours the good (acc)' — but cp. also: Ara þinum fæder (Ancient Laws) 'honour (or perhaps rather, 'show respect for') your father (dat)!'; Onsegdnis lofes gearaþ mec (AS & Early English Psalter) 'the sacrificing of the glory honours me (acc)'; He wæs gearad mid freodome fram his hlaforde (Gregory's Dialogues) 'he was honoured/endowed/presented with freedom by his lord'[8]

(6) a. He geeuenlæcð Gode (Ælfric, Hom.) 'he is like/resembles God (dat)'; þinum Drihtne geefenlæc (Ælfric, Saints' Lives) 'act like your Lord (dat)!'; Ðæt hi ðam flæsclicum geefenlæcon (Ælfric, Hom.) 'that they act like/resemble (perhaps also, 'imitate') the fleshly (dat)' — but cp. also: for þy þe is geduht þæt heo þone heofonlican bogan mid hyre bleo geefenlæce (Leechdoms) 'because it is thought that she [iris illyrica] resemble (rather than, 'imitate') the heavenly arch (acc) with her colour'

b. Ongann Augustinus mid his munecum to geefenlæcenne ðæra apostola lif (Ælfric, Hom.) 'Augustine with his monks began to imitate the life (acc) of the apostles'; Se abbod geefenlæce þa bysene þæs arfæstan hyrdes (Rule St Benet) 'the abbot should imitate/act in accordance with/follow the examples (acc) of the good shepherd'; þæt þa unandgytfullan hine geefenlæcen (Rule St Benet) 'that the unintelligent imitate him (acc)'

(7) a. Abraham wunode eðeleardum Cananea (Genesis) 'Abraham abode in the native dwellings (dat) Cananea'; þæt he ... lete

hyne ... wicum wunian oð worulld ende (Beow.) 'that he should let him live in his dwelling place (dat) until the end of the world'

b. Siððan gast wic gewunode in ðæs weres breostum (Elene) 'since the spirit occupied/inhabited a dwelling (acc) in the man's breast'; seo ðe wunian sceolde cealde streamas (Beow.) 'the one who has to inhabit the cold waters (acc)'; Ða ðe hleoleasan wic hwile wunedon (Legend St Andrew) 'those who had occupied for a while a cheerless dwelling (acc)'; ðær he heanne beam on holt-wuda wunað and weardað (Phoenix) 'there in the wood it [the Phoenix] inhabits and keeps/guards a lofty tree (acc)'

Now, the semantic, and perhaps pragmatic, factors favouring one object marking over the other (in our case, the dative over the accusative, or vice versa) in individual clauses may sometimes be difficult to discern at first sight — a difficulty which is probably aggravated by our space-saving strategy of quoting examples out of context. What strikes one, nevertheless, is that very frequently different predicates have to be employed in Modern English translations to bring out the differences expressed by alternative case choices in Old English. But one still has the feeling that the relevant meanings, though different, are always semantically related, which definitely speaks against positing numerous homonymous verbs in such cases (e.g. *hieran*$_1$, *hieran*$_2$). Moreover, the differences in verbal meaning corresponding to the different object markers also seem to have something in common, rather than varying arbitrarily from one verb to the next. These observations must be taken into account in any reasonable interpretation of the Old English dative/accusative opposition.

In view of the relative uniformity of the differences in meaning between accusative-object and dative-object clauses with a wide range of verbs, and in view of the fact that there are circumstances where either case seems appropriate without much difference in meaning (cp. examples 2, 3, 5b, 6a), the case meanings required must meet these general criteria: they should be relatively abstract, and they should be systemic and relative rather than atomistic and absolute. In accordance with these requirements, I suggest that the accusative and the dative partition a single semantic dimension, 'opposedness', the individual case meanings ('high' and 'low degree

of opposedness') then being definable in contrast to one another rather than absolutely. Given this manner of acquiring a value only relative to the potential alternative term of the system, the absence of clear-cut, preconceived boundaries between the 'high degree' and 'low degree' domains of the opposedness dimension should make it understandable that we occasionally find vacillation in the choice of object cases without significant differences in meaning. There are relationships which are prototypical instances of 'high' or of 'low degree of opposedness', but others are not exactly prototypical instances of 'high' nor of 'low', and thus appear to be categorisable both ways equally well. As the concept of opposedness is not quite self-explanatory (although I think it is intuitively plausible), a few remarks are in order here to further characterise what I take to be the meaning of the accusative and the dative in Old English.

Considering only two-role situations or episodes, the relations holding between predicate and each actant may be distinguished at various levels of abstraction. Suppose the episode to be talked about is that of Cain killing Abel: the roles of Cain and Abel could be characterised, rather concretely, as those of killer and victim-of-a-killing; or, more abstractly, as those of agent and patient; or, still more abstractly, as those of more and of less actively involved participant. Cases marking the actants of such episodes or situations, one might imagine, could then be used to encode the respective kinds of involvement of each actant, at whatever level of abstraction — although meticulous encoding of actant roles at a more concrete level would seem rather redundant if there is a predicate which also provides this role-structural information. In general, one would probably expect to find some division of labour between predicate and actants in expressing role structures; that is, the relational coding on actants should not be more specific than necessary in view of the information about an actant's kind of involvement included in the predicate. However specific predicates are in this respect, there is always another task for actant-related coding in addition to role-structure identification, viz. to distinguish which actant is playing which role, if there are more than one and distinction would otherwise be too difficult or impossible.[9] If it should prove necessary to differentiate situations/episodes which are in some respects similar and, at any rate, do not differ in role structure at the level of abstractness encoded by relational actant markers, one would certainly expect this differentiation to be expressed with the predicate (e.g.

with the help of different verbs made available by the lexicon). Following such considerations, we are able to classify situations/episodes according to the individual actant roles involved, the discriminative force of this classification depending on the level of abstractness assumed. (At a familiar level of abstract roles we get agent-patient, experiencer-stimulus etc. situations/episodes.) But note that situations or episodes may also be classified if, instead of focusing upon the relations between a predicate and its various actants individually, the entire relationships between actants as such are taken as the point of departure. On a certain level, there in fact does not appear to be much difference between these two strategies: classifying situations/episodes as, say, activities and experiences would seem tantamount, to all intents and purposes, to classifying them as exhibiting the role structures agent-patient and experiencer-stimulus. However, relationships between actants may also be differentiated according to parameters which have no obvious parallel in classifications based on individual actant roles. Parameters utilising differences in degree rather than in kind seem particularly promising here; and 'degree of opposedness' is, I contend, one such parameter of crucial importance for the morphosyntax and lexicon of Old English.

With regard to the relationships expressed by predicates, actants may be represented as more or as less opposed to one another. The actant interrelationships to be differentially classified may occur in one and the same clause (given a predicate-actant structure 'Pred *a b c*', the actant relationships between *a* and *b* and between *a* and *c* etc. would then have to be syntagmatically differentiated as to their degrees of opposedness), or in different clauses; in the present context we only need to deal with this latter case of paradigmatic differentiation. Comparing two-actant relationships of the kind suggested by 'transitive' verbs in Standard Average European languages such as Modern English, we are lead to characterise 'high degree of opposedness' — relationships between actants diametrically opposed to one another — approximately as follows, with specific reference to activities in a broad sense (i.e. as including achievements, accomplishments etc.). One actant is represented as most actively involved, the other as least actively, as passive, inert, or entirely reactive; the latter is seen as most thoroughly affected or effected by what is happening, and thus as being completely under the control and influence of the former, who alone is attributed re-

sponsibility for the results of what has happened, and perhaps intention or volition. The two antagonists are thus represented as maximally unlike each other with regard to the kind of their involvement in the situation or episode at issue. Predicates expressing activities of creation (someone causes something/someone to come into existence), of manipulation and modification (someone causes something/someone to change its/her/his position or state), and of annihilation (someone causes something/someone to cease to exist) accordingly ought to be regarded as the prototypical instances of relationships of polar opposedness. Among the predicates of experience, those expressing the purely sensory experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, would seem to be the closest analogues to prototypical polar opposedness in the case of activities. In particular if sense perceptions (or at least some of them) are conceptualised as experiential grasping, these relationships are those where the kinds of involvement of the two actants are maximally dissimilar in the relevant respects.[10] Always keep in mind that opposedness values are systemic, relative, and a matter of degrees. Although it would be possible to adduce typical examples of non-polar opposedness (e.g. where one actant is less active rather than least active or completely passive, and thus more similar to the other actant in its kind of involvement), decisions one way or the other are always precarious outside the prototypical domains, and may depend on which particular relationship happens to serve as the basis of comparison.

Suppose, now, that object cases encode the degree of opposedness of a configuration, in addition to taking care of the task of distinction as mentioned above. Let the accusative encode objects diametrically opposed to the subject, and the dative objects in relationships with a lower degree of opposedness.[11] If the lexicon would provide a great number of predicates clearly identifying the relationships expressed as belonging to the categories 'high' or 'low degree of opposedness', such additional, actant-related coding would again seem redundant. It would not be redundant but, on the contrary, quite useful if this distinction were not systematically coded by predicates — that is, if predicates had a lexical meaning not specific enough to assign the relationship expressed to either of the categories 'high' or 'low degree of opposedness'. It seems to me that this is precisely the situation we encounter when we try to establish the meaning of many Old English verbs — for instance, of those figuring in the examples (4)—(7) above: whatever general, lexical meaning

such verbs may have, their particular meanings in use, including especially the concrete-level role structures they are intended to specify, cannot be determined without considering the degree of opposedness of their actants as signalled by the dative or accusative case marking. With *hieran* (examples under 4), the relationships expressed are conceptualised as ones of hearing(-of), listening-attentively-to, hearing-and-accepting-what-is-heard, or, depending on the context, of hearing-judicially/trying, rather than as ones of obeying/following, being-subject-to, or belonging-to, if the actant roles involved are represented as more, rather than as less, opposed to one another.[12] Analogously with *arian* (as under 5), if the actants are represented as more opposed to one another, the relationship tends to be conceptualised as one of conferring-honour-on or conferring-property-on/endowing, rather than as one of caring-for, being-kind-towards, being-merciful-towards/sparing, forgiving/pardoning, pitying, and perhaps also being-respectful-towards. *Efenlæcan* (cp. 6) may express relationships of being/acting-like, resembling if the degree of opposedness is indicated to be rather low, but relationships of intentionally imitating, reproducing or re-enacting (a pattern of behaviour) if the actants are represented as approximating polar opposedness — although the dividing line here is less than clear-cut. Finally, with *wunian* (as under 7), actants represented as more opposed definitely favour a conceptualisation of the relationship as one of fully occupying/inhabiting, controlling (a certain area), whereas a lesser degree of opposedness tends to imply a purely spatial relationship of living/abiding/staying-in. As in the previous translations, Modern English predicate expressions are used as a somewhat imperfect metalanguage for characterising the differential semantics of the actual relationships at issue. But this is not necessarily tantamount to providing the lexical meanings of such Old English verbs. Although their lexical meanings must be conceptualised so broadly as to encompass all the relationships differing in degree of opposedness (and perhaps otherwise as well) which I have tried to render in Modern English, pronouncing them lexically ambiguous on these grounds might well be criticised as a step justifiable only by the lexical structure of the particular metalanguage chosen. It might therefore be preferable not to regard these verbs as truly polysemous, but as essentially monosemous, their single lexical meaning being, however, relatively abstract and unspecific, requiring contextual information (such as that provided by the case marking of their ob-

jects) in order to be capable of identifying particular interactions more specifically.

It needs to be emphasised that the differentiation of degrees of opposedness is a genuinely linguistic matter — not only because there appear to be languages whose morphosyntax and/or lexicon fail to manifest this concept in any systematic manner. Note that in the preceding sections care has been taken to point out that we are primarily concerned with representations of the role structure of situations or episodes, not with situations, episodes, and relationships 'as they really are' in the real world or some possible world. One could plausibly claim, I believe, that humans can perceptually, especially by the senses of touch and sight, distinguish interactions according to the opposedness relationships holding between the entities interacting; but I still doubt that such perceptual representations completely determine linguistic opposedness classifications, not only on the grounds that many of the relevant interactions simply are not or not directly perceptible by the senses. The factors underlying linguistic classifications of relationships are presumably more complex, involving cognitive and emotive as well as perceptual representations. These representations, at any rate, do not simply mirror the world, but originate in, and then perhaps also shape, the process of actively interpreting and structuring the real and possible worlds experienced, or created, by our bodies and minds. Of crucial importance in this regard is the lexical meaning of predicate expressions, for predicates contribute much towards the identification of relational structures of the situations and episodes talked about. Any serious discussion of the principles according to which predicates tend to interpret and structure the world would be well beyond the limits of this paper; but a few remarks on eventual regularities of a very general kind may not be inappropriate, especially insofar as they bear on the notion of opposedness.

If predicates express relations, one wonders whether there might be any principled limits on the kinds of entities they would tend to relate. It seems to me that predicates, very generally speaking, tend to establish relationships between actants that satisfy criteria such as these: (a) the referents most likely to occur in predicate-implied roles typically ought to be highly individuated, in the sense of being human, animate, or at least concrete (seeable and touchable), countable, singular rather than plural or collective, definite, experientially figures rather than ground;[13] (b) they typically ought to be prag-

matically salient, particularly in the sense of being predestined to appear in the topical or commentative parts of utterances; and (c) the actant roles ought to correspond to what typically occurs in the sphere of experience, influence, and control of individuals (especially of the prototypical experiencer and actor, the ego) in their most characteristic physical, mental, and emotional interactions with their environment. As I said, these are very general guidelines indeed; but if one surveys empirically what role-structural information is preferably included in predicates and which roles tend to require separate specification outside the predicate, it should turn out that distinctions between participant actants and circumstantial actants are drawn more or less in accordance with these principles. (I call participant actants those which are represented as centrally involved in a situation/episode on account of their being part of the role structure expressed by the predicate, and circumstantial actants those which are represented as peripherally involved and which are not included in the predicate's role structure.) At any rate, such general principles still allow an enormous latitude in apprehending the relational structure of situations and episodes, and, concomitantly, in deciding about degrees of opposedness, which are differentiated with respect to the relationships expressed by predicates. Suppose there is a predicate denoting the act of killing in roughly the same manner as the English verb *to kill;* the victim would then, quite obviously, seem to be a much better candidate for the status of polar opposite of the killer than whatever other role (e.g. that of instrument) may also be seen as involved, if peripherally, in the episode. However, it is also imaginable that there is, instead or in addition, a predicate roughly meaning 'use-for-killing-on'. Given this conceptualisation of the episode, the instrument would presumably outrank the victim as the preferred candidate for the status of polar opposite ('Cain used-for-killing a knife on Abel'). Episodes are complex entities, usually consisting of several phases and in turn forming parts of larger episodes. Predicates, following a principle of *pars pro toto* representation, often seem to focus only on a single phase in order to identify the entire episode — although there are also languages, especially those employing serial verb constructions, which as a rule prefer to paint piecemeal pictures of the internal structure of episodes, focusing on various successive phases individually.[14] Depending on which particular phase of an episode is actually singled out by the predicate, different participants may have

better chances of being seen as polarly opposed. A very summary breakdown of an act of killing would perhaps distinguish an initial or preparatory phase (with the subphases: planning and preparing the act, grasping a suitable instrument, approaching the victim), a middle phase (moving the instrument and using it on the victim), and a final phase (effecting a dramatic change of state of the victim); and if the focus is on the (*ceteris paribus* perhaps most salient) final phase, the killer and the victim are the natural choice for a polar-opposedness relationship, which would not seem so natural at the earlier phases. A principle of condensation also ought to be mentioned here as potentially determining how relationships may be linguistically conceptualised. A great number of predicates, in numerous languages, give a condensed account of cause-effect relationships: they represent a relationship between two episodes, the cause-episode and the effect-episode, as a single episode involving as participants the protagonists of the cause- and the effect-episodes (e.g. 'Cain's acting in a particular way caused Abel's dying' is condensed to 'Cain killed Abel'). And such condensations in general appear to be paradigm cases of polar opposedness, especially if the participant centrally experiencing the effect thereby undergoes a noticeable change of state or location.

We have repeatedly emphasised that degrees of opposedness are not differentiated absolutely, but with respect to relationships as expressed by predicates, even if these are not very specific lexically. Circumstantial roles, which by definition are not included in the role structures identified by predicates, are thus not available for this kind of differentiation. But there is no logical or empirical necessity even for our prototypical instances of polar opposedness to be represented with the help of predicates implying two participant roles. Predicates referring to creations or annihilations may, for instance, not incorporate a causative meaning aspect, and may thus require that the causal or agentive part of the overall role structure be specified outside the predicate (if at all). Indeed, predicate expressions are available in English to illustrate this: 'someone died at someone's hands/from a wound/of illness/in an accident', 'an artifact came into existence/arose/originated from/due to (the work of) someone'. Insofar as predicates conceptualised approximately in this manner do not themselves express relationships between creator/annihilator and entity created/annihilated, but instead only attribute certain changes of state to the participant not causally or agentively in-

volved, degrees of opposedness cannot be differentiated with respect to a relationship expressed by the predicate — the predicate simply expresses none. There are still further possibilities for predicates to be conceptualised non-relationally. Instead of predicates simultaneously referring to the different kinds of involvement of two interacting participants (e.g. in the manner of 'A killed/murdered B', 'A approached/reached B'), we may get predicates identifying such episodes or situations as involving only a single participant role, requiring further, less centrally involved roles to be specified independently (to paraphrase this in English: 'A acted-as-a-murderer/murderously, towards/affecting/with respect to B', 'A moved, towards/reaching B'). Or predicates may be entirely self-sufficient, incorporating no reference to any kind of participant involvement at all, and thus removing the basis for distinguishing centrally involved participants and peripherally involved circumstances in the first place: 'there-was-killing-going-on/there-occurred-death, involving agent A and patient B', 'there-was-movement, towards B, involving A'. Such differences in conceptualisation provided the criteria for the traditional attempts at categorising predicates in terms of notions such as 'transitive' vs. 'intransitive', and 'nominal' or 'existential'. The traditional transitive verbs are our inherently relational, semantically incomplete predicates (incomplete insofar as they require at least two roles to be filled by participants); the traditional intransitives, while not relational, are still semantically incomplete (requiring one role to be filled by a participant); and existential or nominal predicates may be characterised as non-relational and semantically autonomous.

The ancient Indo-European languages are commonly assumed to have lacked truly transitive, i.e. inherently relational, verbs.[15] That is, objects at this stage were not represented as forming part of the role structure set up by predicates, and their kind of involvement consequently had to be specified independently (by means of case markers, including the accusative and dative). There is some evidence that the large-scale development of relational, transitive verbs which is characteristic of the later languages, has not affected Old English as much as many grammatical handbooks and dictionaries would have it, judging from the translations of Old English verbs commonly employed there. Although their proper meanings are not always reconstructable beyond all doubt, many Old English verbs may occur with case-marked (non-subject) actants without actually

expressing relationships centrally involving these actants. The accusative and the dative (not only the 'instrumental' dative) are occasionally used to encode such relatively autonomous roles co-occurring with non-relational predicates. But it is perhaps the genitive which is most commonly assigned in the manner appropriate for circumstantial roles, that is independently of the role structure implied by the predicate. VISSER (1970: 355f.) rightly points out the danger of misrepresenting such details of predicate conceptualisation in translation.

(8) a. þu scealt ... deaðes bidan (Genesis) 'you shall expect/await (the coming of) death (gen)'
b. beþearf ælc mon fultumes (Ælfred, Boeth.) 'every man needs help (gen)'
c. þonne hie gitsiað ... ealdordomes (Ælfred, C. P.) 'then they envy (them) eldership (gen)'
d. Sawla moton lifes brucan (Legend St Andrew) 'souls may enjoy life (gen)'

Modern English translations of examples such as these tend to gloss over these details; but there often are ways of paraphrasing such predicates non-relationally in order to disintegrate the objects and the role structure of the predicates:

(8) a. 'you shall be expectant/in expectation, with regard to/on account of the coming of death'
b. 'every man is in need with respect to help/as far as help is concerned'
c. 'then they are envious with respect to/because of eldership'
d. 'souls may have enjoyment with respect to/deriving from life'

It has occasionally been noted (cp. VISSER 1970: 357f.) that verbs which normally do not occur with genitives may do so when appearing as present participles in *-ende:*

(9) Swa se secg hwata secggende wæs laðra spella (Beow.) 'thus the valiant man told the bad news (gen)'

Such genitives have been claimed to result from confusion of the *-ende*-participles with agentive nominals in *-end* (cp. *secgend* 'speaker, narrator'), where an adnominal genitive would indeed be appro-

priate. But one might also speculate that we have to do here with a process of adjectivalisation, adjectives, unlike the corresponding verbs, being inherently non-relational, relegating the object to a circumstantial role appropriately encoded by the genitive.[16] (A closer translation of (9) would thus be: 'thus the valiant man was giving his account concerning the bad news'.) On the whole, it is noteworthy that verbal predicates accompanied by genitival objects mostly do not categorically exclude alternative case markings. With most of these verbs, the accusative and/or dative is possible as well, the concomitant semantic differences being more or less manifest depending on the basic meaning of the verb. Such verbs, then, appear not to be lexically categorised as transitive (inherently relational) or intransitive (non-relational).

I do not wish to claim, though, that only circumstantial roles are encoded by the genitive. Although I believe a good case could be made for not including the genitive in one semantic system ('opposedness') with the dative and accusative, in their major uses that were discussed above, it may prove necessary to recognise genitival participants, even if the distinction between participants and circumstances is sometimes difficult to draw here, given the lexical non-specificity of many pertinent verbs. Most likely these genitival participants will be actants where VISSER's (1970: 355—87) cover term 'causative object' would not seem particularly appropriate — e.g. objects of verbs of consuming and partaking, where a partitive nuance is conspicuous, or verbs of receiving and acquiring (such as *begi(e)tan* 'get, acquire, receive', *bycgan* 'buy, procure', *ceapian* 'trade, buy, acquire', *ceosan* 'choose, accept', *earnian* 'deserve, earn, get', *gripan* 'seize, take possession of', *hleotan* 'obtain (by lot), get', *niman* 'take hold of, receive', *strienan/streonan* 'acquire', *fon* 'grasp, take, receive', *onfon/afon* 'take, receive, accept', *þicgan* 'take, receive, accept'), where the subject referent may be conceived of as a receiving, and in this sense experiencing or affected participant, resembling the experiencer of verbs with 'causative' objects such as *gelystan* 'be desirous', *sc(e)amian* 'be ashamed', *ofþyncan* 'be displeased', *brucan* 'have enjoyment', *fægnian* 'be pleased, be exultant', *þurfan* 'be in need' etc. (cp. the exhaustive lists in VISSER 1970: 366—85). If a general meaning is to be postulated for the genitive in Old English, it must obviously be rather abstract, considering the variety of uses of this case. It might be profitable to approach this meaning in terms of the quasi derivational, rather than purely inflectional, notion of

'sphere', perhaps distinguishing between more particular notions such as 'sphere of influence of actant', 'sphere limited by actant', 'sphere of extension of actant'.[17] But working out the details of the semantics of the Old English genitive is not in fact necessary for our present purposes.

3. PROCREATION AS CREATION?

In view of our assumptions about the meaning of the dative and accusative in Old English, it is hardly a coincidence that objects in episodes most typically lending themselves to a polar-opposedness interpretation, viz. annihilative and creative episodes, quite consistently occur in the accusative, presupposing the respective predicates are conceptualised relationally. Thus, the object denoting the victim with the annihilative verbs of killing (such as *(a)dydan, (a)cwellan, (a)stirfan, fordon, (for)spillan, (for|of)myrþrian, forfaran, forwegan, ofbeatan, slihtan, abradwian, (a|be|of)fyllan, (of|for)slean* — to quote only a tiny selection) is as a rule in the accusative rather than the dative. And analogously, *wyrcan, scieppan, arœran, timbr(i)an, smiðian* etc., when used as verbs of creation, never occur with the effected object in the dative, but in the accusative. Notice, however, that there is no reason to be surprised yet if such verbs appear with objects marked differently (with the genitive, for instance) — the lexical meaning of such verbs may not exclusively be creative or annihilative, or may not be truly relational in the first place. *Wyrcan|weorcan* is a case in point: genitive objects alternate with accusative objects, but not in an entirely arbitrary fashion. This verb in fact can be shown not to be lexically categorised as necessarily relational and creative, its semantic potential ranging from meanings paraphrasable as 'to labour, be working' (non-relational conceptualisation) over relational but not creative meanings such as 'to expend labour upon', 'to get by working, acquire, gain', 'deserve', and 'try to get by working, strive after', to relational meanings having to do with the creation of 'abstract performance objects'[18] (such as 'to perform, celebrate, commit'), and finally to prototypically relational and creative meanings such as 'to make, construct, build, produce, create'. And if this verb occurs with an object not in the accusative, as in examples such as the following, the prototypically creative meanings mentioned last are usually inappropriate.

(10) a. For hwam nele mon him georne gewyrcan dryhtscipes (Solomon & Saturn) 'why will not man earnestly gain himself worship (gen)?'
b. Wyrce se ðe mote domes ær deaðe (Beow.) 'let him that may gain/attain glory (gen) before he die'
c. þa ðe unrihtes ... worhtan (Metrical Psalms) 'those who did wrong (gen)/committed an iniquity (gen)'

Returning, at long last, to procreation, there would seem little reason to expect that verbs meaning 'to beget' will not pattern with the most typical verbs of creation — in particular if SCHUCHARDT's (1928: 300f.) reflections on procreation as creation par excellence and, indirectly, as the basis of acquisition and possession, are assumed to apply to the Anglo-Saxons (they hardly apply to the Aranta or Trobrianders): "Man besitzt dasjenige, was man erworben hat ... und in der Urzeit bestand das Erwerben im Schaffen. ... Die älteste Art aber des Schaffens ist die Zeugung".

*

There are various Old English verbs which are commonly, though not necessarily always, translated as 'to beget', that is, as referring to a causative relationship, if not act, involving the father as causer (the crucial part of the cause episode being the male sperm's fertilising the female ova following intercourse) and the child's eventual coming into existence as the effect. (Of course, the mother's causative contribution is not to be disregarded entirely; it will engage our attention presently.) The commonest of these verbs appear to be *cennan* (rarely *cinnan*) and also *acennan*, *begietan*, *(ge-)streonan*, and *tieman*; and as befits creative verbs conceptualised relationally, with their actants diametrically opposed to one another, they consistently ought to occur with accusative objects, at least when they actually mean 'to beget'.[19] This expectation at first sight appears to be confirmed with respect to *(a-)cennan*, *begietan*, and *tieman*, but not with respect to *streonan*, which is accompanied by genitive objects much more often than by accusative objects. But *streonan* is not the only of these verbs which upon closer scrutiny turns out to be more problematical than one would expect on the assumption that 'to beget', in the sense of causing a child's coming into existence, is a reasonably accurate translation.

Consider first *cennan* and *acennan*. Nearly all dictionaries include 'to beget' as one possible Modern English translation of these verbs, but this paternal existential causative translation is not always appropriate. In fact this meaning, illustrated in (11a) appears to be rather rare as compared to those exemplified in (11b) and (11c) in particular. Moreover, in most of the examples where it is seemingly appropriate (all except the first under 11a), the circumstances are somewhat unusual insofar as progenitor and offspring belong to the realm of the supernatural: the creator, God the Father, was not supposed to have been involved in an ordinary sexual act.

(11) a. Cenne he ðæt bearn ðam gefarenan breðer (Ælfred, C. P.) 'he may beget those children (acc) for/in the name of the dead brother'; þu, god of gode gearo acenned, sunu soþan fæder (Christ) 'thou, God indeed begotten of/deriving from God, son of the true Father'; of Fæder acennedne (Ælfred, Bede) 'begotten/born of the Father'; se ilca sunu wæs ær eallum tidum acenned fram God Fæder (Blickl. Hom.) 'the same son was before all times begotten/born of God the Father'

b. Fisc sceal on wætere cynren cennan (Gnomic Verses) 'the fish shall propagate/bring forth its kind (acc) in the water'; Tu beoð gemæccan: sceal wif and wer in woruld cennan bearn mid gebyrdum (Gnomic Verses) 'two are consorts: a woman and a man shall bring forth into the world a child (acc) by birth'; þe fram wife and fram were wurdon acæned (Lord's Prayer II) 'who were brought forth by/born of a woman and a man'; Gregorius wæs of æðelborenre mægþe acenned (Ælfric, Hom.) 'Gregorius was born of a noble family'; man biþ acenned of Iudan (Blickl. Hom.) 'the man was born (out) of Judea'; ne wæs acenned of unrihthæmede ne ðurh dyrne forligenysse ac acenned wæs of ælicum gesinscype (Ælfred, Bede) 'he was not born out of adultery nor as the result of secret fornication, but was born in lawful marriage'

c. Eft þonne þa wif heora bearn cendon, þonne feddon hie þa mædencild (Ælfred, Oros.) 'after the women had given birth to their children (acc), they fed/brought up the girls (acc)'; on sarnysse ðu acenst cild (Genesis) 'under pains you shall bear/give birth to children (acc)'

d. Sceal ic nu eald wif cennan (Genesis) 'shall I, now an old woman, conceive?' (no example with overt object available)

As is illustrated in (11b), *(a-)cennan* is used quite commonly when the focus is not specifically on the role of the father, but on the creative capacity of both parents, or also of plants and other reproductive forces. These verbs may further be used to refer to the creative contribution specifically of the mother — in fact to ostensibly different contributions: those of bearing a child, in the sense of being pregnant with it (see 11c); giving birth to a child, in the very act of parturition (which is one of the possible interpretations of the second example under (11c)); and conceiving a child (see 11d — although a more generic sense, 'having a child', ought not be excluded here). Presumably the semantic potential illustrated in (11b, c) enables *(a-)cennan* to serve as one of the standard terms for generically asserting someone's birth.

Notice, furthermore, that it is hardly a pure coincidence that *cennan* shows up again in one subepisode definitely linked to coming into being, if at the level of social and perhaps also spiritual existence: that of naming, creating a name for someone (see 11e).

(11) e. Iob ... sunu waldendes freonoman cende (Christ) 'Job gave/devised a noble name (acc) to/for the Lord's son (dat)'; Đam wæs Judas nama cenned (Elene) 'to him (dat) was given the name Judas' (i.e. 'Judas was his name')

To some analysts it has also seemed not to be a coincidence that verbs which are at least etymologically related should be used for begetting and knowing, especially in the senses of carnal knowledge (cp. the biblical *Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived* (Genesis)) and of the recognition of a kin relationship *(ge-/on-cnawan* are the relevant Old English verbs, and also *cunn(i)an)*; but I prefer not to broach this notorious issue.[20]

As far as the case marking of objects is concerned, none of the uses of *(a-)cennan* appears to present problems. The accusative does not come unexpected, considering the semantic nature of the particular relationships expressed by these verbs, which, evidently referring to episodes of creation, surely lend themselves to high-opposedness conceptualisations. (11d), conceiving, might seem doubtful in this respect, but I think one could argue that conceiving is an inevitable part of an overall creative process (if it fails to be recognised as a creative subepisode in its own right), and therefore merits to be conceptualised relationally with the two actants diametrically opposed to each other. Thus, if examples comparable to (11d) but con-

taining an overt object should turn up, these objects might well be in the accusative. A priori, the genitive ought not be ruled out as a possible alternative, though, provided that conception can plausibly be interpreted as a kind of receiving (receiving of male seed). But in fact the other verbs commonly used in Old English to refer to conception, viz. *onfon* and *eacan/eacnian*, when occurring with an object, also construe with the accusative, although in some uses at least these definitely are verbs of receiving:

(12) Gif heo bearn onfehþ (L. Ecgbert) 'if she conceives a child (acc)'; þy syxtan monþe þæs þe Sanctus Iohannes on his modor bosm onfangen wæs (Blickl. Hom.) 'in the sixth month that St John was conceived in his mother's womb'

(13) Đu on innoðe geeacnast (Gospel St Luke) 'you shall conceive in your womb'; Ic on unrihtum, eac ðan in synnum geeacnod wæs: ðu ðæt ana wast, mæhtig Dryhten, hu me modor gebær in scame and in sceldum (Kentish Psalm) 'I was unlawfully, and then also sinfully conceived: you alone know that, mighty Lord, how my mother bore/gave birth to me disgracefully and guiltily'

With *eacan/eacnian*, however, the progenitor and the mother, rather than the mother and her offspring, may also be conceptualised as polarly opposed, the predicate meaning then being 'to make/become pregnant':

(13') Heo wæs magotimbre be Abrahame eacen worden (Genesis) 'she had been increased/made pregnant with offspring by Abraham'; Heo geeacnod wæs of þæm Halgan Gaste (Blickl. Hom.) 'she was made pregnant by the Holy Ghost'

Note also, incidentally, that like *(a-)cennan* these verbs are semantically quite versatile. In the context of coming into being they do not refer only to conception but to other phases of this process too: *eacan/eacnian* to the phase of pregnancy and to the event of parturition (cp. *Ic wæs geeacnad* (Kentish Glosses) 'I was brought forth'), and also generically to bringing into existence as such; *onfon* to the preparatory phase of taking a wife, and to a subepisode of some importance for the social existence of the child, that of standing sponsor at the child's baptism.

As expected, *tieman* occurs with the offspring in the accusative when referring to a creative phase in the process of coming into being (such as the mother's bearing and/or bringing forth of young — see 14a), or generically to this entire process (see 14b).

(14) a. hi tymaþ heora team mid clænnysse (Ælfric, Hom.) 'they [the bees] bring forth their progeny (acc) in purity (i. e. non-sexually)'

b. Nan wer ne wifaþ, ne wif ne ceorlaþ, ne team ne biþ getymed (Ælfric, Hom.) 'no man takes a wife, no woman a husband, children are not brought forth'; Dæt folc tymde micelne team on ðam westene (Ælfric, Hom.) 'the people produced much offspring (acc) in the wilderness'

However, the not highly individuated and also rather predictable noun *team* is the only overt object admissible; and disregarding such cognate-object constructions, it seems best to analyse *tieman* as semantically not really relational. There is, then, the further possibility of *tieman* referring to having intercourse with a female (14c), producing or having children with a female (14d), or both (14e), any eventual object being marked prepositionally:

(14) c. Godes bearn tymdon wið manna dohtra and hig cendon (Genesis) 'the sons of God had intercourse with the daughters of men, and these bore children'

d. Hwilon eac se fæder tymde be his agenre dehter (preface to Genesis) 'sometimes also the father had a child by his own daughter'

e. Ða bæd heo hire wer ðæt he wið hire wylne tyman sceolde (Screadunga) 'then she asked her husband that he should have intercourse and be productive with her maid'

Thus, although acts of begetting, if attempted ones, are usually involved in the episodes referred to by clauses with *tieman*, 'to be productive' presumably is a more appropriate rendering of the meaning of this verb than 'to beget' — it is at any rate more congenial to its non-relational conceptualisation.

Begi(e)tan is frequently translated as 'to get, receive, obtain, take, acquire, seize, find', no doubt appropriately.[21] A little more abstractly we might say that all of these uses of *begi(e)tan* have to do with the creation of a relationship of, more or less literally, possession, usually involving a change of ownership. These relationships

are usually created by effort rather than accidentally, and we might accordingly characterise the meaning of *begi(e)tan* thus: 'to cause someone (oneself or someone else) to have something', or, even more generally, 'to cause someone (self/other) to be with something', 'to be with' being a symmetrical relationship. Given this lexical meaning, the accusative is the appropriate case for objects, although occasional genitives are also understandable on the grounds that *begi(e)tan* may be used to refer to more passive receivings. Here are some typical examples of *begi(e)tan* used with this meaning:

(15) a. Hi ða burh mihton eaðe begitan (Ælfred, Oros.) 'they might easily have taken (for themselves) the city (acc)'; He begeat Arues dohtor him to wife (Ælfred, Oros.) 'he got A's daughter (acc) for his wife'

b. Se bisceop wæs Scyttisc and Sċẽ Oswald hine begeat on ðas ðeode (Shrine) 'the bishop was Scottish and St Oswald got him (acc) into this country'; Gif hwa slea his nehstan ... begite he him læce (Ancient Laws) 'if someone strikes his neighbour/next of kin ... he should get a doctor/medicine (acc) for him'

In the context of procreation, *begi(e)tan* is generally translated as 'to beget'.[22] Although it makes but little difference with respect to the real-world events ultimately denoted, I do not think that 'to cause someone's coming into existence (as male progenitor)' is an exact rendering of the meaning of *begi(e)tan* in examples such as the following.

(16) hie begeton on godes willan feowertig bearna (Christ and Satan) 'they had of children forty (acc) at the will of God'; Gif me ðonne gifede sie ðæt ic bearn begeotan ne mẹge (Kentish Charters) 'if it be my lot then that I should be unable to have children (acc)'; gewundod þæt he ne mæge bearn begytan (Ælf.) 'wounded so that he was unable to have children (acc)'

In fact, I do not think that *begi(e)tan* in Old English is an existential causative verb at all. Instead I assume it is a possessive causative and has the same meaning in the context of procreation as elsewhere, viz. 'to cause someone (self) to have/be with something (a child, that is)', which strictly speaking is not equivalent to causing someone's coming into existence. Referring back to the quote from SCHUCHARDT,

Anglo-Saxon speakers/writers employing the verb *begi(e)tan* in this manner were obviously aware of some relationship between "erwerben" on the one hand and "schaffen/zeugen" on the other; but the reference to a change of state from non-existence to existence of a human being is not, in my opinion, part of the meaning of *begi(e)tan* — this is merely implied, and easily inferable, given the appropriate context, on the basis of the lexical meaning referring to an acquisition by effort.[23] In this respect, then, *begi(e)tan* is best compared to other generic descriptions of having children in terms of creating possessive relationships, by means of verbs such as *habban* (cp. *Gif ceorl and his wif bearn hæbben gemæne* (Ancient Laws) 'if a man and his wife should have a child (acc) together'), *agan* (cp. *Đu scealt sunu agan, bearn be bryde ðinre* (Genesis) 'you shall have a son, a child (acc) by your bride'), or *geagnian* 'adopt'. *(Onfon* 'conceive' is presumably the counterpart of *begi(e)tan* involving the female parent.) On the basis of the possessive rather than existential causative meaning assumed here, we can naturally account for the alternative constructions found with *(bi-)ȝeten* in Middle English and later, with the offspring/acquisition (of the mother) (see 17a) or the mother/acquirer (see 17b) construed as the object, and with appropriate prepositions marking the respective more circumstantial actants.

(17) a. Sire Morisse of Berkeleye wedded ... Is doȝter, and biȝet on hire the kniȝt Sir Tomas (1297 R. Glouc.); Melibeus ... bigat vp on his wyf ... a doghter (c 1386 Chaucer); Fourtene childre he gate opon tuo wifes (c 1330 R. Brunne Chron.)

b. That other knight ... begate her with childe (c 1450 Knt. de la Tour); For shee reported that shee was begotten with child by a certaine Dragon (1611 Coryat, Crudities); cp. contemporary English: He got her with child

If *begi(e)tan* originally meant 'to cause someone's coming into existence', the choice of prepositions in (17a) and the availability of the type of construction illustrated in (17b) as such would require additional explanatory efforts.[24]

Towards the end of § 2 *streonan/strienan* was mentioned among verbs of receiving and acquiring including *begi(e)tan*, and in fact these two verbs are occasionally used interchangeably, as in this interlinear gloss translating Latin *adquisivit: þe begęt ł gestreonde his swyðre* (Lambeth Psalter) 'which his right (hand) acquired'. Accordingly, what was said above about *begi(e)tan* not being an existential

but a possessive causative even when employed in the sphere of procreation, would seem to pertain to *streonan* as well. That *streonan* is not exactly equivalent to the present-day verb *beget* is also attested by its compatibility with female subjects, as shown in (18a):

(18) a. heo woldon wiþ Alexander and wid his mærestan cempa bearna strienan (Ælfred, Bede) 'they [the women] wanted to have children (gen) with Alexander and his most illustrious warriors'

b. Ge strinaþ suna and dohtra (Ælfric, Deut.) 'you (pl) shall have/obtain sons and daughters (gen)';[25] bi eallum heora wifum bearna striendon (Ælfred, Bede) 'with/from all their wives they had/got children (gen)'; þa he eft ongan him to eðelstæfe oðres strienan bearnes be bryde (Genesis) 'when he [Adam] again undertook to have/get another child (gen) as an heir with/from his wife'

But notice that the symmetry is not perfect: with male subjects the usual preposition marking the female actant is *be*, whereas *wiþ/wid* is used to mark the male actant when the female is chosen as subject. Note further that although the originally local preposition *be* may occasionally be used in an instrumental sense, one would not expect it to mark the role of an actant who is involved in a truly cooperative effort to bring about a child's coming into existence (*wiþ* would be more likely under such circumstances) — which might be taken to indicate that *streonan* in such examples simply is no existential causative verb requiring, or implying, this kind of role configuration. In fact, although the agentive sense of *be* is occasionally assumed to be due to French influence, there is clear evidence that *be* marks causative and truly agentive actants already in Old English (cp. Green 1914: 525 ff.). Now, if this preposition *be* marking the female actant with verbs such as *streonan*, *begi(e)tan*, or *tieman* (see 14d), which supposedly mean 'to beget', can be interpreted causatively or agentively — which does not seem implausible —, this would render a male existential causative interpretation of these verbs rather inappropriate, and would definitely favour their association with verbs of acquiring and receiving.

However, if we thus treat *streonan* just like *begi(e)tan*, that is, as verbs of receiving or acquiring even when used with reference to procreation, this does not help us to account for the different object case marking patterns exhibited by these two verbs: accusative objects

are the rule with *begi(e)tan*, but an exception with *streonan*. Examples with genitive objects like those in (18) could easily be multiplied, whereas accusative objects, as in (19), are extremely rare.

(19) Ðæt his broðor nyme hys wif and stryne him bearn (Gospel St Matthew) 'that his brother should take his wife and get him a child/children (acc)'

Recall that we admitted, at the end of § 2 where these verbs first came up for discussion, that the distinction between participants and circumstances is not always entirely clear-cut. Now, it seems to me that this distinction might have to be drawn differently with these two verbs, in spite of their ostensible semantic similarity. The relational meaning of *begi(e)tan* appears to be such as to accord the object the status of a participant, whereas a good point could be made, I believe, for analysing *streonan* as not really relational, its object thus being of a more circumstantial nature. But one should not categorically exclude the possibility that the conceptualisation of these verbs may slightly fluctuate from one occurrence to the next. Paraphrases such as 'to make gain/profit', 'to amass/increase one's property/wealth' ought to help elucidate the basic non-relational conceptualisation of *streonan*, and frequent absolute occurrences of *streonan* appear to fit in with, and thus to confirm, this suggestion:

(20) Se ðe him sylfum strynþ (Gospel St Luke) 'he who amasses wealth for himself'; Hie gemyndgiaþ þara weligera ðe lange striendon and lytle hwile brucon (Ælfred, C. P.) 'they have remembrance of those wealthy who were making gain a long time, and had enjoyment for a short while'

If *streonan* is accompanied by a circumstantial object, no specification of its role relationship is included in the verb, this being the task of the genitival case marking. Accordingly, the translations provided in (18) perhaps ought to be somewhat modified in order to better reflect this distribution of labour among the verb and the case marking: something like 'to make gain with respect to children' or 'to increase one's possessions concerning children' would presumably be appropriate. What was said earlier about a high degree of individuation of an actant favouring the relational conceptualisation of a predicate with respect to this actant is also pertinent here: note that

the genitival objects characteristically occurring with *streonan* (as in 18) are not exactly paradigm instances of individuated objects (e. g. they are never definite/specific, and as a rule are in the plural). Indeed, *beorna strienan* or *suna and dohtra strienan* are almost formulaic expressions, the main, or only, purpose of the nouns being to indicate that *streonan* is to be transposed from the economic to the family sphere.

Our hypothesis that *streonan* is basically non-relational (intransitive) is further confirmed by the observation that the object case marking pattern changes drastically with *gestreonan/gestrienan:*

(21) Se ðe bearn gestrieneþ (L. Ine) 'he who gets/has a child/children (acc)'; Worn gestrynde ær his swyltdæge suna and dohtra (Genesis) 'he had gotten a multitude (acc) of sons and daughters before the day of his death'; He bearn gestrinde be his gebeddan (Ælfric, Testament) 'he had a child/children (acc) with/from his wife'; Ond gif mine broðar ærfeweard gestrionen ðe londes weorðe sie, þonne ann ic ðem londes (Kentish Charters) 'and if my brothers have/get an heir (acc) who is worthy of/entitled to the land, then I grant him the land'; Se frumsceapena man, Adam, næs gestryned ne acenned, ac God hine gesceop (Ælfric, Hom.) 'the first-created man, Adam, did not originate in the human manner (i.e. was without a father and not born of a woman), but God created him'; þeah manige bearn beoþ gestryned (Ælfred, Boeth.) 'although people have many children'

Accusative objects, which are quite exceptional with *streonan*, abound with the prefixed variant of this verb, and may well be the only possibility. Although the details of the function and meaning of the prefix *ge-* are notoriously controversial, there can be no doubt about its role in the system of transitivity:[26] in principle, *ge-* may transitivise verbs; that is, *ge*-verbs tend to be conceptualised relationally where the corresponding simplex verbs are non-relational (intransitive), and they tend to occur with actant configurations exhibiting a high degree of opposedness when compared to actant configurations characteristic of the simplex verb. Because the prefix *be-* likewise functions as a transitiviser in this sense, the claim should not be surprising that it is *gestreonan* rather than the simplex *streonan* which most closely corresponds to *begi(e)tan*. But unlike *begi(e)-*

tan, which does not appear to be in contrast with a simplex *gi(e)tan* in Old English, *gestreonan* manifests more clearly the conditions under which predicates tend to be conceptualised relationally: comparing occurrences of *streonan* and *gestreonan*, one notices a strong statistical preference for the objects (or passive subjects) of *gestreonan* to be more highly individuated and less formulaic than those of *streonan*. At any rate, to conclude this discussion of the Old English verbs allegedly meaning 'to beget', what the prefix *ge-* is quite unlikely to accomplish is to convert a verb of (economic) acquisition, *streonan*, into an existential causative verb meaning 'to cause a child's coming into bodily existence, by fertilising female ova with one's sperm', which is approximately what the Modern English verb *beget* is supposed to mean.

A number of Old English verbs relating to childbirth have not been discussed yet (such as *(ge-)beran* 'bear, bring forth', *gan mid* 'be pregnant with', and *(a-)fedan* 'bring forth, bring up (feed/educate)', referring to maternal activities, or *(a-)tydran/tyddrian* 'produce, bring forth, bring up', which is more general), but this is no serious omission because the focus of our attention is specifically on begetting. The following table, nevertheless, attempts to summarise this whole verbal field, and to bring out a few points, most of them touched on previously, meriting further comment (p. 107).

What strikes one is that most of these verbs are referentially quite versatile. They do not specifically designate one and only one phase in the process of a child's coming into existence, but may alternatively refer to several phases;[27] and many of them are preferably used as rather generic descriptions of the entire episode without singling out one or the other of its parts. It is, therefore, not surprising that in translations or adaptations from Latin often two Old English verbs are offered as apparently synonymous (e.g. *gecenned ł geboren, cende ł gestrionde, foedaŏ ł alaŏ)*. In general, one must rely on the context to determine whether these verbs are intended to be generic or non-generic descriptions, and, if they are intended to refer non-generically to one of the phases of coming into being, which particular phase this might be. Not infrequently one encounters descriptions explicitly focusing on two or more successive phases, and to the extent that the phases meant are in fact uniquely identifiable, such piecemeal accounts, as illustrated in (22), probably provide the most reliable clues to the non-generic meanings of the verbs concerned.

	Marriage	Intercourse	Begetting	Conceiving	Pregnancy	Parturition	Recognition	Bringing up	Generic
wifian, ceorlian, æw(n)ian ...	+								
hæman	+	+							
gehrinan ...		+							
ongietan		+							
begietan	+[a]		??						+[g]
cunnan		+							
(ge/on-)cnawan		(+)					+		
(a-)cennan			?	+	+	+	+[d]		+
tieman		+	?[b]		?	+			+
(ge-)streonan			??						+[g]
eacan/eacnian			−[c]	+	+	+			+
onfon	+[a]			+			+[e]		?
gan mid					+				
(ge-)beran					+	+			
(a-)fedan						?		+	
fostrian						?	?	+	
(ge-)agnian							+[f]		+
agan									+
habban		+[a]							+
(a-)tydran								+	+
alan								+	?

Notes:

[a] In expressions such as *wif begietan, wife onfon, wif habban.*

[b] Non-relational conceptualisation; child not construed as object.

[c] In constructions such as 'to make woman pregnant with child', i.e. child not construed as highly opposed object.

[d] Referring specifically to naming.

[e] Referring specifically to baptism (standing sponsor to child), not necessarily in the Christian sense.

[f] Referring specifically to adoption.

[g] Predominantly used with male parent construed as subject.

(22) a. He bið mid synnum begyten and mid synnum acenned and on synnum afedd (Wulfstan) 'he was fathered/conceived in sin, and born in sin, and brought up in sin'

b. hie ... þær þonne bearna striendon. Eft þonne þa wif heora bearn cendon, þonne feddon hie þa mædencild ond slogon þa hysecild (Ælfred, Oros.) 'there they were then busy with child-procreation. After the women had given birth to their children, they then brought up/fed the girls and slew the boys'
c. Se frumsceapena man, Adam, næs gestryned ne acenned (Ælfric, Hom.) 'the first-created man, Adam, did not have a father and was not born of a woman'
d. An mæden sceal geeacnian and acennan sunu (Ælfric, Hom.) 'a virgin shall conceive and bear/give birth to a son'; Ða wif ðe ða geeacnodan bearn cennað ðe ðonne git fulborene ne beoð (Ælfred, C. P.) 'the women who give birth to the children conceived before they are fully developed'
e. Sona swa he acenned wæs and geboren (Blickl. Hom.) 'as soon as he was begotten/conceived and born'
f. Godes bearn tymdon wið manna dohtra and hig cendon (Genesis) 'the sons of God had intercourse with the daughters of men, and these bore children'
g. Wa eacniendum and fedendum on ðam dagum (Gospel St Matthew) 'woe to those who are pregnant and who are feeding/nursing in these days'

One might be inclined, then, to assume that the more generic uses of the respective verbs exemplify the *pars pro toto* principle mentioned in § 2. But designating one non-generic meaning, in terms of references to particular phases of the episode 'coming into being', as basic should prove difficult, if not impossible, with many of these verbs; and one might therefore be hesitant about according absolute priority (basicness) to non-generic, specific meanings in general. Lest one should find this picture unorderly and suspect (on the grounds that the analysis is of necessity based on a rather limited amount of data), it ought to be noted that the situation found in Old English is far from being unique — on the contrary, semantic uncertainty and versatility of verbs from the area of procreation appear to be the rule rather than an exception in a crosslinguistic perspective.

Most conspicuous is presumably the supposed absence of a verb specifically referring to the causation of a child's coming into bodily existence by having intercourse with a woman (or, if you prefer, by fertilising female ova with one's sperm), the father and his offspring being conceptualised as diametrically opposed to one another with

respect to an existential causative relationship of this kind. Presupposing that our analysis of verb meanings and of the semantics/pragmatics of the object case marking system in Old English is essentially adequate, I can see at least three possibilities of interpreting this lexical gap. Firstly, it could be due to a conceptual gap. However, in the light of the physiological knowledge about procreation likely to have been shared by average Anglo-Saxons (cp. § 1), it does not seem very plausible to assume that they just did not know that children are begotten by their physiological father. This gap could, secondly, be due to a tacit agreement among the Anglo-Saxons to avoid explicit mention, in speech or writing, of certain matters pertaining to procreation, in spite of being fully aware of the physiological details. Obviously, this topic is in fact rather likely to be under a taboo in many human cultures and societies, and we often find that expressions are being used which refer to such matters only indirectly. Thus, one might consider the possibility that the non-literal meaning of the Old English verbs of receiving and acquiring discussed above indeed is 'to beget'. But this interpretation is perhaps rendered a little implausible by the outspokenness with which many Anglo-Saxon authors often deal with sexual matters, whether in the context of procreation or not. A third way of accounting for the absence of a verb of begetting (with the semantic and morphosyntactic properties mentioned) would be to deny that the coming into being of a human child through particular efforts of its father is in fact sufficiently similar to the coming into existence of an artifact through the efforts of its creator to warrant parallel semantic and morphosyntactic treatment, largely irrespective of the details of one's favourite procreative beliefs. For the following reasons this third alternative in my opinion surpasses its rivals.

Unlike SCHUCHARDT, I do not think that procreation is the primordial kind of creation — it is, at any rate, anything but a prototypical kind of creation. Effected objects are typically artifacts (and for a superhuman creator animate beings may well have the status of artifacts)[28] which come into existence through intentional human activities, in particular through manual work perhaps aided by tools. The artifact may be (and typically perhaps is) produced according to some preconceived plan or after some real or imaginary model, the process of completing the product as such is typically gradual. A child's coming into existence — and let us, for simplicity, consider bodily existence alone — is in several respects unlikely to be con-

ceptualised analogously. There is first the question of intention. Trivially, a man may engage in the relevant sexual activities with procreative intentions, but may not be successful as a progenitor; or he may have no such intentions whatever, and may nevertheless be presented with offspring. A socially important aspect of procreation, then, concerns the sex of the child; and although children may be believed to be the very image of their parents, this aspect at least is not one to be fixed according to plan (at least not very successfully in the long run). This is not to say that what counts as a genuine creation may not be contrary to the creator's intentions or plans. Still, on the whole procreation is much less likely to be governed by intentions and plans than the usual creations of artifacts. Thirdly, one might be tempted to liken the development of a human organism to the gradual completion of an artifact, but there is indeed no very convincing comparison between them when seen from the point of view of the procreator/creator and what he actually does and what he experiences. The only thing the male parent may do specifically for the purpose of procreation is to engage in sexual intercourse (provided he is aware of a connection between intercourse and childbirth). Approximately nine months later the mother is delivered of a human organism which, when appearing on the scene, is already essentially completed, if still quite small. As to the intermediate steps in the organismic development, there are unmistakable signs to be sure (most saliently the cessation of menstruation some weeks after the crucial intercourse, the quickening another four months or more later, and the swelling of the breasts and the abdomen later still), but most of them, at least the earlier ones, are of greater experiential importance for the mother than for the father. At any rate, even if the male parent becomes aware of a process of organismic development within the womb of the mother a considerable amount of time after the ostensibly crucial event of his own procreative activity, which it should be extremely difficult to identify in retrospect, he does certainly not conceive of himself as further contributing to the gradual completion of this development in the manner he would work on and complete an artifact. (What happens after the phase of parturition is another question.) In fact, it seems to be universally recognised as a distinctive feature of organisms that changes of their state (which include growth, change of position, etc.) may be self-induced, perhaps given certain contributory conditions. Provided that these are relevant considerations largely independent of

the particular procreative beliefs that happen to be entertained, it should be obvious that the creation of artifacts and paternal procreation are not exactly close analogues.[29] And if the grammar of a language manifests morphosyntactic features which are sensitive to the conceptual factors differentiating procreation and creation, morphosyntactic differences between expressions of procreation and creation are only a logical consequence. The relational conceptualisation of predicates and the object case alternation between the accusative and the genitive presumably are such features of Old English.

Producing artifacts and having children compare even worse as soon as one recognises that in the latter case bodily existence is not the only mode of existence relevant. Children, among the Anglo-Saxons and elsewhere, also need to come into spiritual, mental (in case the mind is given independent status from either the body or the spirit), and social existence before they may aspire to full membership in the society. How do souls, mind, social beings come into existence, then? Surely not as the result of procreative activities of the physiological parents. And the analogy of manufacturing artifacts should, in the view of most cultures, be even more far-fetched here than in the case of bodily existence. It cannot be the purpose of this paper to survey in detail the occasionally fairly elaborate assumptions and regulations concerning the beginning of a child's spiritual, mental, and social existence in Anglo-Saxon society, both in heathen and in Christian times. Intercourse and begetting were at any rate never seen as acts causing these modes of existence. Crucial in these respects were much later phases, in particular the one summarily called 'recognition' in the above table, but also parturition and certain measures in its wake. The child born in wedlock became subject to paternal authority at birth, or after passing tests showing that it was alive and kicking, the paternal power thus established originally including the right to kill or sell the child. The child became an affine of its physiological father, and was thus further integrated into the social structure, only in case he actually recognised it as his child.[30] Upon recognising a child and deciding to bring it up, the father originally forfeited his right of killing or exposing the child, i.e. of refusing to recognise its social existence. According to the traditional ritual of recognition, the father literally had to receive the new-born, i.e. to take it up from the ground when it was brought before him (cp. descriptions such as *Gif min fæder me hand-*

laþ and me gecnæwþ (Genesis) 'if my father handles me and knows/ recognises me'). Apparently there was considerable variation among the Germanic peoples and tribes concerning the practices of baptism and naming; but no matter how and when baptism and naming were performed, these rituals had to do with the establishment of a child's spiritual and social existence. Now, none of the activities male parents engaged in for the purposes of granting their offspring spiritual and social existence is even distantly related to typical manufacturing activities. Rather, these are activities of according some status, of admitting into a social network, or literally of receiving a child after it has been born by its mother. Given the relative importance of social vis à vis physiological paternity, it should not be surprising, therefore, that a father's having children tends to be conceptualised among the Anglo-Saxons (and peoples with similar beliefs and cultural practices) in terms of, or on the analogy of, receiving things already in existence, rather than in terms of creating artifacts. In Old English the semantics and the relational frames of *begietan* and *(ge-)streonan*, and perhaps of further verbs in this area, can be accounted for along such lines. And so can myths dealing with the social and spiritual aspects of the coming into existence of human beings, among the Anglo-Saxons and elsewhere.

4. EPILOGUE: IN DEFENSE OF CIRCULARITY

In conclusion a few remarks are in order about the epistemological status of the analysis of parts of the Old English lexicon and case system that has been suggested in the preceding chapters. What I think I have been doing essentially was to try and make sense of the lexical and morphosyntactic patterns observed in Old English texts. The patterning of object cases, in particular of the accusative, dative, and genitive in their major uses, makes sense, I believe, when interpreted in terms of the notions introduced in § 2, especially those of degrees of opposedness and of semantic completeness vs. incompleteness (or, non-relational vs. relational nature) of predicate conceptualisations. I would be prepared to adopt an alternative analysis, employing different interpretive notions, if I felt it would further my understanding of the patterns taken into account here, and perhaps of further relevant though not necessarily linguistic patterns, beyond the level of understanding reached with the present analysis.

That is, I do not assume my analysis to be, strictly speaking, falsifiable on observational grounds. What is required for this analysis to be overthrown is an alternative, more satisfactory interpretation of the same and perhaps additional relevant data. The present analysis cannot be observationally falsified because its mode of argumentation is essentially circular. Recall that in order to make sense of the case patterning at issue I suggested the notions of opposedness and (in-)completeness. But the locus of these concepts is the mind of speakers and hearers and not the world outside them: although there presumably are correlates on the levels of perceptual and emotional representation, the differentiation of degrees of opposedness and the relational/non-relational conceptualisation of predicates are matters genuinely belonging at the level of conceptual representation — that is, of human imagination. And we arrived at these concepts only through an analysis and interpretation of linguistic patterns, which in turn were assumed to be motivated by these very concepts. In spite of its being inevitably caught in this hermeneutic circle, I feel the analysis I have suggested contributes more to an understanding of the Old English system of object cases than the customary rival accounts in terms of lexically idiosyncratic case government. These likewise do not incur the risk of observational falsification, but simultaneously renounce any attempt to uncover generalisations and to make sense of the data. Champions of case-government accounts would not feel uncomfortable at all, for instance, when confronted with verbs of begetting occurring with genitive objects in a language like Old English; but this lack of irritability only shows that their accounts are vacuous and sterile, which I believe is worse than being circular in the sense of the present analysis. Linguistic patterns, at any rate, need not be the only manifestations of the concepts that were invoked here. If these concepts could be shown to underlie the patterns of cultural beliefs and practices and in general of non-linguistic products and processes of the human imagination as well, this would inspire more confidence still in our kind of approach.

As John Austin used to say on such occasions, here I leave and commend the object to you.[31]

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NOTES

[1] The most extensive discussion of these matters, including references to the voluminous relevant literature, may be found in MONTAGU (1974), whose position is that this supposed physiological ignorance, as first reported by SPENCER & GILLEN and MALINOWSKI in sufficient ethnographic detail, is usually genuine.

[2] Significantly, the Trobrianders' term for 'father' is glossed as 'stranger' or 'outsider' by MALINOWSKI and others. But see BLU (1977) for a recent careful discussion of physiological and social conceptions of paternity, with particular reference to the Trobriand Islands.

[3] See MONTAGU (1974: 253–96) for the argument that it is actually quite difficult to discover and confirm the right causal connection between intercourse and childbirth under every-day non-experimental circumstances. This difficulty will occupy us again in §3.

[4] If such classificatory possessive affixes, as described for certain Melanesian languages by RAY (1919), would occur in Kiriwina, the language spoken by the Trobrianders. From MALINOWSKI's (1920; 1935: 33ff.) accounts of nominal classification in Kiriwina, I gather that this particular classificatory parameter ('effectedness') is not utilised there.

[5] Bear in mind, though, that the procreation beliefs of the Aranta, Trobrianders and other Australian, Melanesian, and Micronesian peoples outlined above are not entirely exceptional and without parallels closer to home. The assumption that essentially similar views of paternity were once more widespread and perhaps universal, is discussed and supported for instance by HARTLAND (1909/1910), REITZENSTEIN (1909), LESKY (1951), and again MONTAGU (1974: 250ff.).

[6] Although MONTAGU (1974: ch. 11) argues that phallic cults per se provide no indisputable evidence of an awareness of the basic physiological facts of procreation, I believe the Germanic circumstances warrant this inference.

[7] I have argued this point elsewhere (PLANK 1983: ch. 3). §2 as a whole draws on the more detailed treatment of case marking, grammatical relations, and predicate meaning to be found in PLANK (1983).

[8] In this and other passive examples quoted, I assume that the nominatively marked actant of the passive clause would correspond to an accusative if the clause were active.

[9] Inferences on the basis of the context and of one's knowledge about the world aid in this task (e.g. if Cain is generally known to be fierce and Abel to be gentle, no distinctive role encoding would seem necessary in relating the episode of Cain killing Abel). See PLANK (1979a; 1980) for a more thorough discussion of distinction and identification with different grammatical relations.

[10] Of course one may wonder whether it is legitimate to distinguish, at the level of linguistic representation, between activities and experiences in the first place. I tend to think it is not, at least in Old English and similar languages (cp. PLANK 1981).

[11] No attempt is being made here to characterise the relation of subject; on my views of this subject see PLANK (1979b; 1983: ch. 2).

[12] 'Belonging-to', that is possessive, relationships may also be conceptualised as ones of polar opposedness with certain verbs, in particular if the emphasis is on bringing and keeping something under one's influence and control. *Hieran*, incidentally, well illustrates that notions such as activity and experience are not particularly suitable at least for purposes of lexical categorisation.

[13] The nominals in constructions like *to play football/piano*, as opposed to the object in *to play the ball to mid-on*, are good examples of a very low degree of individuation. Under such circumstances one typically finds object incorporation in languages where this kind of construction is available, or also simple predicates conceptualised non-relationally.

[14] WESTERMANN's (1930: 126) description of Ewe, for instance, illustrates this very well. AUSTIN's (1970) conception of 'stages', 'phases', and 'stretches' of actions also comes to mind here; 'phase' as used here probably corresponds to his 'stage'.

[15] Valuable discussions of this often neglected matter may be found, for instance, in BRÉAL (1897: ch. 20), MEILLET (1937: 358f.), BLINKENBERG (1960: ch. 1), and, more recently, SCHMALSTIEG (1982).

[16] The genitival marking of adnominal attributes of course fits into this picture quite well, because nominal heads usually are not conceptualised relationally. Cp. again PLANK (1983: ch. 2).

[17] Following suggestions by Brugmann, Curme, Sommer, Ammann, and others. Cp. the detailed treatment in AMMANN (1961), which, although primarily focusing on the genitive in Ancient Greek, seems general enough to cover also many of the other Indo-European case languages.

[18] Term borrowed from DOWTY (1979: 69).

[19] Uses of these verbs outside the sphere of procreation need not concern us here. That is, we need not worry whether, for instance, there are actually two verbs *cennan*, the second meaning 'to declare, choose, ascribe, prove', and, if not, how this meaning is to be related to the procreative one.

[20] A survey of relevant data, including also that body-part which — apparently to the surprise of many — seems most intimately associated with procreation, the knee, may be found in STIEGLECKER (1927), and, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, in THASS-THIENEMANN (1967: 72—82), as well as in numerous etymological case studies. Since *begi(e)tan* will come up for discussion presently, note incidentally that *ongietan* exhibits a similar range of meanings: while usually referring to knowledge in the intellectual sense ('to know/understand/perceive/recognise'), carnal knowledge is meant in examples like *Ic nænigne wer ne ongeat* (Blickl. Hom.) 'I did not carnally know any man'.

[21] Note that the simplex *gi(e)tan* does not seem to be attested in Old English texts, whereas prefix formations are quite numerous.

[22] Only SWEET (1896: 19) also gives the meaning 'to conceive', but this is probably an error — unless *begyten* is appropriately translated as 'conceived' rather than 'fathered/begotten' in this passage: *He bið mid synnum begyten and mid synnum acenned and on synnum afedd* (Wulfstan) 'he was begotten/conceived in sin, and born in sin, and brought up in sin'.

[23] This, incidentally, is not tantamount to claiming that the naive mind imagines things to be created as things already in existence and manipulable or acquireable (thus, e.g., BEHAGHEL 1923: 675).

[24] Even today *beget* occurs with a preposition which seems unusual for an existential causative verb; cp. *We are uncommonly careful in the choice, not of whom we take to bed, but by whom we are to beget children* (J. BRONOWSKI, *The ascent of man*, 1973, p. 406).

[25] The Latin *Vorlage*, incidentally, has the verb in the singular: *filios generabis et filias*, in accordance with the existential causative meaning of the verb.

[26] LINDEMANN (1965) and DE LA CRUZ (1975), for instance, deal with the various functions of this prefix. On transitivity in a semantic-pragmatic sense, as a property of entire clauses, see recently HOPPER & THOMPSON (1980), and PLANK (1983: ch. 3), where it is also related to the notion of opposedness.

[27] Some of these verbs may in fact be less versatile within the confines of individual texts. But the overall situation evinces considerable semantic variability.

[28] Accordingly, the relevant Old English verbs are conceptualised relationally and occur with accusative objects polarly opposed to the Creator as subject; cp. *Ic ðec mon ærest minum hondum geworhte* (Christ) 'I first wrought you, man, with my hands', *Gode wolde þurh his agene handa hine gescyppan* (Screadunga) 'God wanted to form him with his own hands', *Ic eom se þe man of eorðan gehiwode* (Ælfric, Saints' Lives) 'I am the one who created man out of earth', etc.

[29] This should of course also help account for some of the allegedly peculiar procreative beliefs mentioned in § 1.
[30] Analogously in the case of adoption.
[31] The Old English examples quoted in this paper are from the usual handbooks (especially BOSWORTH & TOLLER 1898, TOLLER & CAMPBELL 1972, VISSER 1970), or directly from standard text editions. Often my translations differ from those found in the literature, for reasons that should have become evident. Generalisations suggested here are based on the data that happened to be available to me, and these data usually included all verb occurrences listed in BESSINGER & SMITH (1978). Basic information about Germanic, and especially Anglo-Saxon, beliefs and practices pertaining to childbirth is conveniently accessible in the relevant *Reallexika*.

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