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(ii)

FORMAT

The journal is published three times per year. Articles are welcome from students of anthropology and from people in other disciplines. Papers should be as short as is necessary to get the point over. As a general rule they should not exceed 5,000 words. We welcome comments and replies to published articles. All papers should follow the conventions for citations, notes and references used in the A.S.A. monographs. Communications should be addressed to the Journal Editors, Institute of Social Anthropology, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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MALTHUS AND FORMAL ANALYSIS : A CAUTIONARY TALE

The remarks which compose this paper are the result of speculation upon a problem that is all too familiar: how is it that published arguments which can readily be shown to be inaccurate, and logically unnecessary, nonetheless exercise considerable influence over generations of students? The example of Malthus's writings on population suggests itself in part because it is a notorious and familiar case to most students of human populations, but also because it seems particularly applicable to present anthropological environs. Of course no claim can be made for the generality of a single case, nor can I pretend to point up all the troubling aspects of the problem.

In approaching this example in a short paper, several methods of examination may be ruled out from the start. For instance, it does not seem helpful to attribute the character of Malthus's argument and the ways it has been read to external forces influencing his or his readers' analyses - say, economic conditions in capitalist societies, which have given partisan support to his version of political economy - simply because this requires further enquiry and extensive invasion of social history and historical materialism. I do not doubt that economic factors can be considered determinant, but an approach in these terms has the effect of substituting for our immediate problem a much larger one. It might be pointed out that these approaches have not resolved the problem in any case; besides, there are tidier ways of addressing the issue which do not commit us to systems which have already engaged Malthus in debate with little effect.

Nor does it seem helpful to posit an underlying logic to his argument, an abstract structure which has been found 'good to think'. Recourse to logical possibility, to relational notions such as symmetry, complementarity and transitivity, or to more elaborate structural models, is sometimes a useful thinking stage in understanding social phenomena. Again, there is no doubting that such structures can be posited, and that they bear some fundamental relation to the nature of the human mind, social order etc. But these are age old matters of speculation, and what we are interested in are certain tiresome features of precisely this sort of activity. The artificiality of posited underlying logics, forms or structures has certain effects, which are by now notorious, on the products of analysis. Since these have some relevance to my example, a few of them may be listed.

(i) The most visible problem arising from attention to formal methods is the prominence of finished products of analysis - elaborate terminological tables, statistical tables, lists of oppositions, flow diagrams, and the like - which, within anthropology, has been particularly fancied by ethnoscientists and 'high' structuralists. Given complex and manifold social materials, these are often necessary devices, as those better known users of structural methods, statisticians, have long maintained. Anthropological formal studies show the same tendency as quantitative applications to make these devices the end of analysis rather than contributory means. It is interesting to ask why these finished products hold such fascination.

(ii) Interest in underlying structures carries with it morphological postulates: elementary forms, atoms, essences, relations, principles, properties - in short, the final or empty posits which often go into or are the results of the tables. There is an expectation that these cavities will be filled up with ethnographic contents; in this way an analytical separation of structure and meaning, or structure and function, is effected. There is an inevitable tendency for these posits to become

real, so that it becomes necessary, for example, to remind anthropologists that terminologies cannot be used to predict the actions of the individuals to which, in a given context, they refer. This is a fate which has met many useful posits, including Chomsky's 'transformations', Kuhn's 'paradigms', demographers' 'projections', and so forth. Like the tables, these posits are necessary to manage social materials, yet it seems impossible to keep their analytic status from being taken as merely descriptive.

(iii) This problem has infected formal analysis itself; that is, the way these analyses are carried out. The impression often given by writers using these methods is that formal analysis is something separable from meaning, function, indeed, from language. This is undoubtedly encouraged by the tabular displays, and, particularly in the case of numerical analyses, by the fact that many sequences of elision, approximation, and equation have no direct social analogues. In any case, the selection, manipulation, and interpretation of posits inevitably involves conventions for reading them. This aspect of analysis has not received attention in anthropology, which again marks the similarity of anthropology to other fields in which structural methods are characteristically applied. It may be argued that formal analysts seriously misrepresent the practice of these methods insofar as they portray their application as occupying a rarified domain in which rigid procedures are brought to bear on reduced forms, a domain divorced from semantics and things ethnographical.

(iv) One of the effects of this hyperformalism (we may as well give it an ugly name) is that the work of formal analysts is continually being misunderstood. We may express this as the combined effect of points (ii) and (iii): on the one hand, the unaware or uncritical may read the course of events into formal classifications; on the other, anthropologists will inevitably talk about formal relations with reference to ethnographic contexts. This is especially clear in kindred formal subjects like demography, in which the professional will deny that a population 'projection' is a prediction of population changes over a given future period. Why, then, does he engage in this exercise, and why do governments, corporations, journalists and fellow demographers then talk about these future states in realistic terms? How else could they talk about them, except in terms of linguistic conventions which express the future as a continuation of the present, in which specified similar events are likely to occur? Anthropologists, also, interpret formal relations using substantive terms, either in referring to particular social situations, or in the comparison of societies which happen to share classificatory forms. This is analogous to the demographer's predicament. Rather than modify terms - e.g. 'projection' for 'prediction' - anthropologists seem to prefer to live with their familiar notions enclosed in inverted commas, under the maxim that 'of course no such things exist'. Whether this is an adequate defence against the whole way language is used in the development and subsequent discussion of analytic terms remains to be seen.

(v) Formal analysis involves characteristic ways of reading abstracted forms which are not entirely controlled by the analyst, and probably cannot be. The suggestion of (iv) is that there is much to formal analysis that analysts do not admit. There is also inevitably much more in some analyses than the analysts suspect. Formal methods are not and cannot be simply representational devices; they lay down their own special orders, they change things, they carry with them their own informal glosses and self-emending procedures. By pointing out

that this is not simply a matter of abstractness or reduction, we can at least identify the fantasy of purity (or perhaps merely cleanliness) which often surrounds formal analyses. The formalist renounces language, at least at one stage of analysis, in favour of logical possibility, or a notation, or a calculus - which is only to say that he agrees not to examine the linguistic effects of what he is doing. For in subsequent applications he may talk about his formal constructions willy-nilly, his object by this time being fully formed, and it can be little surprise that it seems eminently applicable to the world as we ordinarily describe it.

(vi) Finally, we can draw the implication of points (iv) and (v): recourse to formal methods, to structures, is a way of changing the world. The interest gained by a particular formulation is a consequence of the particular combination of inclusions and exclusions it performs. Its interest also lies in the means it provides of aligning previously diverse forms. In short, it encourages new and programmatic means of overdetermination. The history of the application of these methods is enough to assure us of this: the use of registration techniques in the Victorian social reforms of the 1830's through 1870's; Clerk-Maxwell's application of probability to mechanics in the same period; a similar but later application to biology by writers such as Pearson or Lotka; Saussure's early linguistic structuralism; and so forth. Surely it is no accident that when Leach, himself trained as an engineer, wanted people to rethink anthropology, he used his Malinowski lecture as an advertisement for formal, structural methods?

To return to Malthus, the present interest of his argument has to do with its construction, how it works at once logically and as a rhetorical device, laying down patterns of inclusion and exclusion for all those who would traverse the same or similar topical ground. In the form and content of his analysis we shall see simultaneity and not difference. Of course Malthus is not ordinarily considered a formalist, indeed his work appeared just prior to the institutionalization of these methods in social studies. I find this priority helpful, for it enables me to fit my argument to a known historical sequence. If forms are carried in language, or language is used in discussing them when they are for certain purposes separated from language, we should consider formal analysis the natural combination of these as they are used. Malthus is useful here because his method is expressly arithmetic - i.e. a part of ordinary language which is also embodied in notation and forms the basis for linguistic and non-linguistic speculation. His argument may thus be dissected, and yet the forms remain content-laden. We can then introduce examples from the period immediately following Malthus's writings which mark the entry of institutionalized hyperformalism into social study, through the work of the Registrar-General's Office from its inception in 1837.

To direct these issues to the opening question: the specific interest of this case is to show the way in which the unattended reading of linguistic forms into supposedly ultimate and purely formal ones is not only systematically misleading, but a powerful, persuasive, and not entirely conscious rhetorical device with far-reaching effects.

The opening paragraph to Malthus's A Summary View of the Principle of Population states the well known numerical principle

upon which his argument is based:

In taking a view of animated nature, we cannot fail to be struck with a prodigious power of increase in plants and animals. Their capacity in this respect is, indeed, almost infinitely various, according with the endless variety of the works of nature; and the different purposes which they seem appointed to fulfil. But whether they increase slowly or rapidly, if they increase by seed or generation, their natural tendency must be to increase in a geometrical ratio, that is, by multiplication; and at whatever rate they are increasing during any one period, if no further obstacles be opposed to them, they must proceed in a geometrical progression (1953:119).

Malthus's object of attention, 'increase', is at once a natural capacity, a principle, and the series of social products which both of these yield. It is the specific character and operation of this simultaneity which is at issue. Merely by identifying 'increase' with 'progression' Malthus sets in motion an arithmetic apparatus of interpretation, for the increase may vary only by its rate of progress, according to the 'obstacles' or limits which arithmetic series inevitably have. Even infinity is a practical limit, whether as the impossibility of endless counting, or as a limit to internal continuity, in the form of irrational numbers. It is common knowledge that populations cannot grow infinitely large, and a popular misconception that population declines are usually due to deaths. Malthus's arithmetic provides him with a way of showing that these extremes converge long before any question of infinity arises. His method consists of a repetitive application of the concepts of 'series', 'rate', 'limit', and 'convergence'.

'By the laws of nature man cannot live without food' (1953:143). Toward this limit possible and actual increases of two series, population and food production, advance and converge. First, the food series: the phenomenal growth of population in the United States in the late 18th century provides Malthus with a case in which actual increase approximates to geometric potential. This establishes the factuality of multiplication in conditions of food production which permit it; but as fertile territory is limited, and gradually being used up, increased use of less fertile land becomes necessary, and the rate of increase in food production must gradually diminish. Malthus argues that even if agricultural production in settled areas were to double - that is, increase faster than he conceived possible - the limit would nonetheless be reached. In this way Malthus is able to use the upper and lower limits of possibility in place of data on declining agricultural produce; fact is manufactured out of a formula for the limits of possibility.

Note that the limits on the rate are natural ones e.g. the fertility of the soil. Social limits on population, Malthus argues, operate only through natural ones, speeding or slowing the convergence of the two series. For example, unequal distribution of property lessens the rate of increase: both luxury (land set aside for hunting, non-productive expenditure, lack of attention to proper management) and the small capital return on less productive land have the effect of taking land out of cultivation and thus reducing the demand for labour. This premature fall in profits and the check on cultivation increasingly enforce the limitation of population by decreasing wages and subsistence. Good government has the opposite effect: it means that more and more

people are able to work and survive and produce offspring; but this merely slows down the operation of the check on subsistence, by delaying the point at which the ultimate limits begin to be reached. It allows more and more people to live on the margins of subsistence. The moral of both of these contentions is plain: privilege is not responsible for the condition of the poor, either in numbers or physical conditions. The argument provided ammunition against the poor laws, since it meant that relief could never solve the problems of the poor, for the poor would only use the benefits to produce more and more offspring. His mode of argument proceeds, then, by adding to the original series of population and subsistence further parallel series: luxury, property, poverty, administration of the poor, popular morality, proper moral attitudes to the poor. Indeed, Malthus's argument enjoins puritanical rigour in the face of an 'increase' whose inevitability can only be a source of increasing pessimism. Hence the famous 'checks' on population: misery, vice and moral restraint.

It appears that the evils arising from the principle of population are exactly of the same kind as the evils arising from the excessive or irregular gratification of the human passions in general, and may equally be avoided by moral restraint. Consequently, there can be no more reason to conclude, from the existence of these evils, that the principle of increase is too strong, than to conclude, from the existence of the vices arising from the human passions, that these passions are all too strong, and require diminution or extinction, instead of regulation and direction (1953:180).

The objective in describing this arithmetic order is not to establish an underlying or implicit formal structure to Malthus's argument; that would encourage the view that for the moral content with which the structure is filled we must look elsewhere - to political economy, to contemporary theology, etc. Such a separation of syntax and semantics is unnecessary, aside from being artificial. The terms of this verbal arithmetic are not mere place-holders; not only do 'many' and 'increase' take a special meaning from the configuration in which they are applied, they admit of modification of evident overtones- 'too many', 'prodigious increase' and so forth. Whatever the political, moral or other influences upon writers in this period, there can be no doubt that the arguments were worked out in the process of their writing, according to these devices. This established characteristic patterns for generally available evaluative terms, as in the above quotation: 'excessive', 'irregular', 'too strong', 'diminution', 'extinction', 'regulation', 'direction'.

We can be impressed with the machinery of Malthus's argument even if its effects are unpleasing. The series of series give consistent logical and persuasive form to his economic, moral and material predilections; all of his arguments move as one, despite the fact that they are rather different sorts of argument, involving terms and ideas with very different ranges of meaning. But this over-determination, this reiteration of fact with fantasy and fantasy with fact, is not merely a matter of a content-laden morphology. One of its characteristic features is that it is not worked out in full; for example, there is no need for Malthus to detail the serial effects of God's will or of improprieties he finds scarcely mentionable:

The remaining checks of the preventative kind, are the sort of intercourse which renders some of the women of large towns unprolific; a general corruption of

morals with regard to the sex, which has similar effect; unnatural passions and improper arts to prevent the consequences of irregular connections. These evidently come under the head of vice (1953:153).

The verbal arithmetic at some indefinable point becomes an effective whole, and may speak with the authority of social convention.

Thus, in addition to content-laden serial form, there are procedures, one might even say predatory procedures, which have to do with flexibility of the argument, its ability to expand or contract in order to make its diverse points. Most of these seem to be 'almost' processes - ways of saying that one social fact can effectively be taken for another. A number of examples have already been provided: historical cases of population growth approach the limits of possibility, the natural growth potential, the dictates of the principle of population, and may be taken as proof of them; conversely, the limits of the possible may be used to manufacture the actual, where no data are available. There are, further, a whole range of terms employed by Malthus to gloss elements he wishes to consider together - 'tendency', 'expectation', 'estimation', 'assumption', 'deduction', 'resemblance'. The procedure of comparing facts and figures from different areas, collected in different ways, brings together on a 'more-or-less' basis, diverse elements which can be used for similar purposes. That is, they turn 'almost' or 'effectively' into 'the same as' or 'is', a shift inevitably forgotten whenever evidence is later produced. This elision is a regular feature of the way objects are constructed by discourse; it is one of those techniques by which a given unit, for purposes of discussion, is taken as a coherent total, even though it is, rather, totalizing. These 'tendencies' thus serve both the purpose of approximation and, by injunction, of equivalence. This is only to assert that the characteristics of reading also affect the reading of formal arguments: ordinary practices of reading legislate misreadings, insofar as the manifold 'almosts', with their varying references to varying kinds of contents, are systematically erased.

To return to the earlier diagnosis of what formal methods in fact entail, my argument that Malthus's essay is of formal character comes down to the following features:

- (i) it utilizes a certain version of logical possibility or ultimate relations based upon the arrangement of a few ordering concepts;
- (ii) this involves an immediate and not entirely conscious reading of language into these forms.
- (iii) it lends itself to illustrative and calculative notation (to which we will refer below).

Another notable feature of formalism is that it lends itself to certain themes, in this way playing a particular role in the construction of a moral view of the world. The most noticeable of these is pessimism as to the inevitable consequences of the trends identified in the application of formal methods. This is accompanied by a sort of Anglican rigour: the exhortation to personal and moral resolution of the trends in terms of self-awareness and restraint. Such an individualist approach is obviously naive given the automatic, partly conscious, and collective nature of the reading processes we have been discussing.

This gloomy thematic is really a version of naturalism applied to human society, and finds strong means of confirmation in the over-

determining procedures of formalism. This is easily demonstrated with reference to Malthus's argument, and is an important and persistent feature of the subsequent use and development of formal methods in human studies. We have seen how the identification of population increase as a natural capacity obeying natural laws is given an elaborate conceptual order in terms of a few serial notions. This reduction of material limits to logical limits is a powerful argument for inevitability. Indeed, without attention to the specific character of the posited logical limits - that they are one arrangement of limit notions out of many possible, and that this arrangement must be read - it is not surprising that a particular inevitable end is taken as the end. This problem evaporates when it is recognized that formal analyses are not merely reductive: they do not treat the essence of the natural world, but certain conventionalizations of it.

This view of inevitability also has considerable and conservative effects upon what is regarded as possible in human studies. Particular limit configurations are taken not only as definitions of the possible, materially and/or logically, they seem also to embody the limits of the expressible. This is, again, due to the practice of surreptitiously reading language into arbitrarily selected natural and logical possibilities. In this way the limits of the currently expressible seem to subsume both what can exist and what it is possible to express. This is really a tautological movement in which current conventions are used to confirm that reality is subsumed by those few posits with which analysis now happens to begin.

The appearance of this combination of hyperformalism-naturalism-personal moralism-pessimism is worth noting since it is one in which it is still possible to become trapped. The trap, as we have said, is an illusion which disappears once the conventional nature of posited structures and the way they are read is carefully examined; once, that is, a realistic idea of the practice of formal methods is introduced. The human sciences since Malthus's time have witnessed a considerable number of expressions of this thematic. To take one dispersion: Darwin derived his concept of natural selection from a reading of Malthus; the moral implications of the ruthless competition of individuals in nature made a forcible impression on the late 19th century; the statistical bases of selection then received formal treatment as a project of eugenics, and appeared as part of a series entitled 'Studies in National Degeneration'; and the subsequent biomathematical and demographic uses of these formal methods have advertised first the supposed imminent threat of depopulation of the western world, and now the over-population of the world as a whole.

There is not room in a brief paper for a thorough explication of these instances. Instead I shall concentrate on the influence of Malthus's formalism upon some of those writers who tried to respond directly to his argument. This enables a description of the procedures by which formal methods such as verbal arithmetic come to be notated, and something of the influence of this upon reading procedures. It is some comfort, given the excesses to which naturalistic hyperformalism has tended, to note that the course of institutional and technical development of formalism is not dependent upon it, but answers to a number of themes in any given period.

Alison's The Principles of Population is typical of early criticisms of Malthus in that it mostly adjusts the verbal arithmetic to fit an alternative and more hopeful set of trends. Thus Alison accepts the

essentiality of 'increase', but rearranges the related series so that the total effects are positive. He notes that in the period in which Malthus was writing the agricultural population was declining, yet it produced more and more food. The subsistence series answers, as Malthus noted, to the movement of capital and the demand for labour; and while this does decrease the land under cultivation, and the number of labourers, the investment of capital in machinery, trade and management increases productivity. While increased food production is accomplished with less labour, the desire to accumulate capital among the upper and middle classes stimulates the demand for labour in industry, while regulating wages and thus limiting the numbers of offspring that may be supported. Alison's world is one in which there are more and more well-to-do who gradually come to have less children. The working classes are simply well-behaved. Increased reason, foresight, property and luxury win out over a decline in animal instincts and in the various vices Malthus emphasized.

Other writers, for example, Edmonds, Lloyd, and Sadler, also responded by describing various arrangements of increase and decrease, according to different moral, political, economic and other assumptions. No one of their writings ever replaced Malthus's as the focus of debate, or as the argument to be refuted. The polemical effects of Malthus's verbal arithmetic remained decisive over their factual corrections, and over the alternative arithmetic logics they put forward. For as long as his commentators confined themselves to suggesting alternatives, they continued the debate on the ground Malthus had set out. The closure achieved by Malthus's argument was very effective: the authority it established in the simultaneity of its formal method - at once the limits of nature and of logical possibility, at once a law and a sequence of events - was never questioned. Indeed this authority must have seemed unavoidable since other options were practically inconceivable. For example, while the need for data on population was recognized, neither the institutions nor the theory for its collection were in place; conclusive refutation could not be accomplished merely by citing a few different facts from Malthus's, when what was required was a superior basis for factuality. Appeal to an alternative logical authority was excluded since it amounted to a denial of arithmetic.

In a situation in which comparable data cannot be entirely agreed upon, and authority is subsumed in arguments whose reading processes remain invisible, those arguments which take up extreme positions have an advantage. They act most completely on the authoritative premises which the chosen formalism lays down as ultimately valid. In short, they read limit conditions as such. There is a sense in which writers such as Malthus, who appear to originate and monopolize formalisms in this way, have said all there is to say about the particular logical construction they have laid upon the world. Under these circumstances there is little option but to ignore the debated terrain, and work on something else. This was in fact exactly what happened in the mid-nineteenth century, for the interest in and requirements for formal methods extended far beyond the one version Malthus presented.

What appeared was a theory of data, embodied in numerical forms and a calculus, with conventionalized reading procedures, and public (usually governmental) institutions. In the field of population, this involved medical, actuarial, and political authorities, and took the form of vital statistics, institutionalized in the office of the Registrar General. However, the broad dispersion of applied and

theoretical mathematical discourses in the middle of the last century, of which the Office was a small part, is not well understood. This distribution can be recognized superficially in a list of new familiar names, in a variety of fields: Bernard, Boole, Cantor, Clerk-Maxwell, Dedekind, Farr, Jevons, Louis, Mill, Quetelet. The despersion doubtless has a great deal to do with our notions of fact, evidence, formalism, and scientificity, whether or not our formal methods are explicitly mathematical. It remains a curious fact about anthropology that anthropologists do not take the time to understand the historical and cultural specificity of the scientific methods and perspectives they employ.

Malthus's formal method was basically ignored in the formulation of registration systems, and while the data and procedures produced in this new social formalism were used on occasion to comment upon Malthus, this was never more than a scathing backward glance. Writers such as Malthus and Alison merely used statistics to illustrate their argument; discussion of increases was repeated in tables in which lists of numbers grew and grew. The Registrar-General's Office, however, utilized life tables, and thereby generalized actuarial techniques by applying them to the national data which the Office was for the first time collecting. For the purposes of the present discussion, three features of the method of the Office may be noted. First, authority was invested in the collection of data, that is in a specially constructed multi-dimensional object which represented events in the world. Language was read into this object in the same way - if much more elaborately - as it was into the more simple device of increase. The basic change was that the central formal notion became that of aggregate or population; the series and series of series were arranged in the form of a grid rather than of parallel and convergent sequences. Thus, increases or decreases in numbers were localized geographically, and distributed by age, sex, occupation, marital status; these were arranged, in turn, in various combinations, such as age at marriage, population density, mortality and birth order.

Second, the compilation and manipulation of these aggregates involved an idea of calculation which was both a mathematical operation and a reading or glossing procedure including operations such as standardization, averaging, correlation and interpolation. The products of analysis included units which introduced, reordered, or specialized linguistic usage, such as distinctions between 'probable duration of life' and 'expectation of life', which were distinguished simply by mode of calculation.

Finally, the procedures of the Office and the authority it constituted were conducive to a variety of social themes. This was in part due to the constitution of its formal authority as the instrumentation of science, rather than as fixed laws which it hoped or professed to reveal. The Reports of the Registrar-General's Office provided a basis for public health reform, particularly in diagnosing the spread of epidemic diseases such as cholera, and were used as evidence of social conditions by writers as diverse as Chadwick, Cobden, Gladstone, Engels and Marx.

While this sketch of an early formal method is quite inadequate to its object, which deserves archaeological consideration, it helps to complete the tale of the influence of Malthus's formal method. It reminds us of the conventionality of formal methods and the need to recognize that they obtain their purposes and limits in particular

historical instances. Formal methods may appear to give exhaustive accounts of a certain range of possibility, and this enclosure is enforced by the simultaneity of its posits, their readings, the ways in which the construction seems to exclude or subsume other possible constructions, and the moral themes that are sometimes used to describe them. The analytical development of formal methods, while showing a preference for certain thematic interpretations, varies independently of them. At the point at which the various means of closure seem to leave the method little scope for operation, while they make every effort to foreclose other options, and further, by means of a thematic, pretend to speak for fundamental limits of knowledge, there is little choice but to recognize the historical limits of this closure, the considerable scope of formal developments elsewhere, and the continuing presence of a wide range of practical problems which very likely require formal means for their solution. Unfortunately, while it is possible to turn one's back on entrenched formulations, there is nothing to keep them from maintaining and promoting their favourite double binds, nor to keep them from later 'rediscovery'. As nearly 150 years of exhumation of Malthus have shown, dead systems can live long and infamous lives.

Why, then, do certain known bad arguments remain compelling? The short answer is that people do not attend to their own or others' use of method as a practice which constructs a certain view of the world. Put another way, methods contain reading procedures which, by their simultaneity, very effectively keep questions about their mode of operation from ever being raised.

In discussing Malthus we have produced something of a recipe for the construction of the operation of formal methods. This requires separating four ingredients:

- (i) posits or basic concepts of method which are at once structural and content laden.
- (ii) the reading procedures by which these concepts are overdetermined.
- (iii) effects of notation.
- (iv) polemical themes.

It seems quite impossible to perform this separation independently of the historical instances in which given formal methods were made sensible. Of course, drawing out elements in this way is itself a simultaneous procedure, with its own characteristic forms of closure. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to trace the extent to which the independent experiments of anthropologists with formal methods have only re-invented forms such as the combination (hyper-formalism-naturalism-personal moralism-pessimism) we have particularly called attention to.

Finally, restating the problem in this way enables us to recognize certain limits implicit in the question as originally asked. Plainly this is a question that is likely to be asked from within an enclosure such as we have described, and accordingly it takes on something of the character of this enclosure. In particular, it is a personal question, with definite moral overtones of good and evil. Our recipe runs counter to merely personal resolutions, since it emphasizes the collective, automatic and partly linguistic nature of processes of analysis, and the historical shaping of formal methods. The differences between formal methods

raises a large and open question as to their varying suitability or capability of revision for the purposes of restructuring the way we view different social situations.

Phil Kreager.

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HERMENEUTICS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Malcolm Crick, in his book Explorations in Language and Meaning (1976) stresses the importance of semantic powers, which make human beings members of a self-defining species. He also stresses that a recognition of the effects of the observer's presence within the field observed makes social anthropology, the interpretation of alien systems of thought and action, more a process of translation, between the observed system and that of the interpreter, than a natural science in which such effects can be taken to be minimal or non-existent. Crick thus accepts the following description of the social anthropologist, from Evans-Pritchard's Marett lecture of 1950:

He goes to live for some months or years among a primitive people. He lives among them as intimately as he can, and he learns to speak their language, to think in their concepts and to feel their values. He then lives the experiences over again critically and interpretatively in the conceptual categories and values of his own culture and in terms of the general body of knowledge of his discipline. In other words, he translates from one culture into another. (Evans-Pritchard, 1962 : 21):

Crick reaffirms Evans-Pritchard's contention that social anthropology is a kind of historiography, not a form of natural science. This however poses the question of what it is which distinguishes such non-natural sciences, collectively known as humanities, or human sciences. One answer, given by Wilhelm Dilthey, is to identify the characteristic method of the human sciences as the method called Verstehen, through which the process of creating meanings is relived by the interpreter. This however leads to a false opposition between a faculty of understanding (Verstehen) suitable for theorising the human sciences, and the mode of explanation, for theorising the natural sciences. Dilthey himself recognised that explanation is not wholly excluded from the human sciences. Even by making a distinction, however, between method and object, the observer or interpreter is again excluded from the field observed, leading to a misleading objectification, and a loss of the insight that investigation in the human sciences, and in social anthropology, is like a process of translation.

What follows is a part of the history of an unintegrated domain, loosely specifiable as 'hermeneutics'. It will show some of the implications of placing social anthropology among the human sciences, and of likening it to a process of translation. This partial history will take the form of an account of some of the differences between the theorisings of hermeneutics in three authors, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer, through a commentary on three texts: Dilthey's The Development of Hermeneutics (1900); Heidegger's introduction to Being and Time (1973); and Gadamer's second introduction to Truth and Method (1975). This account cannot show the full inner dynamics of each theorising, and of its production, but it will give a rough characterisation of each. This, however, will be sufficient to show the looseness of the term 'hermeneutics', by showing deep divergencies between three of its principle twentieth century theorisations.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) was concerned to show the possibility of generally valid knowledge in the human sciences. He grounds this possibility in the nature of the understanding, of Verstehen. He defines 'hermeneutics' in The Development of Hermeneutics as the theory of interpretation, the methodology of Verstehen, as opposed to the exegesis of texts, which is the practice of interpretation. For Dilthey, it is the possibility of understanding expressions of life, fixed in writing, which is specified by the term 'hermeneutics'; for it is by

successive engagements with fixed reidentifiable objects that general rules of exegesis can be developed. Thus there is no contrast with the reidentifiability of objects in the natural sciences. Plainly however there are problems with the suggestion that 'expressions of life' can be durably fixed. There is not just the problem of establishing definitive versions, but also of establishing the relation between expression, its author, and the context in which it was produced. These are presumably the problems which generate Dilthey's supposition of the infinite nature of processes of interpretation, a supposition which is shared by Crick. Dilthey writes in the cited essay:

Theoretically we are here at the limits of all interpretation; it can only fulfil its task to a degree (1976 : 259).

This appears in the essay as a regrettable limitation, but becomes transposed into a necessary consequence of a precondition of any understanding through Gadamer's appropriation of Heidegger's writings.

It is the requirement for fixed reidentifiable objects of interpretation which grounds the privileged status of texts in this essay. Dilthey's emphasis on texts is of course not identical to any such emphasis current in social anthropology. There is in social anthropology the distinction between the alien system of thought and action as text, and the notebooks of the observer, which form the basis of his ethnography. Dilthey's discussion of texts as written works holds only by strained analogy for texts as alien systems, the major difference being the lack of an author in the text of the alien system. The significance of the discussion lies however in the attempt to validate the results of studies in the historiographical mode. Dilthey writes:

Here lies the immeasurable significance of literature for our understanding of intellectual life and history; in language alone the inner life of man finds its complete, exhaustive and objectively comprehensible expression. The art of understanding therefore centres on exegesis or interpretation of those remnants of human existence which are contained in written works (1976 : 249).
(Translation altered.)

However, human 'inner life' is not equally expressed in all texts; and it becomes evident that there is an implicit ordering of texts on the basis of degrees of such expressiveness. Texts such as Goethe's Poetry and Truth and Schiller's On Aesthetic Education are preferred to texts such as property inventories and legal contracts, which express or describe human 'outer life'. The contrast corresponds to that between expressive and instrumental texts. The emphasis on inner life, on intentions and consciousness, becomes clearer by considering the assertion with which Dilthey concludes the essay:

The final goal of the hermeneutic procedure is to understand the author better than he understood himself: a statement which is the necessary conclusion of the doctrine of unconscious creation (1976 : 260).

This might seem to be no more than the correct suggestion that by reconstructing the context of the author's writings, it is possible to reconstruct conditions and constraints on them, of which the author was not or could not be aware. However, the implications of 'the doctrine of unconscious creation' are not exhausted by this, as becomes clear in the shift from privileging texts to privileging their authors as the objects of hermeneutics. Dilthey writes:

But the work of a great poet or explorer, of a religious genius or genuine philosopher can only be the true expression of his mental life; in human society, which is full of lies, such work is always true and can therefore in contrast to other fixed expressions be interpreted with complete objectivity. Indeed it throws light on the other artistic records of an age, and on the historical actions of contemporaries (1900 : 249) .

Thus it is not the historical context which allows the interpreter to interpret the text, but the text which helps the interpreter to interpret the historical context. However, the assertion of the possibility of first establishing the truth of the 'great poet' or 'real philosopher', and then using this truth to develop understanding of the context is entirely implausible on several counts. It is only less implausible than the suggestion that it is possible to identify authors to represent particular eras, to make choices between, for example, Dilthey and Marx.

Dilthey describes the two parts of the process of exegesis as follows:

In the process of interpretation we can distinguish only two aspects to grasping an intellectual creation in linguistic signs. Grammatical interpretation proceeds link by link to the highest combinations in the whole of the work. The psychological interpretation starts with penetrating the inner creative process and proceeds to the outer and inner form of the work, and from there to a further grasp of the unity of all his works in the mentality and development of their author (1976 : 259) .

This equal emphasis on 'psychological interpretation' is however wholly misconceived, the mistake lying in the supposition that it is possible to extend the reconstruction of the author's mental processes beyond the evidence of surviving texts; thus the use of such reconstructions to explain the texts can only be a process of reading back into the texts what has already been read out of them. This unilluminating circularity is reproduced in the following description of Verstehen:

Understanding (Verstehen) is the process of recognising a mental state from a sense-given sign by which it is expressed (1976 : 248) .

Although the reidentifiable sense-given sign is the evidence for the recognition of the mental state, Dilthey suggests that the ground for the possibility of this recognition is the interpreter's own experience of mental states. He writes:

The possibility of valid interpretation can be deduced from the nature of the understanding. There the personalities of the interpreter and his author do not confront each other as two facts which cannot be compared: both have been formed by a common human nature and this makes common speech and understanding among men possible (1976 : 258) .

Dilthey does not question the influence on the process of interpretation of the specific form of 'common human nature' which is present in the particular interpreter. Nor does he systematically discuss the possibility and actuality of differences in the languages and categories of interpreter and author. The danger of this neglect is well put by Crick, following Evans-Pritchard:

An insufficient comprehension of the conceptual structures of one's own society and an inadequate familiarity with the complex resources of one's own language can easily be a source of mistranslation and so cause misunderstanding of another culture. (Crick 1976 : 153)

By emphasising the importance of the author, Dilthey submerges the role of the interpreter and the effects of his understanding on his interpretation of the other culture. For Dilthey the aim of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the self-expression which is given in the text through a process of identification with its author. As a result of this orientation the problem of relativism emerges, because of the emphasis on the specificity of the system to be understood, and of the attempt to construct an understanding of that system from the standpoint of that system. The impossibility of such identification can however lead to a recognition that the process of understanding the alien system is not one of absorption into the system, but of translation of that system into that of the interpreter. There is in the process of understanding a necessary relation between the interpreter's self-understanding and the interpretation of the system to be understood. As Hanson concludes in his paper, 'Understanding in Philosophical Anthropology':

Furthermore a comparative perspective has characterised my entire analysis. I found it easiest to think about why Africans do not evaluate their assumptions on the basis of empirical evidence by thinking first about why Western scientists do (1970:66).

As a result of the submergence of the interpreter, Dilthey cannot begin to give an account of the constraints on understanding imposed by the conceptual structures implicit in languages, nor of the possibilities of altering those constraints. The constitution and development of the interpreter's understanding is an issue explicitly taken up by Gadamer, as a weakness in Dilthey's theorising of hermeneutics; while Heidegger is particularly concerned with the influence of the availability of categories on understanding. The very opacity of his language is a result of his attempt to break through preconceptions embedded in language as given, to what he took to be the truth of philosophy.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) published Being and Time in 1926 in the journal set up by Husserl to develop his phenomenological programme. It gradually became clear however that Heidegger's contribution was not so much a realisation of a part of the programme, as a new programme. In Being and Time itself it is not clear that Heidegger recognised this, and there is thus throughout the work a persistent but ambiguous appeal to 'phenomenology' which is not systematically related to the developing use of the term in Husserl's writings. The following is a brief summary of the introduction to Being and Time, which must necessarily be selective. The significance of this selection can only be made plain by a further reading of the text in question. There will be no direct quotations because they would probably be more confusing than illuminating, but the numbers in brackets are the page numbers of the German edition, indicating the passages on which sections of the summary are based.

Heidegger's concern is to restate the question of Being, which denotes the general category, and not a class of specific entities, because he takes this to be the precondition of philosophical investigation. In this restatement the privileged entity is Dasein, the entity which people are, because it has as a defining characteristic the possibility of understanding not just itself, but other kinds of entity too (12). Heidegger stresses that Dasein is self-interpreting, thus establishing the importance of self-definition and of semantic powers. What Heidegger shows is that Dasein is always already engaged in a linguistic

community, and has structures of understanding prior to the attempt to understand. Thus the forestructures of understanding are prior to the setting up of the subject/object dichotomy, which is the basis of the dichotomy between human and natural sciences. Thus interpretation and understanding are not to be taken as on the same level as causal explanation in the natural sciences, but are presupposed in the very setting up of the dichotomy. Heidegger thus shifts the emphasis from the individual author of particular texts, to the linguistic community, which, in the terms of transcendental philosophy, is identified as the transcendental subject.

What Heidegger wishes to question are Dasein's forestructures of understanding through the attempt to reconstruct them. This reconstruction is designed to establish the actual horizon for an interpretation of the meaning of Being in general. Heidegger indicates temporality as the meaning of the entity which is called Dasein (17), but in so doing questions the concept of time. He writes that 'time' has long functioned as a criterion for naively discriminating between various realms of entities, with a questionable distinction between temporal entities, natural processes and historical happenings, and non-temporal entities, spatial and numerical relations (18). There is a customary contrast between 'timeless' meanings of propositions, and the temporality of propositional assertions. This however obscures the crucial role of temporal determinateness in structuring human understanding (19). This temporality is historical in the sense that having a history is a determining characteristic of Dasein (20). Dasein's being in the present is always dependent on its having been in the past, as a result of which it is embedded in traditions carrying over from past to present. The failure to recognise the influence of tradition in the present obscures the historical origins of categories, and the suppressions implicit in them. By stating the full nature of categories preserved through the mediation of traditions, it is possible to recognise the influence in the present of the past, and to understand what is of value in it (22). Heidegger represents the process of investigation as phenomenological description which, he suggests, means 'interpretation'. The phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic in a dual sense of making the basic structures of Being known to Dasein (37) and of working out the conditions for the possibility of philosophical investigation. Further as a result of working out, through this hermeneutic, the conditions for the possibility of reconstructing historical processes, the methodology of the human sciences is indicated. This can be called 'hermeneutic', according to Heidegger, only in a derivative sense. There is then a clear contrast here between this and Dilthey's specification of hermeneutics as the theory of interpretation, which is to be the methodology of the human sciences.

Heidegger's questioning of the constitution of the interpreter's self-understanding, and of the categories in which that understanding is to be articulated, is taken up and made more accessible by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-). This greater accessibility is achieved at the cost of confusing the distinction between ordinary language and the language in which ordinary language is theorised. Gadamer emphasises the temporal dimension of understanding, the temporal distance between interpreter and interpreted, and the importance of the historical determinations of the interpreter's understanding, the importance of effective history. Gadamer's purpose in talking about effective history is to show how the history of a community is present in the constitution of a community at a particular point in time, not simply in its practices, but in the structures of its members' understandings. This is a stronger version of Evans-Pritchard's claim:

The claim that one can understand the functioning of institutions at a certain point in time without knowing how they came to be, what they are, or what they were later to become, as well as the person who in addition to having studied their constitution at that point of time, has also studied their past and future, is to me an absurdity (Evans-Pritchard : 21).

Stressing that both the material studied, and the understanding of the interpreter, have historical determinations is a different point from suggesting that a discipline, such as anthropology, is historiographical. Gadamer's criticism of Dilthey's failure to give an account of the formation of the interpreter's understanding hinges on a rejection of Dilthey's distinction between hermeneutics as the theory, and exegesis as the practice of interpretation. It is the use, or application, of understanding acquired through interpretation which constitutes that understanding. There is no distinction between the process of producing understanding in the practice of interpretation, and the validation of it by measuring the practice against the theoretical norms articulated in the theory of interpretation, hermeneutics. Gadamer thus relocates hermeneutics in the practical activity of developing systems of conventions and codes, which constitute legal systems, religious beliefs, and, more broadly, natural languages. An example of such practical activity is the modification of an existing language in order to express in it the thought and action of an alien community.

The precondition for such practices is the possibility of communication between interpreter and interpreted, but it is precisely the gap between strangeness and familiarity in the text to be interpreted which is the site of hermeneutics. The familiarity consists in the presuppositions and prejudices shared by text and interpreter; the strangeness by the remaining pre-suppositions, which are not shared. The familiarity is constituted, so far as Gadamer is concerned, by the presence of some effect produced by the thing interpreted in the community of the interpreter. It is plausible that this provides access to things to be interpreted in the instance where that thing is a part of a history linking interpreter and interpreted. This however is plainly not the case for the anthropologist who is not a member of the community studied. There is then a problem of how in this instance the familiarity required to provide access to the thing to be interpreted can be obtained. If the community studied is contemporary, then plainly this happens as described by Evans-Pritchard, quoted at the beginning of this paper. If the community is not contemporary, access can still be established through the reading and studying of the written and plastic remains. The process of interpretation is thus generated by the challenge to pre-supposition made by the texts. Without this challenge to presupposition, and therefore without presupposition, there would not be processes of understanding. The encounter between text and interpreter brings pre-suppositions and prejudices to recognition, and it leads to the dissolution of all but those which bring about genuine understanding. By putting prejudice at risk in the encounter with the text, that text can reveal its claim to truth. Thus the process of understanding begins when a text addresses the interpreter and poses a question to prejudice. Instead of reconstructing the self-expression which is given in a text, by identifying with its author, Gadamer is suggesting that understanding must affirm its own historical context. In the foreword to the second edition of Truth and Method Gadamer characterises his investigation in the following manner:

At any rate the purpose of my investigation is not to offer a general theory of interpretation, and a differential account of its methods, but to discover what is in common to all modes

of understanding and to show that understanding is never subjective behaviour toward a given object, but towards its effective history - the history of its influence; in other words understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood (1975 : xix).

Gadamer is therefore not developing a methodology of the human sciences. He writes: 'I did not intend to produce an art or technique of understanding in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedure of the human sciences' (ibid : xvi). For Gadamer truth is not the result of applying validating methods to processes of investigation, and he endorses Heidegger's notion of truth as revelation. He states his main direction of questioning as follows: 'My real concern was and is philosophical: what stands in question is not what we do, nor what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing' (ibid : xviii). The implication of transcendentalism becomes more clear in the following: 'The investigation asks, to express it in a Kantian way, how is understanding possible' (ibid : xviii). The procedure of German transcendental philosophy of going behind what is present in consciousness, and inquiring for the conditions of its presence, is transformed however by the systematic recognition of language, rather than isolated categories, as the medium for the expression of 'what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing'. This shift alters the nature of the transcendental claim, since although 'consciousness' may with some plausibility be supposed to be unchanging, and atemporal, allowing the derivation of one set of conditions of possibility, language may not. Gadamer identifies the consequences of this shift as follows: 'Hence the demand for a reflexive self-grounding as made from the viewpoint of the speculatively conducted transcendental philosophy of Fichte, Hegel and Husserl is unfulfilled' (ibid : xxiv). This failure Gadamer takes to indicate the impossibility of all reflexive self-grounding. What is common to all understanding is the role of effective history, and the mediation of tradition through the mediation of language, but the necessary diversity of languages, traditions and effectivities of history provides no basis for the postulation of a subject of a total process, required for a grounding of transcendental philosophy. Thus Gadamer cannot use this means for deciding which prejudices are genuine, reflecting the historical determinateness of the prejudiced, and therefore making understanding possible, and which are not.

The concept of tradition plays a crucial role in Gadamer's construction of understanding, and is the only possible location for distinguishing between prejudices. He writes: 'Tradition, part of whose nature is the handing on of traditional material, must have become questionable for an explicit consciousness of the hermeneutic task of appropriating tradition to have been formed' (ibid : xxi). The manner in which this questioning becomes possible however is never clarified, and thus the reason for the emphasis on the appropriation, rather than criticism and rejection of tradition does not emerge. This is the result of there being concealed in the notion of effective history a shift back from emphasising language to emphasising consciousness. Gadamer remarks: 'Hence there is a certain legitimate ambiguity in the concept of the consciousness of effective history, as I have used it. This ambiguity is that it is used to mean at once the consciousness obtained in the course of history and determined by history; and the very consciousness of this obtaining and determining' (ibid : xxi). This representation of effective history as primarily effecting consciousness and not as mediated through language obscures the possibility of articulating traditions, and the particular effectiveness of history on particular understandings, through analysing the language in which they are mediated.

Even the emphasis on language is to an extent misplaced. It leads to a suppression of the question of the conditions determining the development of language. Gadamer's claim to the transcendental status of philosophical hermeneutics suggests the possibility of developing an account of those conditions; but he does not develop a distinction between the ordinary language of intersubjective communication, in which effective history is operative, and theoretical language in which an account of the limits on the suspension of prejudice might be constructed. The distinction is between a language in which rules are followed, and the language in which the rules are specified, their social role specified, their mutual compatibility discussed, and the possibilities for development and change in the rules elaborated. The theoretical language must of course preserve the structures of meaning present in the ordinary language, but give in addition an account of their formation, and cohesion. The failure to make this distinction is the basis for Gadamer's emphasis on the appropriation of tradition, rather than its criticism, because only through theorising the ordinary language in which tradition is preserved is it possible to do anything more than accede to it. The problem is to specify conditions for the adequacy of theoretical languages to ordinary languages. The following is a brief indication of the form of such conditions. A theoretical language is adequate to the domain which it articulates, in this case the structure of the ordinary language, insofar as it can internalise its specification of the domain, not grounding it in appeal to external elements, such as 'common human nature'. Thus the process of validation is also internalised, since validity now consists in the theory's capacity to perform that articulation. The terms of the theoretical language are not to be imposed on pre-given data, but developed through an articulation of the domain and the specification of its elements. The validity of the terms is thus established by their capacity to allow this articulation. If, instead of grounding theory, with Dilthey, in the universal category of 'common human nature' the enterprise of interpretation were taken to be the attempt to grasp the mechanisms at work beneath appearances, and to grasp the generation of the complex opaque forms which are present in discourse, through the construction of such theoretical languages, the grounding by appeal to external standard is no longer necessary. The development of the theory is then governed not by the decision of the interpreter, constituted independently of the engagement in theorising, but is governed by the structure of the domain of objects to be interpreted, in which the understanding of the interpreter is a variable and not a constant.

The emphasis in the hermeneutic orientation on intersubjectivity tends to obliterate the distinction between theory and everyday intersubjective understanding. This obliteration is a precondition for the contention that the critique and supersession of a theory can be reduced to a mere process of criticising ideology. A critique of ideology reconstructs and criticises the system of representations of relations, institutions and practices in a society. This can be an isolable activity only if that system of representations can give a coherent and complete account of what is represented. This presupposes that what is represented is itself coherent and complete. However if the relations represented are mutually inconsistent, the critique of ideology cannot stop at the limits of the system of representations, but must go on to give an account of why inconsistencies occur in reality, of what the possible resolutions of the tension arising out of them are, and of the manner in which those inconsistencies can demonstrate themselves, both in reality, and in the system of representation. The contention that all that is needed to eliminate misunderstanding is a systematic critique of the discourse rests on the mistake of representing discourse as unconditioned by the domain which it articulates. If, instead, discourse is taken to reflect and represent inconsistencies and contradictions in the domain itself, then it is not just the discourse, but the domain which must be criticised. Thus if ideology is taken to be inseparable from, and grounded in the system of relations which it represents, then it is not sufficient to discover tensions in the discourse in which

the ideology is articulated, in order not to be misled; but the process of criticising ideology must go on to criticise that which is represented. It is not a question simply of discovering the rules according to which ordinary language is constructed and developed, but of leaving open the option of criticising that ordinary language.

As a result of not making this distinction between ordinary language and theoretical language, Gadamer is misled into grounding his theorisation of hermeneutics in an unanalysed, unanalysable notion of 'tradition'. Gadamer cannot articulate the difference between history as perceived, as a part of the conscious tradition of a people, operative in their everyday life, and a systematic reconstruction of that history, in which divergencies between history as perceived, and history as reconstructed can also be accounted for. The parallel between this relation and that between ordinary language and theoretical language should be plain. As a result of this failure, Gadamer cannot ground his own theorisation in an articulation of the tradition from which it itself stems. He cannot specify how the content of traditions is formed, nor of how it changes. If the context of tradition can no longer be known in the Hegelian style as the production of self-conceptualising reason, neither can the content and development of the content of tradition be so known. In rejecting such forms of totalisation, Gadamer rejects the possibility of establishing the moment of truth and knowledge in understanding, through appeal to an absolute moment in the process of self-conceptualisation. This rejection seems to entail a rejection of all systems of relations which go beyond the context of tradition, through which that tradition might be grasped, understood and criticised. There is however no need to suppose that without a total context of history, in the Hegelian style, there can be no move beyond specific contexts. Indeed Gadamer's rejection of the desirability as well as of the possibility of final interpretations of texts suggests as much. There can be no such total context of history, since the very enterprise of understanding and reconstructing history presupposes the finitude of the understanding undertaking the enterprise. Instead of leaving traditions to be specified by a total history to which the finite interpreter can have no access, Gadamer's own specification of necessary conditions for understanding texts can be applied to the understanding of traditions. By recognising the distinction between the ordinary language in which tradition is preserved, and theoretical language in which that tradition can be articulated, this problem is of the wholly unspecifiable nature of traditions can be dissolved.

Thus in Dilthey, hermeneutics is theorised as the methodology of the human sciences. In Heidegger, hermeneutics becomes the specification of the **forestructures** of understanding, and of language, which are prior to the making of distinctions between subject and object of discourse. On this basis Gadamer rejects the objectifying tendency in hermeneutics, demonstrated in Dilthey, whereby the interpreter identifies with the author, in order to reconstruct the objective self-expression given in a text.

Ha. strésses instead the relation between text and interpreter, mediated by tradition. The question which remains, indicating a possible line of development in hermeneutic theorising, is how traditions, mediated through language, are to be theorised. At this point it is clear that Gadamer's form of transcendentalism, grounding the possibility of all understanding, cannot be an invitation to the construction of substantial eternal structures of the conditions of the possibility of understanding, but to direct engagement in understanding specific domains, by interpreters, whose historically specific possibilities of understanding are the precondition for such engagement. There is no more than a formal answer to Crick's transcendental question of 'what it is to know, interpret, understand, and mean' (1976 : 129) and an understanding of that answer can be gained only through such engagement, which will be the more illuminating

the more the effects of the interpreter's self-understanding are made explicit. As Crick himself concludes: since the human species is self-defining, change is of its essence and the concept cannot be taken as a pregiven of interpreting, but is always in the process of redefinition. It is thus clear that even the definition of the human species as self-defining cannot be taken as a given of theory, but itself requires theorising. In order to understand the mechanisms whereby changes in the self-definition come about, it is necessary to question the production of such definitions. Both the possibility of the formation of that definition, and the possibility of theorising it, must be theorised in the theoretical language. There is certainly no reason to suppose that a recognition of the importance of semantic powers is always present in ordinary languages, and in human self-understanding, and thus theorising of it must produce an account of its presence or absence. The self-definition of the human species as self-defining must itself be put in question. Clearly in the construction of an account of Europeanised cultures the very refusal to recognise the importance of semantic powers would have to be theorised, and the definition of the human species as self-defining would have to be juxtaposed to marxist definitions of it as producing and reproducing its own means of subsistence. A more decisive conclusion depends of course on actually producing an account of such cultures, which has not been the concern of this paper.

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WHAT SCIENCE IS SAYING ABOUT THE CELTS

Pocock has recently reviewed, in the Times Literary Supplement, Malcolm Crick's Explorations in Language and Meaning. Pocock makes much of the commitment to a full realisation of humanity that the semantic enterprise, in his eyes, represents. Many of us are familiar, by now, with Crick's contrast of the reductive banalities of much conventional social science, to their discredit, with the inexhaustible joys to be found in pondering the works of a creative being. The particularly baneful effect of a narrowly conceived scientific method is much emphasised. That this is a good story with solid and enduring foundations is evidenced by the fact that we have not tired of either telling it or listening to it in Oxford over the last few years. The appeal that this story has for us should not lead us to suppose that it is particularly novel. It is, I think, in some respects, quite old. What I would like to do here is to give some thoughts on the symbolism of the shift from function to meaning, and some indication of the way in which science in particular, and formal systems in general, have been assessed as inimical to a full realisation of humanity, as representing a diminution, or dehumanisation, of man. These reflections arose during an attempt to understand the rationale behind the ascription of certain qualities to the Celtic character and to Celtic social life. I will begin, therefore, by giving some background to the construction of the Celtic character in European literature, a story which really begins in Scotland in the 1760s.

In the first half of the eighteenth century neither the English, nor, more significantly, the Scottish establishment, paid much attention to the Gaelic speaking Highlanders, except as a source of insurrection. The new middle class of Edinburgh was too busy reaping the commercial benefits of the Union to interest itself in a people who were a political embarrassment and an economic irrelevance. Societies like the S.P.C.K. considered it their duty in their Highland activities to spread the English language and to assist in drawing the Highlands fully into the political and economic orbit of Edinburgh. Any suggestion that the Gaelic language was the vehicle of expression of a literature, or that the Highland character or way of life had any particular virtue, would have been treated as a heresy against the economic orthodoxy of 'improvement'. This situation was transformed, at a literary level, in the 1760s by the publication by James MacPherson of a series of epic poems which became popularly known as MacPherson's Ossian. These were, MacPherson claimed, translations from ancient manuscripts of Gaelic poems originally composed by Ossian, the hero bard of the ancient Caledonian kingdom of Morven, in the third century A.D. These poems generated immediate and widespread interest and became involved in a controversy about their authenticity which rumbled on for the next hundred years. Although largely forgotten now outside the world of literary studies or the Highlands, it would be difficult to overestimate their celebrity in the late eighteenth century. The Ossianic poems were translated into almost every European language, Napoleon kept an Italian translation by his bedside during his campaigns, David Hume advised as to the best means of establishing their authenticity, and Doctor Johnson inveighed against them. The progress of the controversy over authenticity, which became very acrimonious, need not concern us here. It is now generally accepted that MacPherson drew some inspiration for his Ossian from the oral tradition in Gaelic speaking areas. It is also held with some confidence, however, that no Gaelic manuscript or text of any kind ever existed which was a simple

original for any of MacPherson's 'translations', and that the unique characteristics of the Ossianic verse can be ascribed largely to MacPherson. Authentic or not, the Ossianic poems obviously spoke with a welcome and recognisable voice. They are now held to be a vital text for an understanding of the beginnings of the Romantic movement in European literature. In assisting at the birth of the Romantic movement the Ossianic poems were defined in opposition to the English language Classical tradition of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and owed their form far more to a reaction against this tradition than they did to the Gaelic verse tradition on which they were ostensibly based. The reaction against the conventions of style and subject of Classical verse took the form in Ossian and in later Romantic verse of an assumed affinity with nature, simple and unaffected, a praise of the spontaneous rule of the emotions in human conduct, and, later, a political radicalism. That these matters were taken not just as metaphorical criticisms of a state of society but as rules for conduct we can see in, for example, the personal chaos which Shelley created around himself in his attempts to live a full and spontaneous life.

It is a commonplace of criticism attempting to understand Romantic verse that it gained much of its character as a reaction not just to Classical verse but to a prevailing rationalism, a century of social conformity, and a utilitarian economic order. MacPherson's decision to locate his muse in the Highlands among a race known for their fondness for political independence and lost causes, with all the vague associations of the simple, unaffected, and spontaneous that barbarity has had for civilised society since antiquity, is both creation and confirmation of this view. It is worth noting that it was largely through the poems of Ossian that an interest in things Celtic was awakened in the world of academic discourse. Thus at its origin Celtic studies was concerned not with an 'authentic' Celtic voice but with a vision of a Celtic 'other' that it had conjured up in response to its image of itself. This disjunction is effectively maintained in the uneasy relationship that exists at the present between, to choose an obvious example, the native Gaelic speaker and those societies that exist to protect his language and further his interests. That the inauthenticity in the eighteenth century was profound we can readily appreciate when we observe that this period saw the finest flowering of native Gaelic verse, of which MacPherson and those involved in the Ossianic controversy were largely ignorant. At the time that Ossianic verse was informing the Romantic English language tradition as a supposed import from the Gaelic, Gaelic poets of note like Alexander MacDonald, Duncan Ban, and Rob Donn, were writing verse that seems, in subject and sentiment, to have little about it that could be labelled Romantic. The Ossianic controversy was not, in any simple way, about Gaelic literature. Rather, it was a dialogue between a dominant eighteenth century world view and its own limitations.

The discovery of MacPherson's deceptions did not cause his verse to lose its appeal, and did not lead to any serious attempt to understand and preserve the Gaelic traditional verse that Doctor Johnson had scornfully called 'wandering ballads'. That such an epithet does not now sound scornful is some measure of the distance we have travelled. In the early nineteenth century the 'Celt' became involved in discussions of the philological history of Europe which provided an idiom in which any subject could be discussed, reaching surprising heights of fancy. The most influential of these ethnologies concerning the Celts were supplied, in the middle of the century, not by specialist Celtic scholars, but by two prominent literati, Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, the latter bringing the ideas of Renan to an Oxford audience.

Renan published a series of articles in La Revue des Deux Mondes in 1854 called 'La Poésie des Races Celtiques' in which he contrasted the populations of Brittany, Wales and the Highlands with the majority populations of France and Britain. What follows are a few typical quotes, the first describing the entry into Brittany (my translations):

In the place of Norman vulgarity, in the place of a fat and prosperous people, content to live, full of its own interests, egoistical as are all those who make a habit of enjoying life, we find, a timid, a reserved, withdrawn race, clumsy in appearance, but feeling deeply and having an adorable delicacy in their religious instincts (1947 : 252).

The Celtic race has all the faults and all the qualities of the solitary man; at once proud and timid, strong in sentiment and weak in action ... It is par excellence a domestic race, made for the family and the joys of the fireside (1947 : 255).

If we be permitted to assign a sex to nations as well as to individuals, we can say without hesitation that the Celtic race, especially its Cymric or Breton branch, is essentially feminine (1947 : 258).

Perhaps the deepest instinct of the Celtic peoples is the desire to penetrate the unknown (1947 : 258).

Renan was born and brought up in Brittany and retained a great fondness for his birthplace to which he retired in old age. Much of his life was devoted to a consideration of the relationship between religion and science in a modern and rational world. He held a mystical view of the destiny of races, considering that the Celtic race would have finally fulfilled itself by nurturing the imaginative spirit in the breast of those in France and Britain of other racial origin, and then passing quietly out of time and history.

It will perhaps help if I were to give a clearer indication of Renan's ideas of the relationship between science and nature, between man and woman. The following is from the preface to his Recollections of My Youth, published in 1883:

The natural sequence of this book, which is neither more nor less than the sequence in the various periods of my life, brings about a sort of contrast between the anecdotes of Brittany and those of the Seminary, the latter being the details of a darksome struggle, full of reasonings and hard scholasticism, while the recollections of my earlier years are instinct with the impressions of childlike sensitiveness, of candour, of innocence, and of affection. There is nothing surprising about this contrast. Nearly all of us are double. The more a man develops intellectually, the stronger is his attraction to the opposite pole: that is to say, the irrational, to the repose of the mind in absolute ignorance, to the woman who is merely a woman, the instinctive being who acts solely from the impulse of obscure consciousness ... The superiority of modern science consists in the fact that each step forward it takes is a step further in the order of abstractions. We make chemistry from chemistry, algebra from algebra; the very indefatigability with which we fathom nature removes us further from her. This is as it should be, and let no one fear

to prosecute his researches, for out of this merciless dissection comes life. But we need not be surprised at the feverish heat which, after these orgies of dialectics, can only be calmed by the kisses of the artless creature in whom nature lives and smiles. Woman restores us to communication with the eternal spring in which God reflects himself (1883 : xi).

This, while we might laugh, is nonetheless familiar enough. These ideas in French Celtic studies are still flourishing in a recent work entitled Women of the Celts by Jean Markale, Professor of Celtic History in the Sorbonne. He says:

Until now, only poets have really understood woman. This is probably because woman, like poetry, is a continuous creation, a crucible in which scattered energies are melted down, and which embraces the unique act that resolves all contradictions, abolishes time, breaks the chains of loneliness, and leads back to a lost unity (1975 : 284).

I will delay discussing Renan's Celt further until I have given Matthew Arnold's version of the same myth. Arnold gave a series of lectures in Oxford as Professor of Poetry in 1865, in which he drew heavily on Renan. It has been justly observed that Arnold's first hand knowledge of things Celtic was limited to a short holiday at an Eisteddfod in Llandudno. This did not prevent his arousing much interest and argument. The argument recapitulated with remarkable fidelity that over Ossian in the previous century, and the interest was such that eventually a chair in Celtic was founded in Oxford. Forty years after the lectures Alfred Nutt, judging an Eisteddfod essay competition on the subject of the contribution of the various races to the literature of the British Isles, found that every entry was a mere repetition of Arnold's imaginative tale.

Arnold tells us how, after attending an Eisteddfod meeting, he came out into the street and met

... an acquaintance fresh from London and the parliamentary session. In a moment the spell of the Celtic genius was forgotten, the Philistinism of our Saxon nature made itself felt; and my friend and I walked up and down by the roaring waves, talking not of ovates and bards, and triads and englyns, but of the sewage question, and the glories of our local self-government, and the mysterious perfections of the Metropolitan Board of Works (1891 : 8).

It is clear that the world of tangible, material affairs, of instrumental activity, is opposed to creativity and the world of ideas as Anglo-Saxon to Celt. Arnold is quite ruthless in his affirmation of the spirituality of the Celtic race (language, muse) and its irrelevance for the affairs of the material world, arguing that 'The sooner the Welsh language disappears as an instrument of the practical, political, social life of Wales, the better' (1891 : 10); 'the Celtic genius cannot count appreciably now as a material power; but ... it may count for a good deal ... as a spiritual power' (1891 : 13).

He elaborates this in his exposition of the German genius, which he describes as:

Steadiness with honesty; the danger for a national spirit thus composed is the humdrum ... The excellence of a national spirit thus composed is freedom from whim, flightiness, perverseness; patient fidelity to Nature, -- in a word, science -- leading it at last, though slowly, and not by the most brilliant road, out of the bondage of the humdrum and common, into the better life. The universal dead-level of plainness and homeliness, the lack of all beauty and distinction in form and feature, the slowness and clumsiness of the language, the eternal beer, sausage, and bad tobacco, the blank commonness everywhere, pressing at last like a weight on the spirits of the traveller in Northern Germany, and making him impatient to be gone, -- this is the weak side; the industry, the well-doing, the patient steady elaboration of things, the idea of science governing all departments of human activity, -- this is the strong side (1891 : 82).

To this he opposes an assessment of the Celtic genius: 'Sentiment is ... the word which marks where the Celtic races really touch and are one'. The Celtic nature is

An organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow ... it may be seen in wistful regret, it may be seen in passionate penetrating melancholy; but its essence is to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay (1891 : 84).

The German, say the physiologists, has a larger volume of intestine (and who that has ever seen a German at a table d'hôte will not readily believe this?), ... For good and for bad, the Celtic genius is more airy and unsubstantial, goes less near the ground, than the German. The Celt is often called sensual; but it is not so much the vulgar satisfactions of sense that attract him as emotion and excitement; he is truly, as I began by saying, sentimental ... always ready to react against the despotism of fact (1891 : 85).

If his rebellion against fact has [thus] lamed the Celt even in spiritual work, how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics. The skilful and resolute appliance of means to ends which is needed both to make progress in material civilisation, and also to form powerful states, is just what the Celt has least turn for (1891 : 88).

... the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret. Again, his sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature (1891 : 91).

Having constructed this edifice of opposites Arnold remarks that 'if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it' (1891 : 89).

Faced with this sort of thing one of the pleasures open to us is simple amusement, but the problem of what to do with these writings is more interesting than any mere assumption of theoretical advance in anthropology since the bad old days of racial explanations. Neither Renan nor Arnold knew much about Celtic literature, which was in any case only in the early stages of its 'discovery'. For both, the most prominent examples of Celtic literature were MacPherson's Ossian, and Lady Charlotte Guest's recent translations from the Welsh, published in 1838 as the Mabinogion. We have already observed that the style of Ossian was determined in response to an established and dominant tradition, rather than as a representation of anything particularly Celtic. In discovering in Ossian the Celt that they have imagined as their alter ego Renan and Arnold are gathering the flesh of the myth about itself. This same anticipation, this same internal confirmation, we find in a more obvious form in Renan's appreciation of Lady Guest's translation, of which he says: 'In order to render the graceful imagination of a people so eminently endowed with feminine tact, it requires the pen of a woman. Simple, animated, without affectation or vulgarity, Lady Charlotte Guest's translation is a faithful mirror of the original Welsh' (Renan 1947 : 264). Renan was quite correct in attributing the tact of the Mabinogion to femininity, but it was that of Lady Charlotte rather than that of the Celts, whose rough edges were much smoothed in translation.

We are dealing in these writings with certain familiar dualities. The congruence between this picture of the Celt and that with which women were burdened hardly needs further exposition. The areas of competence of the Celt, the domestic sphere, religion, emotionality, and the minor arts, and more significantly, the areas of his incompetence, those of politics and economics, and the scientific manipulation of the material world, are precisely those that the middle class Victorian woman lived in and with. The adjectives appropriate to the Celt, whimsical, fickle, nervous, unsteady, emotional, fanciful, still form a potent vocabulary for female belittlement.

We can also clearly see other dualisms that so vexed the nineteenth century mind and, in different ways, some more, some less concealed, continue to vex us today. The relationships between science and religion, between science and the arts, between the intellect and the emotions, the rational and the intuitive, between instrumentality and creativity, between facts and ideas, between materialism and idealism, objectivity and subjectivity, all appear to be capable of sliding easily into one another. It is difficult to avoid the temptation, even if only as a rhetorical device, to take one of these as a foundation stone for the edifice and explain the others by standing them on top of it. There are, however, no obvious priorities in these texts. Each item gains strength and colour from its association with the others, and all can be given prominence without necessarily having more than a fragile status in dependence on the rest. Certainly, some of the oppositions are so compounded of one another that they almost represent common sense for us, and enable us to construct knowledges which it does not immediately occur to us to question. It might be thought necessary in considering this picture of the Celts, particularly since women slide so easily into the Celtic world, to consider it as a picture of economic and political oppression. Certainly, at the time, Celts in both Ireland and Scotland were suffering such oppression, and their political status was marginal.

The real physical marginality of the Celtic world has a clear, practical similarity to the internal enclosure which insulated women from the society around them. Renan remarked of the Breton Celts that they were 'the last to defend their religious independence against Rome, and have become the firmest adherents of Catholicism; they were the last in France to defend their political independence against the king, and have given to the world the last royalists' (1947 : 256). Exactly the same could be said of the Scottish Gaels, and, with reservations, of European women, in their political and religious conservatism. The infolding of vision and reality in the relation of women and the Celts is given a further twist when we consider that because the division of labour in Celtic speaking areas displayed the familiar pattern, women were more likely to remain monolingual, and men more likely to take part in activities where English was essential. Consequently Scottish Gaelic is now much restricted in use to those very areas in which Arnold gave the Celt a peculiar competence, the home, the church, the arts, and close personal relationships. Gaelic is considered to be a very appropriate medium for these activities, and its suitability for scientific or business use is a matter for doubt, not surprisingly since it has been attenuated by disuse in the areas of vocabulary which it would require. It is often said of the Celts that myth and history, myth and reality, become entwined in their lives. We can see that there are some fairly prosaic reasons why this should be so.

Clearly, Arnold's work is neither a simple description of a reality, or a naive apologetics for central political oppression and chauvinism. It has been observed by Rachel Bromwich, in the O'Donnell lecture in Oxford in 1964, that in spite of considerable ignorance of Celtic literature, Arnold managed to anticipate in many ways the direction that Celtic studies was going to take over the following century. Yeats and the others in the Celtic twilight at the end of the last century adopted his picture of the Celt with little modification. He laid down the rules by which the Celts were dispraised and dismissed as well as exalted. It took Bernard Shaw to point out that the Anglo-Saxon race that could believe such a story would need to display all the fanciful credulity normally attributed to the Celt.

To what can we attribute Arnold's foresight, his ability to conjure up a discourse of such creativity? We cannot simply appeal to a prescience. Let us consider the problem of interpretation from the priorities that Arnold established. He considered his lectures to be a means of weaning the English middle class away from a smug and vulgar materialism, from the Philistinism of the Anglo-Saxon, to culture, to sweetness and light. Perhaps the most prominent expression of the Anglo-Saxon inclination is its aptitude for science. To this is opposed the Celt, who has sentiment and taste. Just as we could argue that Ossian was an attempt to supply a missing dimension to the eighteenth century intellectual world, so we can argue for Arnold and his Celt, who appears as a creative attempt to repair the ravages that the dominant intellectual self-image was inflicting on itself. Henri Martin's phrase, 'revolt against the tyranny of facts', which Arnold borrowed, reminds us of the overwhelming pre-eminence of a restrictive notion of scientific method and an associated idea of what constituted 'fact' that was, and still is, a tyranny in the human sciences. The very success of Victorian science, achieved in spite of this self-image, confirmed this science as the only sufficient rationality. Arnold's work was widely held to be one long heresy against the obvious truth and power of materialism, wherein was money, progress, and well-being. His metaphor to express the defects

of materialism, the German with over-developed intestines, and the Frenchman with large lungs, the one dull and plodding, the other mercurial, provides us with a clear moral picture as well as with an ethnological type-casting that we can still recognise. To redeem the British from the scourge of Philistinism, Arnold could pin his faith on the Celtic admixture. In locating outside the Anglo-Saxon the qualities of imagination, taste, whimsy, sensibility, femininity, creativity, beauty, artistry, Arnold was doing no more than the Victorian public school. The 'Germanic' qualities of patience and steadiness were just those that the educational establishment wished to encourage. By locating in the Celt all the qualities that the materialist world view regarded as epiphenomenal, Arnold provided a means whereby the tyrannical and debilitating duality of facts and ideas could be broken down, by the benign miscegenation of Celt and Anglo-Saxon, producing the Briton of the future, a whole man, with both the Celt and the German left floundering in half worlds.

Arnold's conception of science and its inadequacies is central to his work. Clearly, his science is opposed, as the stronghold of rationality, truth, fact, and the world of action, to the arts, fiction, symbolism, the world of ideas. At the same time, science, the same science that is the handmaid of industrial capitalism, becomes inhuman, amoral, cold, and unsentimental. The world in his hands becomes a conjuror's box from which twin dualities can be drawn in the dark with the certainty of getting a matching pair every time. To attempt even a suggestion of the easy combinatory powers of these various symbolic devices would require far more space than I have here. Since this is a paper in social anthropology I will attempt to draw some of the more obviously anthropological conclusions.

It has been suggested, in the great nature/culture debate, that the problem that femininity commonly presents to a male model of society, as a permanent threat to attempts to define clearly a nature/culture boundary, can be explained, in part, by the lack of male control over female reproductive capacity. To this we can attribute characteristics as we please -- mystery and irrationality suggest themselves fairly readily. The relative internality of the capacities and activities of woman at every stage of the reproductive process lends itself only too readily to association with certain overtly analytical categories of human physical and mental activity. The externality of the area in which science was thought competent, and the externality of that with which it dealt, facts and the material world; the qualities with which it was associated, rationality, the intellect; the areas in which it operated, industry, business; all these provide, in a number of different ways, a confirmation of their opposite -- woman in her internal enclosure; in place of rationality and instrumental powers she has emotions and intuitive faculties; her strictly biological creativity and its mystery becomes a locus for all that is non-scientific, she is fanciful, open to the influence of wandering ideas. There could hardly have been anyone better qualified than Yeats's wife to reach the cosmic beyond through intuition, and display it in automatic writing. We draw from recent anthropology an opposition between nature and culture to stabilise our understanding of our own literature. However the 'nature' of the nature/culture couple as applied to women in modern anthropology is no simple location but a moral assessment with three hundred years of thoughts on rationality packed into it. There can be no doubt that these words have been answering back loudly throughout

their use in anthropology, and that to treat their recent application to male/female symbolism as of the order of discovery is to deny them their rich and creative history.

Arnold built his vision of the Celt without repeated reference to an overt male/female symbolism. Probably his image of science and its exclusions was the most creative of the symbols that he employed, and one might understand the characteristics assigned to both Celt and woman as in many ways an artefact of a scientific theory of truth. It would have been helpful for the exposition of the qualities of the Celt if I had been able to demonstrate a physical binarism like left and right to build on. There is, unfortunately, little evidence that Celts are predominantly left-handed. The undoubted fact that they all live on the left-hand side, looking north, of the European continent might be thought to be an accident of geography rather than a symbolic statement. Students of binary symbolism will be relieved to note, however, that the left hand is not entirely without a place in the argument. The qualities, both Celtic and feminine, of intuition, imagination, and nervous sensibility, are exactly those with which left-handed people are accredited, as I am familiar from my own primary school experience.

It has been found necessary, in considering 'the Celt' and more generally, the moral discourse that science has gathered round itself, to situate a person or argument by reference to a pervading intellectual mood. Rationalism, utilitarianism, and romanticism all provide landmarks, bearings to locate a person or text. The citation of authorities with dates provides us with the illusion and security of a linear succession of ideas, in proper chronology, the one influencing the next. I have tried to dispel any such notions about the ideas that I have been examining, although I personally find that constantly risking a relapse into that which I am attempting to deconstruct is rather tiring. When Markale says 'In the Celtic sphere, history is the myth; that is to say, a knowledge of history is already to be found on a mythical level, and at this point the thought provoked by the myth takes on an active power because it influences real life' (Markale 1975 : 17), we can take this not as a racist mysticism, which it is, but as an accurate assessment of the creative potentialities of discourse. To attempt, as we are by our training inclined to do, to sort out fact from fiction in studying Arnold's Celtic Literature, its sources, and its effects (in literature and among those who considered themselves to be Celts) very quickly induces an intellectual vertigo. It is one of the ironies of the Celtic example that the very confusion of fact and fiction of which the Celts are accused provides so ready an example, in its various developments, of a history inaccessible to an 'objective' mode of enquiry. We might generalise the dialectic of myth and history of which Markale speaks, and render it both more fertile and more mundane, as 'a certain legitimate ambiguity in the concept of the consciousness of history ... This ambiguity is that it is used to mean at once the consciousness obtained in the course of history and determined by history, and the very consciousness of the gaining and determining' (Gadamer 1975 : xxi).

If we move from the Celts to the metaphors from which they are built, the task of enquiry becomes even more daunting. We can have recourse to the easy habit of anchoring history in a few great names of the past, and satisfactorily root the Victorian conception of scientific method in Kant, for example, and Mill. This humble temptation to seize on ostensibly philosophical texts to pin down an otherwise fluid history that shifts every time it is disturbed is,

however, particularly inappropriate in this area. In trying to display the symbolic world in which an idea of science has an important part, we are reaching into an ethnography in which philosophical texts are a small, perhaps insignificant, part. While agreeing with Gadamer that we can only 'begin the great task that faces investigators as an aid to philosophical enquiry. Concepts such as 'art', 'history', 'the creative', 'Weltanschauung', 'experience', 'genius', 'external world', 'inferiority', 'expression', 'style', 'symbol', which we use automatically, contain a wealth of history' (1975 : 11), we must emphasise the last statement, and point out that this wealth of history is not found in any particularly privileged, concise, or creative form in the books that a library will shelve as philosophical. Gadamer says:

If we now examine the importance of Kant's Critique of Judgement for the history of the human sciences, we must say that his giving to aesthetics a transcendental philosophical basis had major consequences and constituted a turning point. It was the end of a tradition, but also the beginning of a new development. It limited the idea of taste to an area in which, as a special principal of judgement, it could claim independent validity -- and by so doing, limited the concept of knowledge to the theoretical and practical use of reason (1975 : 38).

In saying this he denies the breadth of history, the every day discourse on whose energy a single text, however original, must draw. The chronology is in a sense irrelevant, but the beginnings of the 'romantic' movement are lost in the early eighteenth century. Ossian was published in the 1760s, and Kant's Critique of Judgement in 1787. What Gadamer calls, with ready symbolism, the 'cold rationalism of the enlightenment' (1975 : 57) was freezing the blood of the thoughtful long before Kant gave it his attention.

Within social anthropology, where we cherish a certain pride in a more than usually acute sensitivity to the meaning of the words we employ, the depth and coherence of the metaphors in which 'science' is involved simply asks that we exercise this sensitivity over a very large area. This request might sound like that valedictory generosity so common among social scientists, the allocation of an impossible task to other researchers. It is certainly that, but also a request that we take seriously a sensitivity to the rich symbolic history that many of our words of self-understanding have. When we consider that the institutionalisation of social anthropology took place at a period when the subject was in the grip of a reductive materialism, and besotted by a notion of scientific method that might, but for the Darwinian counter-reformation, have found its way into the history books some time before, we should not be surprised that the emergence from this twilight is accompanied by an appeal for the broadening of intellectual horizons, advocated by Malcolm Crick as by Matthew Arnold, for largely similar reasons. Nor should we think it an accident of the 1970s that a criticism of formal analysis should appear like an appeal for a humanitarian and moral approach to the study of man.

To return to where we started, let us look again at the shift from function to meaning. Pocock says 'One had hoped that the mood of introspection and concern with epistemology which set in during the 1960s would result in a more educated, more philosophically sensitive anthropology which could both contain the emerging specialisations and justify the emergence of the subject in the undergraduate curriculum as an education for life.' He says that our concern is with 'problems which are ultimately moral ones', that 'Dr. Crick's

prime quarrel is with functionalism because it left out this most basic human characteristic of humanity, and so disfigured the nature that it claimed to study' (Pocock 1977 : 596). We are hoping to find, through a mood of introspection, a sensitive and moral education for life, a re-establishment of an undisfigured natural humanity. Certainly, we might be listening to the Matthew Arnold of Culture and Anarchy. One feature of the argument towards semantic anthropology is the ease with which any attempt to undermine the dualities that logical positivism offered encourages an untimely subsidence into the same old entrenchment. The temptation to subjectivism, idealism, humanism, is difficult to avoid in ordinary language. I have tried to give some illustration of the commonly unacknowledged symbolic baggage that the most apparently innocent of these dualities carry around, that helps perhaps to give them a strength and substance not immediately obvious. When Crick says that 'most of what is important to us is spoken about in discourse which mixes inextricably the analytical oppositions which logical positivism offered' (1976 : 159), he is quite right. It remains the case, however, that the analytical oppositions of logical positivism are themselves only one rescension of a symbolism of enormous scope on which we continually draw. The unpleasant flavour with which 'function' invades our vocabulary is not difficult to account for. To be merely functional was never high praise, and the mere functionary never an enviable person. Bodily functions and civic functions are the most material of mundanities. The appeal of the shift to meaning is equally clear. What more could we ask than that our work should become meaningful? Why ever did we establish our field as a science at all, with such an ugly name? I am led to believe that we owe our thirty years of functionalist tedium to the fact that Radcliffe-Brown was an Anglo-Saxon, and probably right handed. When Pocock says of Crick that his 'passion [is] disciplined by an insistence on meticulously careful exposition' (my emphasis) we can see that Crick represents the first of that generation of which Matthew Arnold dreamed, where the Celt and the Anglo-Saxon join to shed their defects and become the complete man.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

S.J. Tambiah. World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity against a Historical Background. 1976. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. viii, 557 pp. £15.

World Conqueror and World Renouncer will stand, along with Louis Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus, as a classic of anthropology in complex civilizations. As a point d'appui for his programme Tambiah takes this, from Sartre's Search for a Method: 'Do we have the means to constitute a structural, historical anthropology?.. if such a thing as Truth can exist in anthropology, it must be a truth that has become, and it must make itself a totalization' (quoted in Tambiah 1976:5). Tambiah interprets his task in this light as 'the understanding of the "becoming" of Buddhism and its Sangha (order of monks) in their association with the polity as a total social fact...It implies thus the passage of a totality and its "becoming" in its present shape over time.' The programme aspires, that is, to be a structuralist, holistic account while considering two and a half millenia of Buddhist history.

To the extent that Tambiah is successful in this - and I think he is successful - it is because he insists that the enterprise is 'open-ended.' I take this to mean three things. First, he recognizes that his structuralist tactic of setting ideas or images in contrast to each other is provisional and approximate. Second, he recognizes that no single account of history is adequate to its complexity; he can therefore pick his way through Buddhist history carefully, reflectively, and with delight. Third, the 'truth that becomes' is not static, or for that matter, certain; it rather provides a way of seeing new developments or new information in the light of what has gone before. The scholar is pleased, but not surprised, to find new changes rung on old themes in civilization. This is therefore a distinctly anthropological contribution to Oriental studies and history, while, for anthropologists, it suggests an expansive and ambitious way of posing questions and answering them. Yet it remains indissolubly wedded to field work, and draws inspiration from Buddhist theorists themselves. This style grows naturally out of Tambiah's intellectual career, which itself reflects a more general development in anthropology, and it is in the light of that career that World Conqueror and World Renouncer can most fruitfully be read.

Tambiah's first extensive published work was a monograph entitled "Polyandry in Ceylon, with Special Reference to the Laggala Region" (Tambiah:1966). This was the fruit of what might be called a classical piece of anthropological field work, carried out in 1958-9: he chose a particularly isolated and backward area, Laggala; and he chose a problem, polyandry, which could be approached only through field work, for the written sources, which he nevertheless examined thoroughly, were inconclusive. He argued his case clearly, supplied rich field data, and set his conclusions in terms already well laid down by British social anthropological practice. Though he differed from his teacher, Edmund Leach, in the particulars of analysis, he shared with him two presuppositions: first, that kinship arrangements can be explained by reference to economic and inheritance strategy; and second, that this suffices to explain the peculiarly flexible nature of Sinhalese kinship arrangements. "Polyandry in Ceylon" had not yet come to grips with the fact that Ceylon is part of the complex civilization of India; it did, however, establish Tambiah's skill as a field worker, and his ability to draw careful conclusions from field work.

Tambiah then did field work in Thailand from 1960 to 1963, and in his next published work, Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand (1970), he expanded his research programme immensely, aiming at understanding a civilization as a whole.

He begins:

A Thai village is not an island by itself; it is part of a wider network of social relationships and it is embedded in a civilization. Following the method of study usually employed by anthropologists, I describe the religious practices and rituals of the people in a small-scale universe studied at first-hand. But my objective...is to use the particular to say something general.....Insofar as this village is embedded in a civilization and has participated in history and has shared cultural elements with other villages, the structural properties and the processes that characterize its present religious system may reveal features which are of general import (Tambiah 1970:1).

He then devotes most of the book to analyzing four ritual complexes in a synchronic dimension, though he refers constantly to their historical and textual depth.

The method used, that of structural analysis, in general follows precedents set by his anthropological predecessors, among whom he mentions Radcliffe-Brown, Leach, Turner, and Levi-Strauss. He links the four ritual complexes, among which he includes the rites centering on the Buddhist clergy, together in a 'total field' (his emphasis). He shows that the field is ordered by two fundamental distinctions: first, that between merit (Pali puṇṇa) and demerit (Pali pāpa); and second, that between the soul as khwan, an indigenous Thai concept, and the soul as winjan (Pali vināṇa) which is adapted from Buddhism. This construction is persuasive for two reasons. First, it shows precisely the extent to which Buddhism informs and guides village religion, and therefore places village religion clearly in relation to Buddhist civilization as a whole. Second, it retains, at this formidable level of abstraction, the peculiar virtues of a first-hand field study. Tambiah explains that, though no villager would have worked out this total picture, the analyst has, and it is this analysis which allows him to generalize to 'patterns and structural features embedded in the rites which may be unknown to the actors.' He goes on to write:

If a villager is suffering from misfortune, he may conduct a merit-making ritual for the monks and he may, at the same time, go to the diviner and on his instructions propitiate a guardian spirit. This does not mean that he is confusing Buddhist ritual with the spirit cult; it simply means that the misfortune can be interpreted as a consequence of lack of merit or as spirit affliction, or as both...From the point of view of the (villager) there are many strings to his religious bow (ibid:340).

Precisely because his method is eclectic and grows from his field work, Tambiah presents Thai village religion with great clarity. Though he did devote some space to considering Buddhist history as such, it still remained a peripheral concern for most of his presentation.

He does, however, in his final chapter, consider the problems of an anthropologist working in a complex civilization. He concurs with Dumont and Pocock in asserting that the whole cycle of religious

life, which includes elements of both traditions, is the proper field of study in which relationships of significance are to be sought. He takes issue with them, however, on the grounds that they continue to maintain the contrast between anthropology and Indology, the sphere of the Orientalist and historian of religion.

He writes:

I submit that the idea of two levels is an invention of the anthropologist dictated not so much by the reality he studies as by his professional perspective. By definition an anthropologist goes into the field to study live action, and from the observations made over a short period of time he tries to derive a systemic pattern....Because he is already committed to an anthropological level of reality...the anthropologist who works in complex "historical" societies is likely to view the literary culture of that society as constituting another "level" or order equivalent to the level of "live action" he has managed to record (ibid:371).

He then argues, as he had in fact already massively demonstrated, that this simply is not a realistic contrast; not least because monks in Thailand, and Brahmins in India, use and transmit the literary tradition in the village. He then suggests a project which would still lie in the province of participant-observation, but which would resolve the difficulty: the anthropologist should study 'the role of literacy and the traditional networks of learning and the transmission of knowledge', since literary specialists 'in some respects hold the total society together within a common framework.'

Tambiah then returned to kinship studies. If, in Buddhism and the Spirit Cults, he worked out the ideas which constitute 'totalization', in Bridewealth and Dowry (Tambiah: 1973) he adumbrated his approach to 'the truth that has become', under the rubric 'transformation and continuity'. Through a survey of the anthropological literature of India, Ceylon, and Burma, including ancient dharmaśāstric texts, he reveals the significance of different inheritance and marriage practices by contrasting them with each other, in order to grasp their shared principles. The virtue of this approach is that, in the absence of sufficient data to suggest causal links, particular practices may still be explained by placing them in a larger context, either historically or synchronically. Here for the first time he began to deal with Brahmanical India, in all its depth and complexity.

When Tambiah went to Thailand in 1971, then, to do the field work for what became World Conqueror and World Renouncer, his intellectual style was fully formed. It was based on the a priori assumption that 'the piece of reality (the anthropologist) has studied is both an autonomous and a meaningful universe capable of exhibiting order' (Tambiah 1970:371). He had gradually expanded his notion of the scope of the 'relevant piece of reality' until it included the whole of Indian civilization. By the same token, he retained his sense of the compelling vividness of field work, while expanding that sense to encompass the texts with which he increasingly worked.

The problem he set himself was already given by his previous work: the investigation of the network of literary and religious specialists - the monks - who were traditionally responsible for preserving and disseminating knowledge in Thailand. He based himself in Bangkok, where he knew the most able monastic students gathered; and he studied a number of urban monasteries, as well as the monastic

universities and the system of education that reached out into the provinces. He dealt with Thailand as a whole, that is, rather than with a tiny refraction of the whole in the village. But this brought with it another consequence: if in the village he had studied the monks in relation to the laity, in the capital he had to study the relation of the Sangha to the state. In the perspective of his field work this meant that he also investigated the government Department of Religious Affairs; but it also took him further and further into an area he had already reserved for a later volume: 'a macroscopic view of religion's connection with society as a whole, especially in society's aspect as a polity' (Tambiah 1976:3).

This problem is dictated not only by Tambiah's anthropological curiosity, but also by the peculiar nature of the Western understanding of Buddhism. Through the good offices of the Rhys-Davids', the Pali Text Society, and a number of other scholars, the basic canonical texts of Theravada Buddhism had been translated and, to a great extent, explicated by the early years of this century. These investigators shared, to a greater or lesser extent, two presuppositions: first, that the meaning of Buddhist doctrine was to be sought in its origins, and in its oldest canonical texts; often hidden in this presupposition, however, was a second, less fruitful, bias against all subsequent developments in Buddhism as corruptions of its original purity. In consequence little was known in the West about Buddhist history, and especially about those very ancient developments which had adapted Buddhism to be the state religion in Thailand, Burma, and Ceylon. It is only in recent years that Western scholars have begun to unravel this history. In this perspective, Tambiah had to ask himself the question: if Buddhism was the religion of a handful of salvation-seekers, as embodied in the canonical texts, then how could it possibly become a state religion?

In his introduction he describes the intellectual journey which led him to connect the narrower concerns of his field work in Bangkok with this broader problem. He began, he notes, by writing an analysis of his field data: the Sangha acts of 1941 and 1963, monastic educational institutions, careers of monks, the links between ecclesiastical and political powers. He soon discovered that these only made sense in terms of 19th century Thailand, when the contemporary religious and political hierarchies took shape. Yet 19th century reforms were predicated on values and images stemming from the earlier Ayutthayan and Sukhodayan eras of Thailand, and those in turn were based on the Sinhalese Buddhism of the 12th and 13th centuries. The idea of a Buddhist polity in Ceylon, however, went back to legends of Emperor Asoka of the 3rd Century B.C. in India; and those legends were themselves moulded in accordance with principles already present in very early Buddhism. The book as it finally appeared is divided into two parts: the first begins with early Buddhism in India and carries the argument up to the end of the 19th century in Thailand. The second part is the analysis of field data with which Tambiah began.

The whole book amounts to nearly 300,000 words. This is a testimony both to the richness of the material and to the fact that it has been little explored, especially at this level of assimilation. Recent scholars, notably Heinz Bechert and Michael Mendelson, have been persistently tempted to treat Buddhism in a near encyclopaedic fashion; and among these Tambiah's work stands out because it is dense

with reflections and suggestive parallels at every turn. As I have noted, this stems from his intellectual style as an anthropologist, trained to squeeze significance from juxtapositions and oppositions in a synchronic field of data. It makes for difficult reading, however, since Tambiah adapts terms and phrases (total social fact, complementarity, opposition, mediation) from other anthropologists, and he neglects to gloss his usage: indeed, some of them, such as 'mediation', might prove impossible to gloss satisfactorily. I suggest that they be read as rhetorical devices which foster the comparison of ideas.

Yet this very style creates a vision of history different from others, and in many ways more rewarding. Perhaps this can best be seen in contrast to Bechert's three-volume Buddhismus, Staat, und Gesellschaft in den Landern des Theravada Buddhismus. (Bechert 1966-73). Bechert is a more lucid writer than Tambiah, since he uses a vocabulary culled from common historical and political usage. As an Orientalist, he is in the habit of reading early Buddhist material not only as myth, but as history. He therefore presents a history of Buddhism connected where possible by causal links. Like Tambiah, he is sensitive to the influence of early tradition on later developments; and, indeed, because of his training, he is often able to establish clear causal connections where none had been thought to exist. Yet Bechert's view of Theravada history is essentially linear: for him, Buddhist modernism for example, however much inspired by precedent, is a unique phenomenon, a product of our age alone.

Tambiah, on the other hand, preserves the rich ambivalence that informs Buddhist theorists themselves. He writes in his conclusion:

what to a...modernization theorist looks like a conscious reformism and reinterpretation of traditional religious ideas in order to face present-day tasks [this would not fairly represent Bechert's position] may look like still another version of purification of religion and renovation of the kingdom to the historically minded analyst who sees in the unfolding of the Buddhist polities of Asia several recurrences of an Asokan precedent closely linked to the pulsations of political process. It is not necessary to choose between the two but to combine imaginatively the study of continuities and transformations, prospective and retrospective analyses in the 'becoming' of societies that are patently historical and have rich literary traditions (Tambiah 1976:530).

In fact, Tambiah's work is imbued with an empathy for, and a delight in, the religious and cosmological thought of the Thais. The pulsations of political process refer to a tendency for central control in the empires of South-East Asia to wax and wane. This in itself is attributable to the accidents of power, and so is wholly explicable in familiar terms. He describes in these pulsations, however, the peculiarly flexible relationships between king and provincial governors, and shows that these relationships are formed on a view of the state as a mandala, with peripheral and relatively autonomous nodes arrayed around a central node. This galactic polity (originally explained by other scholars) is patterned on the macrocosm, or on the heavens, with the king at the axis mundi. Though the driving force behind change was therefore political or economic, the form of that change was largely dictated by a cosmological vision.

So far there is nothing particularly Buddhist about this theory, which is drawn ultimately from Indian Tantra. However, when the galactic polity waxes, when strong central control is re-established, it is incumbent on the king as a Buddhist dhammarāja, a 'ruler through righteousness', to purify and re-organize the Buddhist Sangha. This leads Tambiah back to the Sinhalese sources of Buddhist polity: there are at least fifteen such royal purifications recorded in the Sinhalese national chronicle, the Mahāvamsa, and these are in turn predicated on the purification carried out by the Indian emperor Asoka.

Here I shall take up the threads of an argument which Tambiah has to a large extent neglected. This notion of purification (Pali visodhana) is founded on a more pervasive principle of moral purity (Pali sīla, sīlavisuddhi) which lies at the heart of Theravāda Buddhism both as a system of spiritual training and as an elaborated world religion. The path to Nirvana, for a monk, or to better rebirth, for a layman, begins with moral purity, which is conceived as the eschewal of immoral behaviour, such as lying, stealing, improper sexual conduct, etc. The fundamental role of the Sangha in this light is to provide moral guidance - monks advise and exhort (Pali ovadanti anusāsanti) the laity, including the king. This role is moreover predicated on the Sangha's moral purity itself, as renouncers of (immoral) involvement with the world. Hence the principle of moral purity is, for Theravāda cultures, a notion autonomous and effective in its own right.

Despite this, Tambiah tends to treat purification of the Sangha rather as a restoration of the Sangha's worldly appurtenances: the reconstruction of monasteries after a war, etc. To be sure, this ambiguity, between the Sangha as a morally pure body of world renouncers and the Sangha as a national clergy, is fully present in the sources, chiefly the Sinhalese chronicle, the Mahāvamsa. Indeed, most of the Sinhalese purifications were demonstrably ineffective with respect to monastic discipline, and could be viewed as mere expressions of the king's accession to power. There is nothing to prevent an autonomous moral principle from being used to ornament the exercise of sovereignty.

I would argue, however, that the most effective reforms of Theravāda history unambiguously display the autonomy of the principle of moral purity, not because of the king's necessity to order the polity, but because of demands for moral purification that sprang from within the Sangha itself. These demands in turn originate with a fundamental difference of opinion between two parties inherently present in the Sangha. On one side stand the ascetics, for whom the moral discipline is all-important; on the other stand the clergy, the literary specialists of society, whose affections naturally lie with their lay constituency and with the needs of the polity. This distinction is enshrined in Buddhist historiography in two ways. First, the commentaries distinguish between 'book-duty' (ganthadhura) and 'meditation-duty' (vipassanādhura) as monastic careers. Second, they distinguish between 'village-dwelling' (gāmaṇṇi) and 'forest-dwelling' (vanavāsi) monks - the forest-dwellers being the party of meditators and ascetics. These distinctions may not apply neatly in any given case, but they identify a fundamental difference over the monks' role.

As I have argued elsewhere (Carrithers, in press) the conditions of life for the literary specialists inevitably set them at odds with the ascetics. Because of their social responsibility as teachers and as parish priests, they must live in close proximity to their constituency. They live in the village - or capital - and are of the village. This in itself tends to compromise

their strict observance of moral discipline; but furthermore they tend to become custodians or even outright owners of temple property, a circumstance which contradicts the ascetic ideal of homelessness. These conditions create a climate of opinion proper to what I have designated the village Sangha. The monks of the village Sangha are educated for a ceremonial and educational role in the village, and in fact they draw their social legitimation from that role. They therefore comprise a class of specialists in society, rather than a monastic order.

The ascetics, on the other hand, draw legitimation from their moral purity, and attempt - par excellence by withdrawing to the forest - to retain that purity as a monastic order. The precedent is fully explicit in the canon, particularly in the Cullavaṅga (Vin. II. IX. I.). Here the Buddha convenes a meeting of the Sangha to recite the code of discipline, which is the chief recurring ceremony of the Sangha as an order. He refuses to proceed, however, because of the presence of an 'impure monk, of filthy habits, etc.' The monk Moggallāna discovers the culprit, ejects him, and shoots the bolt behind him. It is precisely this gathering in moral purity, and the ejection of the impure, that ascetics demand at a royal purification.

The three most effective purifications, in which this vision of purity played a significant part in the motivation and shape of events, were those of Parakkamabāhu the Great of 12th century Ceylon, King Dhammaceti of 15th century Burma, and King Mongkut of 19th century Thailand. In the case of Parakkamabāhu, he purified the Sangha after consolidating his hegemony over the entire island, and the purification was part of a larger programme which included a great deal of pious building. The sources are ambiguous as to who actually initiated the reform, but it is clear that the monk Mahākassapa was responsible for its design and implementation within the Sangha. Most important, from my point of view, were Mahākassapa's associations: he was the chief elder at the noted forest hermitage Udumbaragiri. While it is impossible to reconstruct the actual climate of opinion at that hermitage, he certainly stood in a lineage of particularly strict monks, among whom many were meditators and ascetics. The reform itself had particular reference to monastic discipline, education, and property: it was aimed, in short, at correcting those abuses I have attributed to the village Sangha.

The case is even clearer for Dhammaceti of Burma. He was for many years a career monk himself before he ascended the throne. 'The Vinaya (the code of discipline) pervades Dhammaceti's.... programme for the Sangha. A reading of his Kalyani Inscription itself is necessary in order to appreciate the relentless thoroughness with which the king thought out and organized his purification'. Dhammaceti insisted on the re-ordination of the entire Sangha in the Sinhalese tradition, which was associated at that time in Burma with moral discipline and strictness and in fact with the tradition of the 'lone forest-dweller' (Ibid.:49).

King Mongkut of 19th century Thailand - a key figure in Tambiah's presentation - also began his career as a monk, at Wat Samorai in Bangkok, which was noted for its moral strictness and the pursuit of meditation. He left it to study Buddhist doctrine elsewhere, but returned to live there for seven years before he became king. His subsequent reform extended most effectively only to what became known as the Dhammayuttika Nikāya, the relatively small, strict group to which Wat Samorai belonged; but at first he attempted to apply it to the entire Sangha (See, for example, Bechert 1966-73. vol. II:189). Tambiah shows that Mongkut's concern for the proper editing and use of texts was in fact related to 'the achievement of religious purity and merit' (Tambiah 1976:211).

So far I have suggested that Tambiah's argument must be expanded to account for the reforming presence, either in the flesh, as at Wat Samorai, or as an ideal in the texts, of the morally pure ascetic Order. Yet this in fact implies a re-interpretation of his argument from the beginning. In his first chapter he founds his analysis of the relationship between Sangha and polity on the Agganna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya in the Pali canon. Following the (superb) translators, the Rhys-Davids', he construes this as a 'Book of Genesis' - that is, as an origin myth, which present 'the Buddhist version of the origins of the world, society, and kingship.' He is clear that this myth is ironical in relation to Brahmanical theory, yet he holds that it is a serious presentation of a rival cosmology. I argue, however, that it is not only ironical, but a sustained and brilliant satire; that it is a satire not only of Brahmanical cosmology, but of Brahmanical society, including kingship; and that it expresses, in a radical form, the views of the original Sangha of world-renouncers, who are concerned entirely with moral purity and spiritual cultivation.

First, I will summarize Tambiah's argument concerning the myth. It describes the gradual decay of mankind from pure undifferentiated beings living on radiance, to sexually differentiated toilers in the fields. Every step in this gradual decay is brought about by a moral fault. The first fault was greed: the surface of the earth congealed from the primeval chaos, and it formed a substance as tasty as butter and honey. A being tasted it, and conceived greed. This brought about the decay of the beings' self-luminance. Later, they began to be differentiated in physical beauty, and the earth became solid. Eventually fragrant rice appeared in unlimited supply; but sexual differentiation appeared, and with it, lust. The lazy began to hoard rice, and it no longer appeared spontaneously, but had to be planted. With this land ownership appeared, and therefore crime. So the people selected the 'handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable' and asked him to be king. This is the foundation of society. Then the castes formed: first the khattiyas (nobles), then the Brahmins, and so forth.

In contrast stand the monks, who, out of contempt for the world go into homelessness, thus, in Tambiah's diagram, returning to the moral purity whence mankind had evolved. [The concluding statement of the myth', he writes, 'confirms that (the king and the monks) are the two central personages. The king is the mediator between social disorder and the social order; the [monk] is the mediator between home and homelessness.....(ibid:15). The concluding statement is this:

The Khattiya is best among this folk
Who put their trust in lineage.
But one in wisdom and in virtue clothed
Is best of all among spirits and men.

Tambiah therefore identifies the khattiya with the king. He goes on to write: 'In a nutshell this is what Buddhism as a "total social fact" is largely about...'

My analysis, on the other hand, is based on a closer view of the context of this origin myth. A full literary analysis would be too lengthy, but I will present the salient points. The sermon begins with a circumstantial account of two Brahman youths, in training to be monks, who approach the Buddha for some advice.

They are therefore leaving Brahmanical society and entering the circle of ascetics, and the sermon is particularly addressed to their station. The Buddha asks them whether they are not censured by their fellow Brahmins for joining the Sangha, and they reply that they are censured, on the grounds that Brahmins are the noblest caste, born from the mouth of the god Brahmā, while the monks are 'an inferior class...menials...the off-scourings of our kinsmen's heels.' The Buddha replies on a satirical note which sets the tone for the rest of the sermon: he says that the women of the Brahmins are known to bear children, and the Brahmins are in fact 'born from the womb' (or the sexual parts: yonijā). He then makes a point which appears throughout the canon, but which here has particular force: people of whatever caste who commit immoral deeds are to be censured by the wise, so there is no true ground on which Brahmins can be considered the best. The order of society, in short, is irrelevant to the pre-eminent moral order.

He then goes on to instance King Pasenadi of Kosala, who had lately extended his hegemony over the khattiya clan of Sakyans, the Buddha's own people. He mentions that the Sakyans must now do obeisance to the king, but that the king does obeisance to the Buddha, because the Buddha represents the moral order (dhamma). The satirical tone is maintained. The king, in doing obeisance, thinks: 'Is not the Buddha well born? I am not well born; the Buddha is strong, I am weak; he is attractive, I am not comely...' Not only does this re-iterate the pre-eminence of the moral order, but it pokes fun at the king, who, unlike the king of the myth, is ugly. It also adduces the conflict between the king and the aristocratic republic (or oligarchy) of the Sakyans, who are elsewhere said to have agreed to send a princess to marry the king, but sent instead a slave woman. The satire therefore glorifies the khattiyas (this is clearer elsewhere in the sermon). It may also adumbrate the resistance of the khattiya republics to the rising forces of monarchy, which were perhaps at this time already provided with a Brahmanical theory of the divine origins of kingship.

The Buddha then points out to the ex-Brahman aspirants that they may consider themselves born of the Buddha's mouth, insofar as they follow his teaching. He turns then to the myth, which is full of false etymologies or, better, puns. For example, when the savoury scum on the earth disappears in the course of evolution, the beings wailed: 'alas for the savour, also for the savour.' (aho rasam! aho rasam!) In these days therefore, when men taste a good flavour, they cry, 'Ah the savour of it, the savour of it!' (Also aho rasam.) 'They do but follow an ancient primordial saying, not recognizing the significance thereof.' This probably reflects on Brahmanical tastes for constructing etymologies to bolster their cosmology; and it may also imply the monks' wise renunciation of sensual pleasures.

At the end of the myth the origins of society are explained in a rash of puns. The name of a legendary king, Mahāsammata, who was appointed by divine choice in Brahmanical accounts, is glossed as 'elected by the people' (mahājana sammata). The second expression to arise was khattiya, glossed as 'lord of the fields' (khettāṇaṃ pati). The Brahmins fare very poorly. They went to the forest to meditate, and 'put away' (bāhenti) evil and immoral customs. So far they are praised: but many were unable to stand it, so they came to the villages and began writing books - the Vedas. Hence village-dwelling Brahman scholars, called ajjhāyaka, originated as 'non-meditators' - a-jhāyaka.

At the end of the sermon the Buddha praises the person, of whatever caste, who leaves the lay life, practices the Buddha's advice, and attains Nirvana. There are thus two objects of satire in the sermon, which are contrasted with the ideal of the spiritual

life. The first is the Brahmins, who are replaced by the khattiyas at the head of society. The second is the Brahmanical social order itself, including kingship, which is irrelevant to the chief Buddhist principle of human life, morality based on wisdom. The concluding verse is therefore to be glossed: 'Of those who put their confidence merely in social distinctions (gotta-patisarino) the Khattiya is best; but one replete with wisdom and virtue is truly best among gods and men.'

This argument by no means refutes the bulk of Tambiah's work. It does show, however, that the insistence on moral purity is both chronologically and logically prior. It is chronologically prior in that it emanated from a circle of committed world-renouncers - I see no reason to doubt that it is basically the Buddha's word - which must have preceded the circle, closer to the seats of power, which began to forge a positive Buddhist theory of the polity. It is logically prior, in that the infusion of moral responsibility into notions of kingship is only one case of what Gananath Obeyesekere has called 'ethicization' in Buddhist cultures. Tambiah's own material in Buddhism and the Spirit Cults, for example, demonstrates that moral dualism, in the form of merit and demerit, is the primary axis around which Thai village religion is organized. Indeed, it is the simplicity and general applicability of this principle which created Buddhism's success as a proselytizing world religion.

It is nevertheless important to bear in mind the extent to which the idea of monastic purity actually informs Buddhist life. Present-day Ceylon affords a fine test case. After national independence in 1947, and in the light of the 2500th anniversary of Buddhism in 1956-7, cries for Sangha reform went up throughout the island. In the pluralistic, democratic society which was the legacy of the British, however, there was no legitimating authority which could carry out such a reform, so the parties of reform monks withdrew into relative obscurity, and they do not now play a very active part in religious politics. Walpola Rahula, a distinguished monk with experience of both asceticism (his teacher was a remarkably strict figure) and public religious life in Ceylon, said, 'I suppose the forest monks might have some effect of society' (his emphasis; in a talk at Oxford in 1976). This studied pessimism reveals how limited an effect the passive religious ideal of moral discipline might have.

The forest-dwelling monks are nevertheless the object of considerable lay piety, and are supported by laymen throughout the island. They retain some optimism as to their effect on society, though they perhaps influence the quality of private behaviour rather than the conduct of public life. Their case was put to me by one of their leading lights, a monk who had founded a group of meditating monks, and had guided them firmly toward spiritual cultivation and renunciation of the world. My field notes record that he was lying in hospital in the city of Galle one evening when one of his chief lay supporters came to visit him. The layman averred that he was very happy to support the hermit monks, but he supposed that they did not do much for society. The monk raised himself up on one elbow, pointed out the window at a street lamp, and said: 'Do you see that street-lamp, sir? What does it do? It goes nowhere, does nothing, it merely stands there. But would you say we need it or not, sir? We need it. You can't walk in the street without it. We monks are like that street-lamp. We shed light in the world. The world, you know, is a dark place. It is difficult to know which way to turn. But the monks are there to show the world which way to turn. If we behave well, sir, if we keep our moral discipline, then the world can go along in our light.'

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Robin Fox (Ed.). Biosocial Anthropology 1975. ASA Studies. London : Malaby Press. xii, 169 pp. £6.50.

When the late Professor Freedman composed his long essay on social and cultural anthropology for the UNESCO Survey of Current Trends in the Social and Human Sciences, he gave honourable mention to 'approaches from ethology' as a 'trend' - even a 'growing point' worth watching. Now with the publication of Biosocial Anthropology the growing point has become, in its own eyes at least, 'an' anthropology. And here is the first source of doubt. Is it 'an' anthropology in the sense that, say, economic anthropology might be: namely a set of techniques and debates to do with the analysis of a bounded segment of social reality, enriched though it might be with controversy about the location of the bounds? Or is it a comprehensive mode of thinking about the social, on a level with the major '-isms' of our day and capable of competing with, or superseding, them? Is a biosocial anthropologist a sub-specialist, such that there are some kinds of social fact he feels called on to know about and others that he does not? Or is he a revolutionary? Some of us, who were involved in early attempts to explore the possibilities of biosocial thinking, may not have finished pondering the implications of this choice, and so may be disinclined, as yet, to make it.

Biosocial Anthropology is the record of papers presented to one session of the special Decennial Conference of the ASA at Oxford in July 1973. The authors and editor have had two jobs to do. On the one hand, they have had to assemble research material illustrative of what can be achieved within a biosocial framework. On the other, they have had to confront the problem of how this framework is itself to be characterised. In this review I shall try, through comment on the individual contributors' material, to suggest how much progress the symposium achieves towards the second objective.

Robin Fox, in his introduction to the volume, adopts a less revolutionary stance than in many of his writings. His opening statement that biosocial anthropology 'views social behaviour ... as the outcome of an evolutionary process' leaves room for manoeuvre on the possibility of alternative ways of construing the social. A wise move, despite the confusing hint, simultaneously given, that 'culture itself' is 'only understandable in [evolutionary] terms' (2). Fox picks out four 'disciplinary areas' as contributing most to the theoretical basis of biosocial anthropology: comparative sociology, comparative zoology, physical anthropology and primate biology. In addition he distinguishes certain 'points of departure' as characteristic of the biosocial approach. Among these are a 'concern with the life-cycle', 'ease of learning and critical periods', the notion of 'pathology', and that of 'characteristic bonds' often synchronised with the life-cycle. This re-grouping of the concerns of traditional disciplines within clusters of core issues is an achievement for which credit is due to biosocial anthropology in its programmatic phase. Whether the opportunities thus presented are to be fully exploited, either in the rest of the programme or in concrete research under the biosocial banner, only time will tell.

W.D. Hamilton's paper 'Innate Social Aptitudes of Man : An Approach from Evolutionary Genetics' tackles an old problem in a new way. The problem, which Darwin acknowledged, is the paradoxical evolution of altruistic behaviour. It has as corollary the general question of the

order of entity on which selection acts, an issue of central importance in any discussion of social systems as evolutionary products, and one which has recently acquired a new and intriguing twist (cf. Dawkins 1976).

Hamilton is concerned with the possibility that certain phenomena conventionally assigned to a moral universe, such as cheating, xenophobia and guilt, may have a biological basis in the sense that selection may have created in human populations a genetic predisposition for these to be manifest under certain conditions. Avoiding, as we would expect, any vulgarly reductionist formulation, he indicates his general position with the aid of a seductive analogy: 'The problem facing a humane civilization may be how to complete a sketch suggesting some massive and brutal edifice - say the outlines of an Aztec pyramid - so that it reappears as a Parthenon or a Taj Mahal' (134). There remain however unexplored linguistic difficulties, which I can best identify with the aid of another quotation:

Consider also the selective value of having a conscience. The more consciences are lacking in a group as a whole, the more energy the group will need to divert to enforcing otherwise tacit rules or else face dissolution. Thus considering one step (individual vs. group) in a hierarchical population structure, having a conscience is an 'altruistic' character. But for the next step - group vs. supergroup - it might be selfish, in the sense that groups with high levels of conscience and orderly behaviour may grow too fast and threaten to overexploit the resources on which the whole supergroup depends (135-6).

The difficulty in this case lies in the apparent congruence between the terms 'altruism' and 'conscience' which leads Hamilton to juxtapose them in a single frame. 'Altruism' entered the vocabulary of evolutionary biology (as did its converse, 'egotism') as an idiomatic, almost colloquial way of referring to a class of behaviour clearly marked out by independent defining criteria, namely behaviour which demonstrably diminishes the actor's chances of survival but serves the interests of his group. The human paradigm was of individual self-sacrifice; and in this case it was an exact and appropriate one. The moral connotations of the term do not, however, constrain debate about what is 'really' happening; at the level of the 'selfish gene' there seems indeed to be a doubt whether altruism can be said to occur at all where an individual sacrifices itself for close relatives. 'Conscience' by contrast stands in no such relation to an operationally defined class of events. The human paradigm 'acting rightly, or feeling that one should, without coercion' exhibits, were it necessary, the double relativity of human choice and of prescriptive systems.

I am not here making the oft-repeated point that humans live in a moral universe while animals do not. I am saying that 'altruism' like 'cheating' and 'xenophobia' but unlike 'conscience' belongs to a class of terms whose slippage from human to non-human contexts takes place in circumstances which have received less theoretical attention than they deserve. Enough has been said in the past about the gross application of human socio-political concepts to non-human spheres as if the former were straightforwardly descriptive. It now appears as an oddity in the language of behavioural science that the self-conscious objectivity of the fieldworkers' official stance regularly coincides with turns of phrase which tacitly invite the reading-in of invisible quotation marks on the part of the biologically well-educated reader. Certainly there is a 'so to speak' implicit in, say,

Wickler's remark (1969:198) that 'sometimes the (finches) quarrel about the best seat...' which renders any charge of simple anthropomorphism misplaced. Yet we may wonder whether there is more in it, whether there are reasons why language itself forces the observer into patterns determined by its own structures. I labour this point here not in criticism of Hamilton (to whose main thrust it is peripheral) but because it connects with suggestions I shall make later about the need to scrutinize the epistemology of our descriptions of the natural world.

I shall not attempt to assess Hamilton's mathematical argument, which seeks to refine a theoretical model under which there could be positive selection for altruism. The necessary modification seems to be that the model include a device for ensuring that the benefits of altruistic behaviour fall on individuals more likely to be altruists than are random members of the population' (140: his emphasis). I believe however that the advances contained in his work are accessible, at least intuitively, to the less numerate among us. Among the most interesting of his themes is that of strategy, that is of strategic options available within the life process at a number of orders of integration. At the intermediate level of groups, the situation of pack-hunting carnivores provides an illustration with quite plausible analogies for man, as anyone will recognize who remembers Thesiger's account of his despair when he and his Bedou companions, barely surviving in the wastes of the Empty Quarter, had no sooner managed the rare feat of killing a wild animal than beaming strangers appeared from nowhere to share the meal. At the individual level, a renewed interest falls on the deception and coalition games which are currently emerging as characteristic of higher primate groups. Hamilton draws from this material a number of bold hypotheses about the development of warfare, reciprocity, cheating and the mercantile virtues which seem destined to inspire a healthy controversy. Be that as it may, the strategic element in the life of complex social organisms places much social action squarely within the purview of some version of a theory of games. Hamilton, perhaps wisely, does not explicitly apply this formulation to non-human forms of social life. Yet the notion of strategy, if accepted as valid for non-humans, might justify a move in this direction. This in turn might prepare the ground for introducing or at least acknowledging a degree of controlled subjectivity in our accounts of non-human social life.

Where Hamilton explores links between macrosocial phenomena and events at the level of the replicating gene, Tiger points the finger in a different direction and seeks to connect the macrosocial with the somatic patterns of the organism. He provides an expert and much-needed review of this area, with a focus on studies of the somatic basis of non-specific sexual differences. Money and Ehrhardt are commended for their advocacy of a shift away from the old nature/nurture sterilities towards an interactionist view incorporating the concept of a 'program'. There follows a comment worth quoting:

Of particular theoretical interest to social anthropologists must be the contents of the phyletically written 'program' and what are the 'phyletically prescribed environmental boundaries'. This is in a real sense another version of the traditional quest for 'universals' in human societies, or functional prerequisites. However, to the extent the enterprise can depend on verifiable and cross-culturally applicable statements about human propensities, an augmented precision becomes possible that is unavailable to those focusing solely on sociogenic processes (122).

This revealing passage exhibits, to my mind, much of the strength and weakness of the brand of theoretical underpinning which Tiger and Fox, in particular, have been seeking to establish for a science of the biosocial. On the positive side, the evidence cited by Tiger should be enough to convince anyone that somatic and social factors can co-act, and it ought to be someone's business to be interested in their co-action. If officer cadets in the U.S. Navy consistently show low levels of testosterone secretion during the low-status phase of their training when 'degradation ceremonies' and the like are rife, levels which rise as and when the structure allows status and self-esteem to go up, then it is pertinent to ask what relevance this finding may have to the explanation of mechanisms perpetuating systems of sharp inequality - slavery, say. Similarly, Tiger raises questions about the Pill which can be answered only within a frame capable of embracing both the endocrinal and the social. Yet the passage I have quoted shows that we are still in deep trouble over human universals, propensities and programmes. It is embarrassing to have to re-assert what I have said before, but if we are engaged in the 'traditional quest for universals in human societies', how can this quest depend on 'verifiable and cross-culturally applicable statements about human propensities'? The term 'propensity' is itself merely confusing here, with its ambiguous coverage of 'tendency' and 'capacity'. Programmes, in some sense, there may well be - it would be astonishing if there were not - but we have not yet been told how to identify them.

N. Blurton Jones's paper 'Ethology, Anthropology and Childhood' commands respect as a demonstration of the scientific virtues of ethology in the classical tradition. Ethologists, he says, 'study the behaviour you can see people doing' (71). Beautifully put; and this very clear-mindedness forces reflection on the nature of the mental operations involved in 'seeing' a subject 'do' anything. I hope Blurton Jones will forgive me if I suggest that much of the strength of his work lies in his refusal to theorise prematurely or over-grandly. I mean this as praise. The unflustered, 'lateral' empiricism of Blurton Jones and 'people whose work I like' - how does the creature conduct its affairs in the world in which it lives? - may seem to divide their work from that of anthropologists, particularly those of a non-positivist turn of mind. Yet this is an empiricism which has a capacity to transcend itself in response to what I can only call the demands of appropriate explanation. There remain in the back of the mind doubts about the initial attraction of children as objects of ethological study. Are they (like mental patients, also very popular) unconsciously seen as more like primitives or animals than are fully functional grown-up Westerners? In Blurton Jones's case (though not, perhaps, in all recent ethological studies of children) the interest is amply justified by his concern with development. His way of approaching his material is a real contribution to the quest for common understandings between biological and social scientists.

It would not be appropriate for me to attempt a detailed appraisal of Michael Chance's paper on 'Social Cohesion and the Structure of Attention' since I have worked with him on the topic and have a view somewhat different from his on the 'advertence' concept. (Very briefly, Chance sees advertence as 'defining the manipulation of group attention where it is used mainly for the acceptance of an individual within an existing group' (111), and thus as belonging

within a theory of display; while I prefer to look on it as pointer to a new kind of treatment of the observer-observed relation, a treatment which allows for explicitly performative, rather than flatly behavioural, modes of description.) Chance's line of argument in this paper closely follows that of his earlier essay (1973). What is best in it is, I think, still the perception of the increased flexibility in the organization of social relations allowed by the 'hedonic mode' of interaction. Chance's insight here and elsewhere lies in drawing a connecting line between the possibilities of creativity in social relations, the capacity for self-monitoring, and the selection pressures favouring functional elaboration of the primate and hominid brain. The implications of this linkage have been extensively discussed and further elaborated elsewhere, notably by Fox (1972).

At the beginning of his essay, 'Comparative Ethology of Incest Avoidance', Norbert Bischof pegs out his ground with an ambiguity which (whether intended or not) nicely illustrates the present uncertainties of the biosocial exercise: 'At the present time comparative ethologists are interested in making the study of nature available for the comprehension of cultural phenomena' (37). Bischof, like Hamilton, has set himself an old problem: the so-called incest prohibition and its natural or cultural roots. I say 'so-called' because the nub of Bischof's solution is that the rules about incest are best construed as labelling devices which cultures attach to choices and avoidances which would in any case 'naturally' tend to occur. The articulation of incest rules in man thus becomes 'an act of self-interpretation' (63); an attractive idea so far as it goes, and a great improvement on older and cruder demands that we choose between two equally vulgar forms of determinism, the natural and the cultural. Yet the incest problem in its traditional version is not quite disposed of. If the received view is true, that societies set up a category of incest (however defined) which they then ban with great determination and fuss, then the problem of incest rules lies in their rule-like character. We can modify Freud's objection (which Bischof himself cites) to a biological-cause explanation: why choose incest to have deeply-felt rules about?

Bischof's point is well taken: that Levi-Strauss was wrong to assume incest between biological kin to be 'a natural phenomenon found commonly among animals'. Any theory which equates animal-to-man with nature-to-culture by using the 'incest taboo' as pivot for both is clearly mistaken; such theories are in any case faulty on other grounds as well. Bischof presents a mass of evidence to show that biological incest is rarely found in animals under natural conditions, and that in species whose social organization includes individual bonding, devices exist which seem aimed at the systematic avoidance of incestuous mating. His survey of mammalian social structures, incidentally, exemplifies a mode of deductive analysis which I for one have long been hoping to see. His argument that the biological final cause is likely to be 'the increase of variety through the recombination of genetic material' (57; his emphasis) rather than avoidance of the supposed evil consequences of inbreeding, carries conviction. Yet the sceptical Durkheimian will still ask, so what? If incest avoidance exists in nature in the sense that animals show it for good selective reasons, are social scientists obliged to take note of this fact in their accounts of rules about incest avoidance? As in Tiger's case, a brave attempt is made at an inclusive framework of explanation but the result is still disappointingly tenuous.

Robin Fox shares with Bischof an interest in the possible evolutionary basis of general features of human kinship systems. His contribution, as he says himself, has to be read in continuity with his earlier paper (1972). We can in passing note the latter's point of departure:

Rules of marriage...have to do with the allocation of rights over women...The modern theory of kinship in fact sees all kinship systems as sets of rules regarding the allocation of women as mates, or the 'circulation' of women among the kinship units of the society...Kinship systems, then, are systems of rules about the exchange of women and the relationships set up by this exchange.

Without indulging in too much tit-for-tattery (what about the allocation of rights in men's sexual services? - and these are real rights, women quarrel about them) we can gently question whether such a 'modern theory of kinship' can possibly aspire to the scientific virtue of completeness. One of the most interesting features of Fox's writings generally is the way in which, seemingly dazzled by the analogies and homologies between 'dominance' in a non-human world and 'control', 'possession' and the like in a human one, he treats these (which are properties of relationships) as if they were adequately descriptive of systems. He is, of course, not alone. Yet a serious treatment of the notion of system, as it relates to the cross-specific analysis of social organization, is surely one of a number of preconditions for any form of theoretical advance.

Fox's present paper is entitled 'Primate Kin and Human Kinship' and at its core is a bold and original theory: that the characteristically human pattern of kinship organization arose from the putting together of elements of 'alliance' and descent' found separately, not together, in existing primate structures. It is a beautiful theory; but I doubt whether the data are complete enough to support Fox's claim that descent and alliance are never found together in non-human primate systems. For example, do we know all there is to be known about female-female relations in one-male systems? It is true as Fox says that in hamadryas the 'son' does not routinely succeed the 'father' as focal male of a breeding group; but can he be sure that all kin bonds are lost to the young male during the long process of peripheralization and re-entry to the breeding centre of the group? Is it impossible that because of his relation to 'mother', the young male may find it easier to kidnap a young 'sister' than an unrelated female infant as founder-member of his harem (thus going against Bischof's theory, however)? Might not a newly-recruited female assimilate most smoothly to a harem which already contains a 'mother' or 'sister'? Could not the quality of relations among the females itself influence the stability of a harem and the male's chances of holding it together and hence exert selective pressure? Even a slight tendency for any of these to happen - and they would reflect patterns known to occur in other primate groups - would amount to a coincidence of 'descent' and 'alliance' factors (as Fox defines them) in determining the composition of breeding groups. Kummer's picture (e.g. 1971) of the organization of hamadryas society, in space and time immediately fascinates the anthropologist, with its Levi-Straussian circulation of females between breeding groups, and its tantalizing hints that a male's female-based links with different groups may influence his 'political' career in the post-breeding phase of the life-cycle. Yet we should be cautious, and at least await the results of thorough long-term study before ruling out this or that pattern in the service of grand theories.

A general verdict on the state of play in biosocial anthropology as represented in the book must be that the 'theory' has not caught up with the 'work'. It is a tantalizing state of affairs. The material presented, and questions raised, by the contributors testify loudly to the need for a coherent theoretical frame; and this, precisely, we lack. This is a serious condemnation only if we fail to see the book for what it is: good documentation of an incomplete phase in what may yet turn out to be a valuable synthesis of different research areas. On this view, Fox does a disservice to the biosocial movement by his impatient efforts to specify a firm theoretical structure. I for one do not share his cheerful confidence in the 'neo-Darwinian synthesis' (2) if this is to be incorporated wholesale into the new discipline as its sole explanatory principle. This is not the place to attempt a substantial attack on the problem; but I should like to conclude by mentioning two major difficulties (there are others as well) which must be overcome by any comprehensive biosocial theory.

The first difficulty is about method. What are we trying to explain? I have already commented on the suspect procedure of citing variation as an index of variability; and Blurton Jones in this volume cites Bowlby's observation that the selection pressures influencing the plasticity of a character may be quite different from those determining its development and phenotypic emergence. We have a legitimate interest in 'biological givens' and their relation to 'cultural responses'. The problem, as Fox sees it, is how to get at the givens; and it is made worse of course if his preferred method ('the comparative study of society' to illuminate 'the range of variation open to human social arrangements') is shown to be questionable. As he rightly says, the relationship between givens and responses must be problematical. But a crucial aspect of this is that the givens and responses are likely to include one another many times over and at more levels than the purely material or causal. So we must be on our guard, and prepared to meet at the outset questions of the greatest philosophical and semantic complexity.

The second difficulty is epistemological. Model-making in this as in other fields is heavily dependent on data, 'facts' and the like. Among the types of observation we are dealing with are those of ethologists on animal behaviour and social organization. Because ethology styles itself as an empiricist, non-subjective mode of inquiry, it is typically assumed that the 'facts of animal behaviour' are unassailably 'there', whatever dispute there may be about their relevance to human life. But it is quite easy to show that this confidence is not always justified: as in Young's eloquent demonstration of the intrusion of socio-political prejudice into biological theory (1973) or in the failure of primatologists until very recently to notice females' participation in primate societies in any capacity other than as mothers or as an admiring audience to male dramas. While many would lament these as chinks in the armour of the old paradigm, it is at least arguable that they may hint that the uncompromising empiricism of ethology's official stance may be due for re-examination. The notion of 'observing animals' groups together a number of mental operations which may differ in the nature of the demands they make on the observer. Comparison of Tinbergen's painstaking studies of digger wasps and sticklebacks with van Lawick-Goodall's equally painstaking study of chimpanzees might lead us to suppose these differences to be a linear and uninteresting outcome of the taxonomic distance of the species in question from ourselves. That this is not the whole

story, is attested by the odd case where an animal species, though apparently very different from man, seems to make a more than usually powerful claim on the sensitive observer's human powers of understanding: witness Lorenz and his geese, or Michael Fox (1971) and his wolves. The roots of such affinities might be traced in a number of ways and it would be wrong to be dogmatic; what I am suggesting is that benefit might result if such features of the observer's relation to the observed were brought to the fore, rather than kept at the unofficial periphery, of behavioural analysis. (Hence another intriguing twist: the operation wherein the human observer sets up a relation to the animal groups he investigates is itself an anthropological issue.)

I make no attempt at theorise systematically here. My point is that far-reaching changes are possible in the spistemological self-conception of at least one of the component disciplinary areas of the biosocial synthesis; and any such changes will influence the intellectual balance of the whole in ways that are at present largely unpredictable. Therefore, despite the provocative originality of many of the contributions to Biosocial Anthropology, this is not the right moment for the movement to settle into a respectable discipline or sub-discipline. Leave it all to brew a little longer.

Hilary Callan.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Brenda Johnson Clay.

Pinikindu. 1977. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
xviii. 173. £10.50.

Ethnographies of matrilineal groups who believe the substance of children to be derived solely from the father are somewhat rare. An ethnography of such a people in which no direct reference is made to this state of affairs must be unique. Pinikindu is an attempt to cast ethnography in a different mould, to escape from the restrictions imposed by traditional frameworks. It is introduced as 'an interpretative analysis of cultural symbolisations of the Mandak people' of New Ireland, focussing particularly on those symbols 'through which the Mandak define and articulate interpersonal and intergroup relationships' (1). Dr. Clay tries to describe Mandak society to us through its central cultural symbols, the shared understanding of which constitutes the reality of Mandak experience. The problems she tackles are those of the definition of social unit boundaries and the regulation of relations between them. Inevitably, this involves detailed consideration of kinship and reciprocity. Dr. Clay refuses, however, to treat matters in these terms and steadfastly pursues a course of obfuscation in which the reader is faced with a bewildering mass of Mandak terms, an exhaustive and exhausting account in which no reference is made to the work or even the terminology of other anthropologists.

The reason for this seems to lie in concern for the transmission to the reader of an unprejudiced impression of Mandak life. Dr. Clay assumes that the use of anthropological terminology would work against this. More particularly, kinship terms are rejected on the grounds that genealogical terms are not a valid translation of Mandak categories. The use of such bald terms as 'cross-cousin' or 'lineage' is studiously avoided, and Dr. Clay demonstrates instead how ideas of 'nurture' and 'substance' are linked with those of 'sharing' and 'exchanging' to define units and the relations between them. Her avoidance of kinship terms seems based on a confusion about their use. She worries that 'the Mandak themselves do not think in terms of genealogical frameworks' and that 'genealogical definitions of Mandak categories add little if anything to comprehension of their cultural signification' (43). It is evident that the Mandak do recognise categories of persons related to each other in definable ways, that these categories can be seen to conform to terms in general anthropological usage, and that they could usefully be labelled as such. As Needham has remarked, 'The circumstance that two societies can be described by the same means does not argue any significant similarity either sociologically or semantically, between them. Still less does it mean that the relationships in question are genealogical or that they are so conceived by the actors.' The use of kinship terms need not destroy the interpretation the ethnographer seeks to provide; their abandonment plunges the reader into an impossible dilemma, forced to use indigenous words without a knowledge of the language of which they are a part.

Dr. Clay's description of Mandak society is centred on a cluster of complex metaphors in terms of which social relationships are expressed. The focal symbol is that of 'nurture', which is associated with female, sharing, sustenance and the generalised reciprocity of the exogamous group. Female nurture is a long term process, a life-long obligation to sustain and support, in contrast to 'paternal

substance', associated with formal exchanges and the more balanced reciprocity existing between exogamous groups. This dichotomy is the fundamental category division of Mandak society, it embraces all social relations. The symbolisation of 'female nurture' as the metaphor of clan membership is one of the more arresting notions in the book, but it is divorced from any attempt to show what this image of selfless provider might mean to the women themselves. Dr. Clay's work was primarily with the men; women were too busy with their many tasks and, anyway, women were 'reticent in talking to strangers and not as adept as men in articulating their own culture'(xv).

There is much reiteration of the symbolic associations which Dr. Clay feels to be central to an appreciation of the Mandak world. Unfortunately the general circumvention of nearly all anthropological concepts places burdens on both author and reader throughout the book. So much of the text is taken up in precisely the sort of explication which the shorthand of terminology avoids. As a result, a sense of frustration assaults the reader. We are denied access to information which Dr. Clay evidently has in her possession, as question after question remains unanswered. New Ireland ethnography is sparse and it is a pity that an obviously sensitive fieldworker should have chosen to present potentially fascinating material in such an inaccessible manner.

Lynette Singer.

Jean Baker Miller, Towards a New Psychology of Women. Boston:Beacon. 1976. \$ 9.95.

The latest book by Dr. Miller, who is presently working at the Tavistock Clinic in London while on leave from Boston, Mass., is welcome for the constructive way she deals with potentially dispiriting material, finding 'strengths' where others find 'weaknesses' and offering hopeful solutions to seeming intractable problems in the way ahead. Her approach, while novel, is in tune with some anthropological work being attempted in England, and it is stimulating to find distinguished scholars in other fields making valuable analyses, informed with their different academic histories and specialist modes of discourse, on common problems. Throughout her admirably concise book Dr. Miller keys her theory to particular cases. She shows sympathy for all involved in them: there are no devils in her scenarios. She evaluates the different impact such ideas as 'service', 'power' and 'conflict' have had on the self-perceptions of women and men, and their interrelationships, and envisages possible new transformations. Unlike some past writings by psychologists, which sometimes seem to indulge in more incredible fantasies than those they so solemnly discuss, Dr. Miller's insights show that elusive 'common sense' which is a sure sign that they approach that 'authenticity' which she advocates.

Shirley Ardener.

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