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## INTRODUCTION

DUMONT (1964: 9) has written that in order to understand Indian civilization, we must establish an intellectual rapport between it and the formal categories of our own system. This perspective permits ramifying comparisons drawing in further systems (Dumont 1979: 798). Central to Dumont's understanding of caste is the principle of hierarchical polarity attached to every criterion of distinction (1964: 18) and the opposition of status and power (1966: 268-9). Although in Dumont's view (*ibid.*: 273), India has exported only 'quasi-caste' to Southeast Asia and elsewhere, he also holds that as a comparative principle hierarchy is capable of varying manifestations and worldwide investigations (*ibid.*: 33-4; 1980: 245). A number of authors have demonstrated this potential in studies of widely different historical and cultural provenance presented to Dumont as *Différences, valeurs, hiérarchie* (Galey 1984). Among these papers is a joint examination of hierarchy and exchange in four geographically separated societies by four authors, three of whom are contributors to the present book (Barraud, de Coppet, Iteanu and Jamous 1984).

Dumont's conception of hierarchy is seen by these authors as providing a method of anthropological analysis relying on the conception of hierarchical opposition as extending throughout the totality of the ideology of every society. Comparison should be directed toward the differing patterns in the hierarchical ordering of social value. Key terms in Dumont's approach to comparative sociology are difference, ideology, value, totality, opposition and hierarchy. Hierarchy is relevant to the sociology of holistic civilizations such as India and of individualistic systems such as those of Western nations. Dumont strictly distinguishes hierarchy from social stratification and mere inequality. Hierarchical opposition applies to fundamental social values and entails distinguishing levels of value, whereby the ultimate level encompasses lower levels. Reversals may mark the difference of level, so that what is superior at the

level identified with the whole of society may be inferior at subordinate levels. The levels are ordered only in reference to the totality of ideology. In Dumont's perspective the notion of equal opposites in structural taxonomies and classifications is less useful than hierarchical opposition, which also brings into question the modern distinction between facts and representations. The conception accounts for differences between all societies, especially between modern and non-modern civilizations, and is not just another feature among several in a logic of symbols. The observer and his background are integral aspects of Dumont's comparative analysis of ideological systems in a way that, perhaps, has not always been so true of British and French structuralism and of the various applications of the Hegelian dialectic. The classic expression of Dumont's comparative understanding of the place of hierarchy in the world's cultures is to be found of course in *Homo hierarchicus* (1966), devoted to Indian caste. He has often discussed aspects of the issue in publications both before and since that book and has recently elaborated his views on hierarchical opposition and encompassment (see especially Dumont 1979; 1980: 239–45). Subsequently others have proposed more specific interpretations or developments of Dumont's statements (Tcherkézoff 1983; Houseman 1984).

The papers in this volume derive from a conference held at St Antony's College, Oxford in March 1983 in conjunction with the Institute of Social Anthropology and supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council of Great Britain and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France. The authors have attempted to explore the comparative potential of Dumont's ideas of hierarchy in social contexts different from the classical Indian sphere. Some papers describe societies peripheral to that sphere (in Nepal and Tibet), others set forth historically derived though geographically separated systems (Bali, Lombok), while the majority of papers deal with communities of Melanesia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Africa with no direct connection to Indian caste. Most contributions are largely ethnographic in focus, but the first three treat more generally with the ideas of hierarchy and context.

The French participants are associated with the Equipe de Recherche d'Anthropologie Sociale: Morphologie, Echanges (ERASME), which derives from the Recherche Coopérative sur Programme 436, led from 1976 to 1980 by Louis Dumont, who still directs the scholarly programme of ERASME. Although the other participants are associated with five different British universities, all but two are either employed by the University of Oxford or have recently been postgraduate students there. Unfortunately, not all persons who were invited to participate found that they were able to do so; for example Gregory Forth, who nevertheless submitted a paper, was in Southeast Asia. One of the participants was unable to return a revised contribution.

Professor Dumont was a Lecturer in the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, from 1951 until he assumed the Chair in the Sociology of India at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, VIe Section, in 1955. He was at least in part responsible for stimulating the Institute's long and fruitful involvement in the works of Marcel Mauss and Robert Hertz (Evans-Pritchard 1954: vii; Dumont 1979: 816; 1983a: 167–86); and his own publications in

many branches of anthropology have had a rich and unbroken influence on the teaching and research done there. It was especially appropriate, therefore, that a conference devoted to his ideas be held at Oxford; and the authors and editors wish this volume to be received as a token of appreciation and gratitude to Professor Dumont for his profound contributions to our subject.<sup>1</sup>

The members of ERASME reveal a kind of *conscience collective*, such as has been attributed to the group of collaborators around Emile Durkheim (Needham 1963: xxx). No such unified outlook can be ascribed to the other contributors, save what may result from similar training and reading. Hobart is known for a series of stimulating publications on Bali, and Howe has launched another such series. As it happens the two have worked in Balinese communities quite near to each other. McDonough and Duff-Cooper have recently completed Oxford D.Phil. theses on the Tharu of Nepal and Balinese of Lombok, respectively. Forth has published a major monograph, *Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba* (1981), as has Howell, *Society and Cosmos: Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia* (1984). Allen continues a long series of contributions to Indo-Tibetan studies. Aspects of Barnes's discussion of Dumont's work have recently appeared in his *Two Crows Denies It: A History of Controversy in Omaha Sociology* (1984).

Casajus has published several papers on the Tuareg of Niger. Pauwels has recently received her doctorate 3ème cycle on a documentary study of Tanimbar, Indonesia. De Coppet has published a number of scholarly analyses of exchange in the Solomons including, with Hugo Zemp, *'Aré'are: Un peuple mélanésien et sa musique* (1978). Barraud's paper provides readers of English with an opportunity to sample the results of her work in the Kei Islands, Indonesia, hitherto available in her remarkable structural monograph, *Tanebar-Evav: Une société de maisons tournée vers le large* (1979). This book initiated the collaborative series of Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Atelier d'Anthropologie Sociale, under the general editorship of Louis Dumont. Other titles include Iteanu's *La ronde des échanges: Circulation et valeurs chez les Orokaiva* (1983), Tcherkézoff's *Le roi nyamwezi, la droite et la gauche: Révision comparative des classifications dualistes* (1983), and Casajus's *La tente et la solitude, mariage, parenté et valeurs chez les Touaregs du nord Niger* (forthcoming). Dumont's most recent books are *Essais sur l'individualisme: Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne* (1983a) and *Affinity as a Value: Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia* (1983b).

Dumont has remarked (1964: 14) that we may not assume in advance what relations will obtain between the various levels or aspects which by common sense we distinguish in a society. Instead we must discover the nature of these

1. Dumont has remarked that in his four years of teaching at the Institute, 'I became familiar with British social anthropology and I received in the Institute [that Evans-Pritchard] directed a second training, so to speak. It was for me an orientation complementary to that I had gained from Mauss: the second eye which helped me to develop a sort of stereoscopic vision' (Dumont in Galey 1982: 18). At Oxford Dumont replaced the famous Indianist M.N. Srinivas.

relations in each concrete case and be prepared to accept the results even when they do not confirm our preconceptions. The spirit of this position surely is in harmony with Allen's comment below that the value of Dumont's notion of hierarchy 'depends on its application either to the problems he has set himself, or to other bodies of material' and with Barnes's generalization that 'the nature of opposition, hierarchical and otherwise, is a matter for empirical demonstration in each culture and the results may be very different from culture to culture.' The papers in this collection set out to make precisely the same careful exploration that Dumont says must be made.

In the second edition of *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980: xvii, 241), Dumont tells his readers that he is indebted to Raymond Apthorpe for his understanding of the hierarchical relation between the encompassing and the encompassed. Most contributors have come to the idea in the reverse direction from Dumont, having learned of it from Dumont first and encountered Apthorpe's version only later. This pattern of events may explain why the full implications have not always seemed so clear to Dumont's readers as he would have wished. Indeed, things could hardly have been otherwise, for Apthorpe's exposition is to be found in an unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis of 1956 which is unavailable even to persons working in Oxford. By happy coincidence Apthorpe was able to attend the conference and to participate in discussions. Furthermore a summary of his work on hierarchy and opposition has recently been published (Apthorpe 1984). Without attempting to characterize the scope or implications of his paper, we may observe that he distinguishes (1984: 285) four categorical cases associated with four sociological situations. The first case consists of complementary and contradictory categories marking a relationship of hostility. The second case involves including and excluding categories and the relationship of hierarchy. The third case requires intersecting categories and cooperation. The fourth concerns contrary categories and competition. He relates these cases to the idea of a universe of discourse. Apthorpe's explanation differs in various ways from Dumont's. In the first place he clearly and correctly separates contradictory opposition from contrary opposition. Unlike Dumont, he also distinguishes both of these types from hierarchical opposition. In the case of hierarchy, he does not speak of the *identity* of the part with the whole, but merely of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, he makes the intriguing, if not clearly elaborated, claim (*ibid.*: 292) that all four types *can* be complementaries.

Allen continues the discussion of universes of discourse, when he considers the possibility of a transcendent third term. He also compares hierarchy to the linguistic notion of markedness and to the metaphor of centre and periphery. Hobart observes that if we treat context like a thing and try to pick it up, so to speak, it turns out, quoting a Balinese aphorism, to be like grasping the sea. Hobart perceives a difficulty in formulating a theory of context in the Western tendency to view relationships as pseudo-objects. A consequence is the obscuring of the extent to which knowledge is built up from a plurality of perspectives.

De Coppet in fact attempts to capitalize on a multiplicity of perspectives in 'Are'are knowledge of land tenure and the link between men and the ancestors

as related by the Solomon paramount chief Aliko Nono'ohimae Eerehau. The analysis leads him to a comparison with Hofstadter's 'strange loops' and Escher's drawing 'Drawing Hands'. De Coppet's comments at this point implicitly explain why Tcherkézoff chose the Escher print for the cover of his recent book (Tcherkézoff 1983). Dealing with another Melanesian case, Iteanu forthrightly argues that levels are not abstract theoretical constructs invented by anthropologists, but are actual social facts as defined by Durkheim, which impose themselves on the ethnography. He also makes the noteworthy inference that reversal is only one form among several of a shift in ideological levels.

While discussing right and left in Rindi (Sumba, Indonesia) hairstyles, Forth suggests that Dumont's definition of hierarchy should be regarded as referring to symbolic, rather than logical, relations. Allen's comments about transcendence (see also Apthorpe 1984: 291) may be exemplified by Barraud's discussion of the sailing-boat of the Kei Islands, Indonesia, which represents two partial and hierarchically related holistic conceptions of society, turning on contrasts between internal and external perspectives. Pauwels reviews the hierarchical relations between human and cosmic power in ritual and exchange in the culture found in the nearby Tanimbar Islands of Indonesia.

Howe examines the extent to which the Indian system of caste is paralleled in Bali and concludes that the question leads not to a definitive answer but to a sequence of considerably more illuminating questions. Duff-Cooper continues this exploration among Balinese of the adjacent island of Lombok.

Howell describes her dismay in being unable to find hierarchically ordered features in the culture of the Aslian Chewong of Malaysia. The Chewong emphasise equality and suppress hierarchy. Though distinction, separation and juxtaposition are present in Chewong thought, the Chewong dominant value is recognition and equality. Hierarchy, though also present, is the 'inferior value' or 'non-value', in Dumont's terms.

Casajus exploits Dumont's idea of value levels to explore the practice of men wearing veils among the Tuareg of northern Niger. Another African people, the Nyamwezi of Tanzania, receive consideration in Tcherkézoff's discussion of black and white dualism. Tcherkézoff actually recognizes three distinctive patterns of hierarchy. In this sense his paper represents an extension of Dumont's formulations.

McDonaugh investigates the hierarchical implications in the layout of houses among the Tharu of Nepal and India. Clarke explores the potential and limitations of Dumont's approach among a Tibetan Buddhist community of the High Himalaya of Nepal and argues the need for simultaneous application of a variety of perspectives. Though the ethnographic circumstances described in these papers are diverse, the essays of this collection are united by the determination of each of the authors to respond to Dumont's invitation to give hierarchy its due place in sociological analysis.

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