

# Anthropology and Epistemology

*Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders*

There are two kinds of question that guide social science enquiry: "What can I know about the world?" and "How can I know the world?" The first is properly the domain of metaphysics – philosophical enquiry into the nature of reality, existence, and being – while the second is the terrain of method. In general terms, however, they are both the stuff of what we term theory in anthropology because they cannot be easily or profitably separated. Anthropological difficulties with knowing the world rest on what we can know about other people, and this is a problem that has several dimensions.

## **Sameness and Difference**

The first issue is whether and to what degree human beings share characteristics and capacities. In anthropology, these reflections on the nature of being have at different times been profoundly influenced by work in biology, psychology, and cognition. At the root of these reflections lies an important question: "do all humans think in the same way?" This question underlies and forms the presuppositions for two others: "is it possible to understand other worlds, how other people think?" and if the answer to this is affirmative, then "what is the relationship between culture and thought?" To a very significant extent the answer to these questions depends on the characteristics we assume human beings and indeed cultures to have. One of the factors that has driven change in anthropological theorizing has been variation in our pre-theoretical assumptions about the nature of being human and of being a culture-bearing human.

Twentieth-century anthropology explicitly set itself against nineteenth-century evolutionism, against the idea that all cultures were ranged along a line towards Progress and Civilization set by western values and understandings (Herskovits, 1972; Sapir, 6). Franz Boas and his students explicitly espoused the notion that cultures had to be understood in their own terms and as wholes (Boas, 1). Their presupposition was that human beings shared a common human condition, but one which expressed itself in diverse forms:

underlying cultural difference was an essential human sameness. Boas was interested in using the science of culture to combat racism, but he was also passionately committed to ethnographic particularism, to the idea that cultures could not be understood according to universal standards and values (Boas, 1). In short, Boas was a cultural relativist and he was categorically opposed to the analysis of cultural elements outside of their historical and cultural context (Boas, 5). Each culture had to be treated as a unique way of life. Each culture had its own “genius” and there was no way that they could be ranked or valued against or in comparison with each other (Bateson, 3; Sapir, 1924; Stocking 1968, 1974).<sup>1</sup> The result was that any judgement relating to behavior and behavior patterns must be made relative to the standards of the cultures producing them (Sapir, 6). Hence, while the Kwakiutl, for example, may exhibit a constellation of characteristics which appear abnormal by western standards, this judgement is invalid since the behavior is normal by Kwakiutl standards (Benedict, 7).

The notion of “genius” was connected in other writings in the early twentieth century to the concept of *zeitgeist*, or as it is sometimes glossed, “ethos” or “configuration”: the view that cultures had or were to be conceptualized as integrated “systems of thought” or “scales of value” (Bateson, 3). Edward Sapir distinguished between what he termed genuine and spurious culture and in so doing expunged the last of Boas’s historicism in favor of the notion of culture as an integrated whole. A genuine culture is one that is both consistent and harmonious; it is not a spiritual hybrid of contradictory patches, made up of a mere accretion of traits (Sapir, 6; 1924). However, it was recognized that all thinking and feeling in a culture must be done by individuals, and it followed from this that there must be some way to specify how cultures influenced the psychology of individuals, how it affected their thinking. The actual mechanisms through which culture affected individuals were not known, but general propositions were advanced that culture “standardized” the potentialities and capacities of the individual, favouring some and suppressing others. The result was a series of behavior patterns characteristic of each society which conditioned the thoughts and emotions of that society’s members (Sapir, 6). This process was recognized as a fundamentally circular one, since systems of values and thoughts influence not only individuals, but also cultural institutions, and these institutions in their turn shape the individuals (Benedict, 7; Bateson, 3). The circularity of argument here depended on a particular pre-theoretical assumption: the idea that while human actions produced culture, human beings are always culturalized. In short, the human beings who make culture are themselves already the product of culture – hence Durkheim’s view that society is the origin of social facts (Durkheim, 4).

Different scholars gave different emphases to this process, but a widely accepted view involved a hierarchy of levels based on the assumption that culture presupposes society, society is based on individuals, and individuals have both minds and bodies (Kroeber, 2). The result was a four-“level” approach to the study of human beings based on body, psyche, society and culture. A biological “level” existing before the operation of culture was assumed, but because of the all-powerful nature of cultural construction it was deemed “remote” from the point of view of the emerging discipline of anthropology. Bio-psychological structures were given particular cultural form or content, but in the context of an assumption of the “psychic unity” of humankind, the idea was that culture is itself the product of a uniquely human set of psychological characteristics, and that each culture is a

variant upon them. Thus the biological and the psychological were seen as setting constraints or limits on culture (Steward, 9; White, 10). Culture became understood as humanity's unique form of adaptation, a way to meet needs that were simultaneously social and biological (Kroeber, 2; Malinowski, 8).

Among anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century, there was much debate about the exact emphasis to be given to the relationship between culture and individual, the social and the psychological. Sapir, for example, was critical of Benedict's treatment of cultures as collective personalities (Benedict, 7). He remained committed to the idea that individuals could exercise independent creative autonomy and thus complete cultural determinism was an impossibility (Irvine 1994; Bateson, 3). These attempts to unravel what linked the development of individuals to the distinctive nature of the culture in which they lived gave rise to what became known as the "culture and personality school" in American anthropology. Nonetheless, while discussion focused on individuals and their psychology, the specific focus on cultures as integrated wholes tended to downplay differences between individuals within the same culture as a consequence of emphasizing the individual distinctiveness of cultures. Theorists were not always consistent in their positions, and circularity of thought was common in the strenuous effort to unravel complex issues. The overall position, however, was a strong form of cultural determinism allied to cultural relativism, but one which was premised on a certain degree of cultural universality. The aim, then, was to understand what specific cultures in their particularity are able to tell us about themselves, but also about universal human capacities.

The question of how values shape lives in the context of the biological and psychic unity of humankind invites a particular rhetorical form. If all humans share certain biological and psychological characteristics, then we should be able to specify what they are. One way to attempt this is to ask what differentiates humans from animals. The standard reply, at least in anthropology, has historically been that it is culture that makes human beings distinctively human, that "the creation of meaning is the distinguishing quality of men" (Sahlins 1976:102). Humans are ranked over animals by virtue of their culture, and by extension, their minds (including various arguments about the capacity for language and symbolism that are contentiously debated). Indeed, this ranking is subsumed within the more general hierarchy of mind over body, individual over organism (Ingold, 17). The result is a view of the relation of culture to individuals that depends upon the imposition of cultural meanings on an undifferentiated and underlying biological organism (Malinowski, 8; Ingold, 17; Toren, 19). Culture, in this view, is learnt as a consequence of socialization. Meaning is "dumped into the minds of children" (Roberston, 20). The idea of humans as clever learners accounts both for the view of cultural diversity as characteristically human, and for the notion of humans as "plastic," infinitely adaptive and innovative (Kroeber, 2; Gibson, 18).

The famous "neural plasticity" of humans which predisposes them to cultural creativity and diversity also shapes and is shaped by a particular notion of culture. There has been a long debate in anthropology about whether culture should be understood as socially patterned behaviors and/or as symbolic systems, values and meanings. Socially patterned behaviors are common both in non-human primates and in non-primate mammals and depend upon the existence of certain sensorimotor and learning capacities (Gibson, 18). They are certainly not restricted to humans, and thus we cannot simply say that humans are programmed for culture in a way that non-humans are not and/or that culture depends on

“neural plasticity” which is also common in non-human mammals. While there are divergent opinions as to whether non-human primates have the capacity for language and symbolism, what is clear is that culture understood as symbolic systems, values, and meanings is not widespread in non-human primates (Gibson, 18). Thus the question of whether or not humanity is premised on culture rather depends on the definition of culture. More crucially, our mental capacities, and those of other mammals, are developed in the context of social interaction and intense sociality. We actually know very little about the evolution of sociality in our own species – it must have taken place long before the evidence for culture in the archaeological record – but what is clear is that sociality and social relations can exist before language and collective representations as they do in non-primate mammals and non-human primates. It logically follows that language and related communicative and symbolic capacities must have evolved in a context of intense sociality, and that sociality is the likely bridge between the non-human primate and human worlds. Thus culture, understood both as social behavior and as symbolic systems involving communication and meanings, is a consequence of our humanity – our sociality – rather than a precondition for it (Ingold, 17; Gibson, 18; Toren, 19).

What this means is that humans are not, strictly speaking, socially constructed in the sense of culture acting upon a pre-given biological entity. But the problem of how culture relates to individuals still needs to be addressed. How does our understanding of our group history, of how we became human, relate to our understanding of individuals, of how we all individually become culture-bearing human beings? Anthropology has traditionally dealt with this by defining human beings as having “capacities.” These capacities have not always been very well defined, and have sometimes depended more on linguistic analogy than on empirical facts. Referring to culture as something “hardwired into the brain” is one example (Robertson, 20). The principal difficulty, however, with imagining culture as something “added” to a biological entity and/or imaging that entity as having pre-given modular (often neural) properties is that biology and culture are divorced from their mutual history (Toren, 19; Robertson, 20). For this reason a number of anthropologists are now arguing for a view of the relation between the individual and culture which sees them as ontogenetically related.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, humans are not biological entities with the capacity to acquire culture, but biologically cultural-beings who develop as individuals through intersubjective relations with cultural others (Toren, 19; Robertson, 20). This is a view that not only conceptualizes how the individual human mind develops as a product of ontogenetic growth in a specific cultural context, and signals how culture is reproduced across generations as a consequence of the reproduction of human individuals. It also provides an account of how individual agency – a life lived – is fulfilled within the context of a shared cultural and symbolic world.

### **Forms of Abstraction and Forms of Explanation**

In anthropology, as in all forms of academic enquiry, theories frame questions, and such theories may be both implicit and explicit. They are also embedded in analytic terms, and the degree to which they are so embedded will depend on how deeply those terms have

become implanted in everyday usage within the academic discipline, and/or in ordinary life in different parts of the globe (Moore, 41). Two of the most salient terms in this regard are "society" and "culture." Both are widely used inside and outside the academy, and their meanings are assumed to be so generally understood that there is little apparent controversy about their referents. However, terms like these have evident histories (Kroeber, 2) and the frustrating fact from the point of view of social science is that the more generally understood such terms appear to be the less theoretical purchase they appear to have. Recent discussions in anthropology have suggested that we should abandon the concept of culture altogether, that it has become meaningless as a category of analysis because it is not clear what it refers to (Brightman 1995; Lambek and Boddy 1997). At first glance, this seems curious because from a commonsense perspective it seems clear that cultures self-evidently exist, that there are other cultures, and that anthropology studies them.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the term *culture* was increasingly identified as the object of study in anthropology (see Kuper 1999), but this was not a straightforward process. Nor was it uncontested. Many British anthropologists insisted that the object of study was social relations and later, social structures, while most of their American colleagues adhered to the view that it was culture. One of the major points of disagreement derived from the idea that while social relations based on behavior could be observed and recorded, culture could not because it did not refer to any concrete reality. It was simply an analytical abstraction (Radcliffe-Brown, 11; Holy and Stuchlik, 15). The underlying point of contention here was the difference between behavior that could be observed and values and meanings that could not. Many writers were quick to point out that a simple division or distinction between behavior and ideas was untenable.<sup>3</sup> For instance, one might take social relationships as the object of study. But since this involves looking at behavior between individuals, one has to consider not only what they do, but also who they are. While the first might be directly observable, the second would not, since it would depend on ideas, expectations, and meanings existing in actors' minds about the kind of people these individuals are meant to be and how they should relate to each other (mothers to sons, for example, or chiefs to commoners). Social relations make no sense outside the intentions, ideas and expectations within which they make sense to historically situated actors (Beattie, 14). It was thus recognized that social relations and culture were mutually determining, although the one could not be reduced to the other. Much depended here on what might be meant by the term "abstraction." Cultural values and beliefs, since they are held to influence social behavior and social relations to varying degrees depending on the theoretical position of the analyst (compare articles 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11–13), cannot logically be seen as less material, concrete or real than social relations, the way people interact with each other. Hence, culture is not more abstract than behavior if by abstraction it is implied that it is more ideal, less material. However, if by "abstraction" we mean the construction of a model or concept or notion that allows us to order, compare and analyze data then both culture and social relations are forms of abstraction.

Radcliffe-Brown argued that human beings are connected by a complex web of social relations which he termed "social structure." Societies can be identified as being characterized by certain social structures. Just as anatomy and physiology deal with the structures of organisms, anthropology deals with the structures of society. The social structure of a society would be directly observable as the actually existing relations between people at a

given point in time (Radcliffe-Brown, 11). Arguing against this position, Leach pointed out that social structures are things created by the analyst from what she or he observes. They are abstract models that are the product of a particular way of looking at and characterizing social data (Leach, 12). Most often, the purpose of these abstract models is to allow comparison between societies or social institutions; and thus societies or cultures or social institutions are classified into types (Holy and Stuchlik, 15). However, as Beattie points out, anthropologists do not actually study whole societies – nor can they, by extension, study whole cultures or even whole social systems or structures. Instead, they study certain things which they observe and which they abstract or draw out of the data according to some particular interest (Beattie, 14; Thornton, 42). The most evident example of this in anthropology is the study of kinship systems. Leach's criticism was really directed at how anthropological analyses create "entities" by lifting them out of the space and time of real social interaction. When the anthropologist uses a term like "society" or "social system" or "social structure" she or he is effectively describing a model of social reality, a way of understanding how things fit together and work together (Strathern, 44). While this model necessarily forms a coherent whole, social reality itself is never coherent because of its countless inconsistencies and the indeterminate nature of life lived (Leach, 12).

As Leach correctly identified, this leaves the rather interesting problem of what, exactly, the relationship is between the anthropologist's model and the empirical reality she or he observes. This question cannot be answered in a single straightforward fashion because it turns out that the relationship of model to data very much depends on what kind of question the analyst is seeking to answer in the first place. Different kinds of questions require different kinds of data, and different kinds of data require different forms of explanation. This is why theory and method remain absolutely intertwined in the social sciences, as in all fields of academic enquiry. This is particularly evident in anthropology in the debates that went on in the first half of the twentieth century about the relative merits of functionalism, structural-functionalism, and structuralism. These theories all had methodological consequences and sought to provide very different forms of explanation.

The functionalism espoused by Malinowski (8) and to a significant extent by American cultural materialists (Steward, 9; White, 10) started with the idea of the human being in a natural environment, influenced by it and in turn transforming it in co-operation with others. Culture in this view is seen as an instrumental reality which allows humans to meet their biological and cultural needs, and to transform their environment. Specific cultural traits are thus explained when their function or purpose within the overall system of humans and their environment has been determined. This form of explanation was fundamentally different from that of nineteenth-century evolutionists for whom explanation was a matter of demonstrating progress and position on a historical chain, and from the sociology of Durkheim which decried the notion of "function" as valid explanation and sought to show how social facts beget social facts (Durkheim, 4). The notion of function employed in this work depends in large part on a definition of "needs," not just the biological needs of humans, their need for food, and shelter and so on, but their socially or culturally defined needs, those needs that arise out of the achievements, intentions, and theories of previous generations. Theorists in this framework inevitably hierarchized the different types of needs, and saw "basic" needs as more determining than "social needs," especially in small-scale societies. Discussions of cultural change were

therefore focused on how societies progressively met and developed their needs over time, encouraging a view of cultural systems as integrated organic wholes with functionally related component elements (Malinowski, 8; Steward, 9; White, 10).

The notion of "function" was crucially dependent on the conceptualization of humans in their environment as a system with interrelated parts. The function of any cultural trait or element was thus demonstrated either when it could be shown that elements in the system were interconnected and affected each other and/or when the existence of certain elements could be demonstrated by reference to their ends or purposes (Beattie, 14). The result was a particular kind of method of data collection and recording which involved amassing huge amounts of empirical data to demonstrate that everything was connected to everything else. Consequently, without the idea of the system, "function" as an explanatory concept could not have any analytical purchase. The analogy which linked functionalism to the structural-functionalism of Radcliffe-Brown and the post-1940s school of British anthropology was that of the living organism. The idea was that society and its human members could be seen as a social system which is – like a living organism – constantly being renewed. The notion of function here was restricted to the specific contribution that a particular trait, element or behavior makes to the existence and continuity of the social system and the social structures from which it is derived. Radcliffe-Brown was heavily influenced in his thinking by the sociology of Durkheim and the idea that societies are orderly and have structures that can be formally analyzed (Radcliffe-Brown, 11).

The notion of "structure" was later developed in the works of Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, Firth, and Schapera.<sup>4</sup> They believed that social structures were abstractions from social behavior (see above) and that the main purpose of their identification was comparison, classification, and generalization between societies. These scholars did not believe – as they claimed Malinowski had done – in the idea that analytical concepts were inherent in the observed data. Social structures had to be drawn out of observations; organizing principles had to be identified, and comparative frameworks established. Perhaps the most salient of these in British social anthropology was the notion of a "lineage society" (Beattie, 14; Holy and Stuchlik, 15). In this form of analysis, data from observations, informants' reports, recollections and theories were all mined to illustrate the structures devised by the anthropologist. Data was very selectively collected and deployed. In this work, much hinged on what exactly the term "structure" meant and how it related both to the anthropologist's data and to social reality (see above). Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Fortes (1945) both took the view that lineage systems were the basis of informants' models as well as those of the anthropologist. This might have been less problematic if it could be shown that these local models governed behavior, that social relations followed the principles of social structure. Unfortunately this was far from obvious (Holy and Stuchlik, 15). There was thus considerable dispute both about how structures related to the empirical data from which they were abstracted, and about how structures qua anthropological models related to informants' models. This problem was further compounded by a tendency to treat structures as if they were both institutional regularities and underlying principles, both the pattern of relationships between persons and the relations between the logical principles of cultural systems.

As a type of explanation, structural-functionalism focused more on comparisons between societies rather than the empirical description of a total system that was the

object of enquiry in functionalism. Although structures were abstracted from social relations and behavioral data, there was little room analytically for the individual or for any discussion of how culture or society affected individual behavior. The analysis was more firmly settled at the level of the group. It is true that structural-functionalists were interested in beliefs and values, but primarily in terms of how they functioned as social systems (the elements of which were systematically interrelated) and the degree to which they could be linked to social relations. It is the idea of the logic behind the system, the underlying structures from which systems are generated, and the rules of transformation which govern how elements will change in relation to each other that links structural-functionalism to structuralism proper in anthropology. Thus, Lévi-Strauss's notion of structure had both continuities and discontinuities with the older concept, and these are in large part due to the influence of Durkheim and Boas on his work (Lévi-Strauss, 13).

If the relationship between norms and actions, between social structures and social relations had been at the heart of structural-functionalism, the idea of structural analysis that Lévi-Strauss introduced was concerned with modes of thought, classification, and symbolic logic. It drew on particular aspects of Durkheim's work, especially on the idea that social facts determine individuals' behaviors and the collective consciousness, and on the axiomatic principle that social facts must be treated as systems where the meaning and purpose of individual elements can only be understood with reference to the total set of relevant social facts. Durkheim used his interest in classification to put forward the view that societies should be studied as moral systems, as systems of thought. Lévi-Strauss also drew on the Boasian school of cultural anthropology and on the belief that cultures form patterned, integrated wholes. These ideas found an easy congruence with his interest in structural linguistics (Lévi-Strauss, 13; 24). Structuralism as it was developed in anthropology was not concerned with the actions of individuals or groups, but with the underlying logic of social and symbolic systems. What it took from structural linguistics was the distinction between speech (*parole*), the medium of day-to-day communication, and language (*langue*), the system of objective elements or underlying structures from which speech is produced (Bourdieu, 16). Structuralism used this distinction to claim that social and symbolic systems should be analyzed with regard to their underlying principles or structures, that they should be treated as systems in which the elements only come to have meaning with reference to their relation with other terms, and that analysis should strive towards the elucidation of general laws (Lévi-Strauss, 13; 24). Thus, in his analysis of kinship systems, Lévi-Strauss showed that the diversity of marriage rules and kinship systems could be explained with reference to a small number of structures or general principles which could then provide the basis for comparative study (Lévi-Strauss, 24). These structures or principles, however, were unconscious; they remained unknown to the people living in those systems (Lévi-Strauss, 13).

Lévi-Strauss was interested in classification, which is to say, in the way humans impose order on their social and environmental worlds. His view was that the categories created were always arbitrary, but that they formed pairs of oppositions grouped together in systems. This was a study of how humans think by creating sets of oppositions with concrete references and then connecting and correlating those oppositions in systems. Radcliffe-Brown had also been interested in classification and how people create patterns, but his assumption was that these patterns and oppositions were present in

the environment and that people simply seized upon them (Lévi-Strauss, 24). Lévi-Strauss took a very different view, seeing classification and opposition as the product of the structures of thought and the mind, as being symbolic systems that operated according to certain formal properties that could be analyzed independently of their elements. Thus, different cultural forms could be compared and analyzed on the basis that they were transformations of the same basic structures. Lévi-Strauss, it might be said, was more interested in how people think than in what they think. The notion of structure Lévi-Strauss employed was therefore significantly different from that used by British anthropologists following Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. In order to identify and elucidate the “structures” he had in mind it was necessary to ask quite different sorts of questions, and to collect rather different kinds of data. Leach encapsulated the difference by contrasting Lévi-Strauss with contemporary British anthropologists: “His ultimate concern is to establish facts which are true about ‘the human mind’, rather than about the organization of any particular society or class of societies. The difference is fundamental” (Leach 1970:7–8).

One of the major critiques of structuralism is its inability to deal with human agency and social change. This is a logical entailment of privileging *langue* (language as system) over *parole* (speech), since analysis focuses on the interrelations between elements in the language system and their relations with each other rather than on how people use language in day-to-day contexts and what they say. When applied to anthropology more generally, this means that analysis focuses on the logic of symbolic systems, their transformations, and the principles underlying cultural forms rather than on what people do and how they use, transform, and manipulate cultural forms in everyday life (Bourdieu, 16). Bourdieu demonstrates most elegantly how the privileging of structures over agency creates a gap between the analyst who establishes a theoretical relation to language and its underlying structures, and the informant, who speaks the language and uses it as a lived tool of communication. The result is that anthropologists generate an objectified model of the world as outside observers which is quite different from the world as it is lived, and from the model of the world created by the people who live in it. This is what Bourdieu describes as the privileging of logos over praxis (Bourdieu, 16; 37).

The more general point, however, is that particular concepts and theories not only frame the questions to be asked, but actually construct objects of enquiry. What functionalism, structural-functionalism, and structuralism have in common is a concern with how theory relates to data, with how forms of abstraction relate both to the analyst’s model and to that of the informant, and with how anthropology constructs its object of enquiry. The solutions to these epistemological difficulties vary according to the emphasis each theory gives to the question it believes it is answering. That said, what remains fairly constant in anthropological theorizing are the fundamental epistemological difficulties themselves: the constant search for a firmer, clearer, and more solid understanding of the nature of the anthropological object of enquiry and of how we should approach it.

## Meaning and Interpretation

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the rise of semantic and symbolic/interpretive anthropology in the 1970s. Whereas structuralism had created an object of

enquiry based on the idea that culture could be studied like a language, as a complex language-like system of signs, semantic and symbolic/interpretive anthropology shifted attention from language models and their validity for cultural analysis to the meaning of what is said in language. The emphasis was on ways of analyzing meanings and their relationship to actors' models (Geertz, 21; Keesing, 23; Crick, 25). Analysts differed from each other in many respects, yet they shared an assumption about the centrality of language to social life, and consequently, defined social life as the creation and negotiation of meaning. Many of them owed an implicit or explicit debt to Weber in that they took it as axiomatic that humans endow the world and events in it with meaning and significance, and they therefore viewed beliefs and values as real material forces that have an impact upon the world (Weber, 33).

Clifford Geertz is probably the most famous exponent of interpretive anthropology, and his work sets out a clear link between theory and methodology based on interpretation, both that of the actors and the analyst. Geertz wanted to develop culture as an analytic concept and he therefore reformulated it, defining it as an ordered system of meaning and symbols within which actors interpret their experience and order their actions. In his view, cultural meanings and values do more than simply construct a vision of the world, a model of reality. They also provide guidelines for action. In this sense, culture is public and can thus be analysed by the observer without any need to "get inside actors' heads." Culture can and should be read, translated and interpreted. Thick description thus becomes a way of understanding what others think they are up to, a way of interpreting their interpretations (Geertz, 21). The view of culture that Geertz espouses is one where social groups are tied together by the expression of shared values, meanings, and symbols. As both Asad (22) and Keesing (23) argue, this notion of culture is extremely problematic, not least because culture is not just meaning. It is also power. And to the extent that it is, any effective account of cultural meaning would have to explain why some ideologies become powerful and persuasive, and how they come to serve the interests of some groups over others (Weber, 33; Comaroff and Comaroff, 35; Donham, 36). Anthropologists should thus be very wary of creating cultural coherence and consensus when in fact there exists social difference and even discrimination. A truly materialist account of meaning would explain not just how meanings guide action, but how different forms of discourse are actually materially produced and maintained in specific contexts.

The shift from language models to the analysis of meaning in anthropology thus produced various difficulties about the degree to which actors within a single culture could be said to share meanings, and by extension, values and beliefs. This inevitably raises questions of how language relates to thought and to the individual, and of how shared meanings, values and representations get transferred between individuals and groups (Sperber, 29). One problematic issue here, as Needham (27) notes, is the relationship of ordinary English language terms like "belief" to local actors' understandings and to the analyst's models. Needham suggests that anthropologists often use the word "belief" to indicate an adherence to culturally defined ways of thinking, rather than to indicate anything about an individual's "inner state." This leads to an unsatisfactory situation where it is assumed that all individuals subscribe unproblematically to cultural beliefs when we know this is simply untrue. The result is that we have very little idea of how values and beliefs actually relate to individual action. Geertz (21) and others suggested that this

relationship could be clarified by examining actors' interpretations – that is, folk models (Crick, 25). The pre-theoretical assumption here is that meaning is always contained within action. As Crick (25) argues, one cannot describe an activity as “praying” or “voting” unless the actors involved possess these concepts. In this view of action there is no distinction between systems of ideas and patterns of behavior (Geertz, 21; Crick, 25).

Difficulties arise immediately with strong versions of this theory because it is premised on the assumption that actors are supremely knowledgeable and that they are always able to link belief and action. However, since we know that behavior and belief are not always synonymous, this proposition will not hold. The difficulty is a profound one because human language and human culture (actions, beliefs, values) are not simply empirical facts; they are always conceptual, their structures the consequence of the meaning they have for their actors (Weber, 33). If we neglect this conceptualization (actors' models, understandings, classifications, values) then we will fail to understand what we are trying to investigate (Crick, 25). However, we also know that there are limits to the knowledge of human actors. We do not directly author all of our actions, but neither do we religiously follow rules (Tyler, 28; Bourdieu, 37). While we cannot know the world independently of language and of our interpretations of it, not all knowledge takes the form of verbal propositions (Bloch, 26; Tyler, 28). In fact, much of the knowledge anthropologists study exists in actors' heads in a non-linguistic form. Not only is it not formulated in natural language, but it is not even necessarily language-like in the sense that it does not follow the sentence-logic model of semantics in natural language (Bloch, 26; Jackson, 30). A very strong version of this theory would argue that language is therefore not necessary for conceptual thought (Bloch, 26).

The view that notions of the thinking self are separate from the body, and the idea that the mind controls the body are part of the analytic philosophical traditions of the west (Tyler, 28). They are also one of the major reasons anthropology finds it so difficult to model the relationship between self and soma, culture and biology (Ingold, 17; Jackson, 30). This is compounded by the fact that the western tradition rests on an assumption that knowledge is best articulated in language. However, the work on bodies and phenomenology raises in a particularly dramatic way the question of how adequately language can represent our knowledge of anything, and the kinds of problems that arise when anthropologists have to describe what is non-linguistic through the medium of language. The human body knows the world through its practical engagement with the world, and with others in that world (Lambek, 39). What is built up is a practical understanding, a form of knowledge that is not necessarily conscious and often cannot be brought into language (Mauss 1973; Bourdieu 1990). More than this, it is not just that practical knowledge need not – or cannot – be brought into language, but that language-based models and concepts of meaning may be wholly inappropriate for understanding such knowledge. Because body language is not a system of signs in the way that language is, semiotics and semantics cannot stand as the basis for our understanding of embodiment and/or embodied knowledge. Distinctions between the sign and the signified, representation and meaning, are particularly problematic here because embodied knowledge may not stand for or represent something in the way that natural language does. A gesture of dismissal, after all, is not simply a sign of dismissal. It *is* dismissal (Jackson, 30).

However, body movement and experience of the body are grounded in specific social and material environments so that the body becomes both a means for knowing the world

and the product of a social and cultural world that pre-exists it (Bourdieu, 37). Thus, an emphasis on practical knowledge may question our analytic reliance on language and meaning, and interrogate what we might mean by the term "belief," but it does not solve the problem of the intentional actor. If body movement, the experience of an embodied self and practical knowledge of the world are the result of engagement with a socially constructed world, then what scope is there for individual creativity, for innovation, or social change? Actors do not slavishly follow the rules of their embodied cultural worlds any more than their actions are directly determined by their conceptual models of the world. Strong versions of this thesis come perilously close to stating that a change in environment is necessary before change or innovation in embodied understandings are possible. In this context, a parallel critique of that made for the over-determining nature of collective representations (see above) can readily be sustained. However, Bourdieu's notion of habitus seeks to address this problem – some critics see his attempt as unsuccessful – by focusing on how actors are able to acquire a practical mastery of their world, that is, an ability to act appropriately in a variety of circumstances, without in any sense following a rule book or being able to discuss or enumerate principles for action (Jackson, 30; Bourdieu, 37). Bourdieu defined the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on a practical level, a set of classificatory principles acting both as categories of perception and thought, and as the organizing principles of action (Bourdieu, 37). One of Bourdieu's attractions for anthropology was his insistence on the temporality of lived practice, on the way schemes of thought and perception are used in specific historical circumstances. In this sense, his work could be used to resituate anthropological analysis within historical time, the lived reality of social systems. Not all of his critics, though, thought his work successful in this regard, seeing his emphasis on acquired systems of thought and schemes for action reproduced across time as too determining. His focus on practice did nevertheless allow for a situated, temporal understanding of that process of reproduction, and in this his work reveals its indebtedness to marxism.

The problem for all anthropological theories based on language-like models is how to account for forms of knowledge that actors cannot or need not bring into language; and related to this, how to balance in any analysis the emphasis given to innovation and intention on the part of actors as against structural determinants (collective consciousness, social institutions, cultural values etc.) (Moore 1994: ch. 4). Consequently, Bourdieu's theory of practice had a profound influence on anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s. His emphasis on actors' practical mastery within a socially constructed world was a direct attempt to negotiate the opposition between objective structures (structuralism) and subjective experience (existentialism and phenomenology). Subsequently, it was taken up by those anthropologists who wanted to understand both how individual action shapes social structures and cultural systems and how those systems and structures, in turn, shape social action. The difficulty for many anthropologists was how to transcend the divisions between symbolic and material explanations of culture and agency, and how best to reinsert individual persons and events back into the analysis (Ortner 1984; Abu-Lughod 1986).

In the 1970s, structuralism was emphasizing the determining role of symbolic systems and the structures of the mind, whereas marxism was emphasizing that the

relations of production and the structure of economic life were determining in the last instance. Practice theory as it developed in anthropology was never a single coherent theoretical model, but, rather, a series of loosely interlinked attempts to show that both the symbolic and the material were involved in determining social action. Bourdieu's specific contribution was to demonstrate how symbolic systems and material inequalities are linked in the practice of everyday life and are mutually reinforcing. Ultimately, practice theory in anthropology was a further example of a theory attempting to transcend the divisions between culture and the individual, objectivism and subjectivism, structure and agency. The result was an emphasis on structures as both constituted by and constitutive of social action. This was a quite different notion of structure from that developed by Lévi-Strauss or British structural-functionalism. It was directed at quite different sorts of questions and required the collection of different kinds of data.

### **Structures of Power**

In language-based models in anthropology – this includes most versions of semantic and interpretive anthropology – the untheorized relation between structure and agency, culture and intention, raises the question of power. As Emily Martin makes clear, talking about bodies in new ways not only changes our understanding of them, but also changes the way we experience and live them (Martin, 31). New ideas about bodies may arise and be driven by emerging and/or changing sets of values. But once these ideas enter public discourse, become part of our lived world and our habits, and pass into the way we think of ourselves as embodied individuals, they are naturalized and fall out of conscious reflection. They become, as it were, the unquestioned world-as-it-is. Over time, established habits, ways of doing and experiencing can become fractured and change, most often as a result of responses to economic and political changes (Weber, 33; Comaroff and Comaroff, 35). However, the naturalized order of the world is powerfully inculcated not just in the human body, but in the human subject (Foucault, 32; Bourdieu, 37). Power relations mark, categorize and invest the body, as well as the subjective understandings of actors and their views of others. These forms of power are powerful, and are particularly so because they can rarely be overtly challenged and because they are central to the way we constitute ourselves as subjects (Foucault, 32). Yet the relations between power and knowledge are never complete. Forms of knowledge exist that are subordinate or subjugated to dominant understandings and knowledge practices – those of women, the colonized, the insane, subordinate groups – and they exist on the margins, partially hidden from view, but still active, forming the basis for individual agency and perhaps for group resistance (Wolf, 34; Comaroff and Comaroff, 35; Foucault, 38). Foucault's value to anthropology was in allowing analysts to move away from a notion of power as substance or thing, something to be held, towards a notion of power as act, as something that is exercised in the course of social relations, something that requires empirical investigation both at the level of individual practices and at the level of patterns that are institutionalized (Foucault, 38).

Foucault's critique of how subjects are created through changing configurations of power and knowledge has been enormously influential in anthropology in examining not only how actors as subjects have been formed in particular historical and ethnographic locations (Comaroff and Comaroff, 35), but also in investigating how the human sciences, including anthropology, constitute the acting subject and classify the world. Foucault's theorizing thus provides a mechanism for exploring how anthropological theories, models, and forms of discourse create specific kinds of entities – societies and cultures – populated by particular kinds of individuals, selves, agents, categories, groups, and persons (Ortner, 40; Moore, 41). In consequence, Foucault has been most often appropriated in anthropological writing as a means to critique the power relations that constitute western epistemology and to unpick anthropology's complicity in those power relations. The emphasis in his work on decentered/subjugated knowledges and their role in resisting discursive and political power relations was taken up by many anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Lavie 1990; Taussig 1987; Tsing 1993). The enduring value of Foucault's work for anthropology is his emphasis on the relations between truth and power: who does the classifying, who determines categories of thought, how do those categories and classifications impact on people's understandings of themselves and others, on their actions and aspirations? Foucault's notion of discourse is intended to weld together ideas and classifications with agency, experience, and the process of becoming a subject; it provides a means to transcend the distinction between ideas/values and practice, society and individual which has always been the founding distinction of the social sciences (Abu-Lughod, 43).

The twenty-year period from the 1970s to the 1990s was characterized by a range of loosely associated models that drew on Bourdieu's and Foucault's reworkings of marxism and structuralism, as well as on the work of other theorists and philosophers, including Gramsci, De Certeau, Derrida and Rorty. The theoretical emphasis in anthropological writing in this period depends very much on whether the author is focusing on the creativity and intentionality of agents at the expense of longer-run structures of domination and power; on displaced, decentered, marginal voices in contrast to dominant ideologies; or on processes of resistance, rebellion, and change as opposed to broader patterns of social, economic and political control. New analytical concepts such as habitus (Bourdieu), discourse (Foucault) and hegemony (Gramsci) were introduced and selectively employed as a means of dealing with anthropology's increasing disenchantment with the concept of culture (Abu-Lughod, 43).

Starting in the 1980s, voices were increasingly raised against the concept of culture demanding its redefinition and reformulation (Appadurai 1990; Kahn 1989; Rabinow 1988; Rosaldo 1989). But, it is worth noting that the emphasis on practice and experience and the diversity of voices, as opposed to the homogenizing effect of a coherent culture, was not new in anthropology. Paul Radin argued in 1933 that "The method of describing a culture without any reference to the individual except insofar as he is an expression of rigidly defined cultural forms, manifestly produces a distorted picture" (Radin 1933:42). Edward Sapir made a similar point in 1931: "While we often speak of society as though it were a static structure defined by tradition, it is, in the more intimate sense, nothing of the kind, but a highly intricate network of partial or complete understandings... It is only apparently a static sum of social institutions; actually it is being reanimated or creatively

reaffirmed from day to day by particular acts of a communicative nature which obtain among individuals participating in it" (Mandelbaum 1949:104). Of course, earlier scholars were not developing a theory of practice or of discourses, not explicitly anyway. Nor were they interrogating the truth claims of anthropology and western epistemology in the way their counterparts in the 1980s were. Nonetheless, what their comments reveal is how theoretical debates in anthropology about how we should define the object of enquiry have continued to oscillate around the problem of culture and individual, psyche and soma, ideas and practices, and that in each generation of scholars, whichever binary they choose to emphasize, the other pole cannot be ignored. It works through the theory uninvited.

It has been argued that the theories of the 1980s were distinctive because they were an attempt to transcend these binary divisions within anthropological theorizing. There is some justification to this claim, but transcending binaries is, by nature, an imperfect and unstable enterprise. True transcendence, if such a thing were possible, would require thinking outside these distinctions. Two immediate kinds of problem arise. The first has to do with the relationship between data, analytical terms, and theoretical propositions. Ortner noted in her 1984 review that an emphasis on practice in some writing had already given way to an analytical preoccupation with actors' strategies, decisions, aspirations, and knowledge at the expense of longer-run structures and values (Ortner 1984:150). This not only runs the risk of overvaluing agency and change to the detriment of reproduction and the institutionalization of values, but it can potentially seriously misrepresent actors as hyper-agents, overactive strategizers, super-knowledgeable actors. This is not itself problematic except that we know that much of social life is quotidian, unthought, and routine. We don't, after all, spend our whole time asking ourselves whether our actions are reproducing the family or critiquing the dominant ideology (Donham, 36). In addition, we know that aspects of cultural systems, social institutions, and values are durable, long lived, and buttressed by economic and political resource systems. Some things change fast. Others do not. Some things endure over long periods of time and then change very rapidly. We need to be able to analyze and understand daily practices and routines, as well as to analyze long-running structures and value systems, and the relation between the two (Comaroff and Comaroff, 35; Donham, 36). By focusing on practices or the idea of a practice theory, there is a danger that we will collect data based on quotidian activities and immediate events, and begin to build a picture of strategies, decisions, and cultural knowledge that reinforces a particular view of the acting subject and of the potential instability of systems at the expense of longer-run structures that would require different analytical terms and different kinds of data.

The second problem has to do with the fact that different kinds of theories work at different analytical levels, and that what may be required are composite theories where different kinds of propositions, analytical terms, and data are appropriate to different levels, and indeed to different temporal frames. Human agency is about the flow and flux of life and events. As Marx noted, humans make history – and indeed create themselves – but not under conditions of their own making (Wolf, 34; Donham, 36). This must logically be so because the temporal dimensions of social systems and cultural values are different from those of the biological individual. Yet precisely because humans make social systems, those systems are never stable, never immune from change no matter how powerful the dominant

group that maintains them. No empire has endured or will endure forever. Looking simultaneously at continuity and discontinuity, reproduction and change may require us to deploy more than one theory of culture, more than one theory of power and more than one theory of agency (Wolf, 34; Comaroff and Comaroff, 35). The kinds of theories we need for understanding social totalities and the way they are structured over time will necessarily differ from those required to analyze daily social activities and how specific discourses become powerful or persuasive. Longer-run patterns of social totalities, and the issue of how certain types of economy go with certain types of polity, are certainly connected to human agency and needs, but exactly how will require specification in each historical context and at each analytical level (Wolf, 34). Marx placed production and the satisfaction of human needs through labor at the heart of his historical materialism in an attempt to specify exactly this linkage (Donham, 36). General theories of this kind are essential to move our thinking on, but they are unlikely to be predictive and/or to account for all empirical instances. More crucially, the value of critical theorizing in anthropology may lie less in attempting to transcend binaries to achieve – we assume – higher-order synthesis, and more in working aspects of the binaries against each other, specifying how they interconnect and intersect, and examining what kinds of theories and analytical concepts are appropriate to different analytical levels and temporal structures.

### **The Practice of Criticism**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of post-structuralism in anthropology heralded a critique of anthropology's modes of analytical classification and representation. Ideas drawn from Foucault and others were used to criticize and re-analyze anthropological concepts and the relationship of forms of knowledge to forms of power. In many ways these critiques formed intelligible links with earlier moments of critique within the discipline. Like those earlier moments, they were not simply the result of auto-genesis, but emerged in response to political movements and economic changes in the world at large: chief amongst which were the black consciousness movement, feminism, postcolonialism, and the gay rights movement. Building on the social activism of the 1960s and 1970s, political changes in the 1980s and 1990s broke down older forms of consensus, but critiques of the world order coincided uneasily with globalization and the growing power of transnational corporations. Technological change and consumer power drove capitalism into a new phase. The anthropological response was diverse, but two important interlinked themes emerged which drew on a critique of the power/knowledge axis. The first focused on representation and anthropology's truth claims, critiquing among other things the idea that the cultures and societies described in anthropological writing mirror existing reality, and thus that the knowing anthropological subject can be distinguished from the known objective other (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988). This part of the critique emphasized the historically situated nature of anthropological constructions, and their relation to western philosophical traditions, theoretical models, and literary conventions. This inevitably raised serious questions about how accounts – and thus facts and truth claims – are constructed (Weber, 45; Spiro, 48). The second theme focused on the concept of culture

and on the analytical constructs of anthropology more generally (Abu-Lughod, 43; Gupta and Ferguson, 55). Drawing on Bourdieu, analysts rejected the notion of culture as a reified abstraction (see above). But rather than simply challenging the ontological status of culture as an abstraction, these critics also argued against the ideas of wholism, determinism, boundedness, totalization, stasis, and constructionism implicit in the concept itself. Culture in this critique was negatively seen as a bounded, timeless entity that determines human agency and occludes real differences, especially those of power (Abu-Lughod, 43).

One element in this latter thread of critique was the recognition of shifts in the conditions of the production of anthropological research and therefore of anthropological knowledge. Cultures, however they had been represented by anthropologists in the past, had likely never been fixed, unitary, and bounded. In the context of globalization, mass migration and transnational cultural flows, the very notion that cultures represented fixed and bounded populations in specific locales seemed ludicrous (Wolf, 34; Gupta and Ferguson, 55; Appadurai 1990). There was a deeper point to be made because in the context of practice theory and the attempt to rethink how agency and subjectification are connected to larger and longer-run cultural values, discourses, and systems, the idea that different cultures somehow produce distinctively different types of people, subjects, or identities could no longer hold. The dominant emphasis on differences between cultures gave way to a clearer recognition that differences are not only internal to cultures, but also to individuals as subjects (Moore, 1994).

The boundedness of cultures in anthropological theorizing was never, however, simply the product of assuming that culture mapped onto society and that both mapped onto a specific place – the basic building block of a discipline concerned with studying “other cultures” (Gupta and Ferguson, 55). It was, rather, the consequence of particular sets of pre-theoretical assumptions about cultures as integrated wholes (Thornton, 42). Social wholes, even if they exist, can never be directly experienced either by anthropologist or informant. The scope and scale of social systems and cultural forms beyond the level of direct experience must be imagined (Thornton, 42; Strathern, 44). Analytical constructs in anthropology, such as “kinship,” “religion,” and “exchange systems” are ways of ordering data, not ways of ordering life. They are thus imaginary categories.

In the 1980s and 1990s, anthropology increasingly came to see culture as something constructed, reproduced, and transformed by the activities and ideas of human agents. It was recognized that this is rarely a matter of intentional design, but was most often the consequence of unintended actions. Far from being coherent and systematic, culture is contingent, conflicting and shot through with power relations. As the concept of culture expanded to take account of global flows of images, people, commodities, and capital (Appadurai 1990), the notion of culture itself seemed ever more fragmented, illusive, diverse, and contingent, its purchase enfeebled. The irony, of course, was that at the very moment anthropology looked as though it wished to abandon culture as an organizing principle and analytical category, the rest of the world started to adopt it. And with vigor. From management consultants and international organizations to NGOs and local interest groups it became the prism through which the complexities of a globalized world could be understood (Moore, 41; Jackson, 52; Appadurai, 57). More than this, culture simultaneously became a mobilizing concept for indigenous groups and others seeking to

redefine themselves against adjacent or competing groups, or searching to define their distinctiveness within an increasingly global and globalizing world (Moore, 41; Jackson, 52). Suddenly, cultures became self-evident constructs. Everyone had “theirs.” Anthropologists, taken by surprise, began dramatically to talk of the authentic and the inauthentic, and of the invention of tradition. Rather mysteriously, local cultures or culture concepts were now criticized for being timeless, bounded, reified, and static: a strange kind of transference, it would seem, between the defects of the anthropologist’s analytical construct and the forms of culture that many people wanted to claim for themselves (Sahlins 1999).

What is curious about this theoretical turn is that it is based on two mistaken premises: the first is that anthropologists in the past *did* work exclusively with bounded, fixed and totalizing views of culture; the second, that people who are making contemporary claims relating to cultural distinctiveness are doing the same thing. The reality though, as anthropologists are fond of saying, is more complex. Culture as a concept is both stabilizing and negotiable, both about long-run cultural values and systems and about lived daily practice and the determinations of the moment. This tension has always been there in anthropological writings on culture, albeit with particular notes of emphasis at certain historical moments, and indeed at different times in the writings of individual authors. Similarly, many of those who today deploy the culture concept in everyday parlance are hardly naïve about its contested nature.

Postmodernism and poststructuralism in anthropology provided powerful critiques of anthropology’s analytical categories, representations, and practices. Yet they often did so by committing the act they so condemned in others: by generalizing and occluding differences. This is clear in the powerful critique that arose concerning the problem of generalization and comparison in anthropological theorizing. Once again, this critique derived from a concern that anthropological categories of analysis create abstract entities (through reification and objectification) and thus erase the particularity of lives lived, smoothing over differences, inconsistencies, and contradictions, in favor of coherence, boundedness, and totalization (Abu-Lughod, 43). This position was particularly powerful where it could be demonstrated that western philosophical and analytical constructs were either being directly imposed on other cultures, and/or where the pre-theoretical assumptions of western philosophical traditions were consistently constructing other cultures/cultural concepts as the “other,” reducing the otherness of other cultures to the other of the West (Ingold, 17; Oyèwù’mí, 49; Dhareshwar, 50; Viveiros de Castro, 51).

While there were powerful arguments in support of this critique, there were also occlusions. The fact that generalization and comparison can be problematic, and that categories and classifications are linked to differential power relations, is not in itself an argument for abandoning generalization or comparison (Moore, 41; Weber, 45; Spiro, 48). Far from it. Generalization and comparison, based on critical use of categories and classifications, are essential to the project of anthropology for two reasons. The first is that longer-run structures of power and domination form patterns in human life, as Marx among others recognized, and those patterns require elucidation and explanation. Gender is a case in point (Ortner, 40). Abandoning generalization and comparison will occlude rather than reveal the workings of power (Weber, 45). Second, by assuming that binary classifications, like nature/culture, mind/body are products of western philosophical

traditions and have been imposed on other cultures, we lose sight of the fact that other cultures may deploy similar binaries albeit in dissimilar ways (Lambek, 39). In our determination to see all analytical constructs as impositions of the west, we run the risk of glossing over the complexities of other peoples' philosophical traditions precisely because we assume that they are completely "other."

## Conclusion

Anthropology is changing because the world is changing. This truism is central to anthropological epistemology, to the constant striving to specify its object of enquiry. New ways of imagining the discipline have involved new ways of imaging social relations and social wholes. Hybrids, networks, and flows are now the dominant metaphors (Strathern, 44), but these imaginative constructs are no more mirror images of reality than the earlier ones. The locations and nature of fieldwork are changing, and these too require new forms of imagination (Augé, 53; Latour, 54; Marcus, 56; Appadurai, 57). The exercise of the imagination is not however solely anthropological in the sense that it is contained within the discipline. The challenge for anthropology is that its truth claims must be based on the changing nature of others' imaginations, on the way they see the world, their culture, their response to globalization, unequal power relations, and inequalities, as well as the opportunities they perceive for change, for personal and social advancement, for well-being, and security (Moore, 41; Appadurai, 57). Anthropology has its roots ethically, practically, analytically, and institutionally in its history and in the west (Dhareshwar, 50; Latour, 54). It can critique that history, to be sure, but it cannot completely disavow it. To do so would not constitute a moral position, for it would ultimately occlude rather than reveal the relations between truth and power. Anthropological epistemology is ultimately about the way we imagine others as human beings. Thus the question, "what can I know about the world?" is always bound up with who I am, for myself and for others.

## NOTES

- 1 Boas is famous in anthropology for refusing to theorize explicitly, preferring to locate cultural traits or elements within their specific historical and cultural context. However, Kroeber and Kluckhohn point out that Boas when writing typically vacillated between seeing culture as a specific historical, even accidental, agglomeration of traits and as an integrated "spiritual totality" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:214). For a similar view that cultural phenomena are only intelligible in terms of their history see Lowie 1937:145.
- 2 A view first put forward by Geertz in the 1970s (Geertz 1973).
- 3 See Holy and Stuchlik, 15, for a critique of what happens when anthropologists conflate these two kinds of data.
- 4 Firth (1936) and Schapera (1940) both wrote early monographs that were functionalist and Malinowskian in style, that is, they were huge empirical studies of how everything in family life was related to everything else, but they lacked a single organizing theory. Their aim was the demonstration of interrelations rather than of organizing principles.

## REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod, L., 1986 *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Appadurai, A., 1990 Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Public Culture* 2(2):1-24.
- Bourdieu, P., 1990 *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brightman, R., 1995 Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification. *Cultural Anthropology* 10(4):509-546.
- Clifford, James, 1988 *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James and Marcus, George E., eds., 1986 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E., 1940 *The Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Firth, R., 1936 *We the Tikopia*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Fortes, M., 1945 *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Geertz, C., 1973 The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Herskovits, M., 1972 *Cultural Relativism*. New York: Random House.
- Irvine, J. ed., 1994 *Edward Sapir: The Psychology of Culture*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kahn, J., 1989 Culture, Demise or Resurrection? *Critique of Anthropology* 9(2):5-25.
- Kroeber, A. L. and Kluckhohn, C., 1952 *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Cambridge, MA: Papers of the Peabody Museum, Harvard.
- Kuper, A., 1999 *Culture: The Anthropologist's Account*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lambek, M. and Boddy, J., 1997 Introduction: Culture in Question. In J. Boddy and M. Lambek, eds. *Culture at the End of the Boasian Century*. *Social Analysis* 41(3).
- Lavie, S., 1990 *The Poetics of Military Occupation: Mzeina Allegories of Bedouin Identity under Israeli and Egyptian Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leach, E., 1970 *Lévi-Strauss*. London: Penguin.
- Lowie, R. H., 1937 *The History of Ethnological Theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Mandelbaum, D., ed., 1949 *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mauss, M., 1973 Techniques of the Body. *Economy and Society* 2:70-88.
- Moore, H. L., 1994 *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ortner, S., 1984 Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26: 126-166.
- Rabinow, P., 1988 Beyond Ethnography: Anthropology as Nominalism. *Cultural Anthropology* 3(4):355-364.
- Radin, P., 1933 *The Method and Theory of Ethnology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Rosaldo, R., 1989 *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Sahlins, M., 1976 *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sahlins, M., 1999 Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5(3):399-422.
- Sapir, E., 1924 Culture, Genuine and Spurious. *American Journal of Sociology* 29: 401-429.
- Schapera, I., 1940 *Married Life in an African Tribe*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.
- Stocking, G., 1968 *Race, Culture and Evolution*. New York: Free Press.

- Stocking, G., 1974 *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911: A Franz Boas Reader*. New York: Basic Books.
- Taussig, M., 1987 *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tsing, A., 1993 *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.