

the butterfly
resting upon the temple bell,
asleep

-buson

British Social Anthropology, Identity, Culture and Society

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somos distintos. somos iguales.
-j.h. CIFUENTES

1. INTRODUCTION: "SOCIETY"?

In a 1989 debate, Marilyn Strathern supported the motion that "The concept of society is theoretically obsolete" (in Ingold 1996:60-66). The concept of society, she says, was useful as long as it "served as a focus for thinking about social organization, collective life and relationships," as long as it incorporated ideas about all aspects of social life. Now, however, "'society' is set against 'the individual'." With the Western concept of concrete individuals, Strathern says, it is generally assumed to think of individuals as having a "logically prior existence." This priority is persistent; it has also "been applied to society itself: 'societies' take on the character of discrete holistic units" (Strathern in Ingold 1996:64). This is a mistake in Strathern's view: "Durkheim said almost all the right things: that society is prior, that social life is prior, that persons are already embedded in relations" (Strathern in Ingold 1996:94). By defining the concept of society as one polarity in the society-individual dichotomy, anthropology has made it possible for Margaret Thatcher to say that: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." And that statement "shows us what has gone disastrously wrong with making an abstract entity out of the particular concept under debate" (Strathern in Ingold 1996:64,65).

While Strathern (in Ingold 1996:63) concludes that therefore, the concept of society "is a calamitous 'has been'," I would rather conclude that the then British Prime minister had not quite understood what the anthropological concept of society means. She also committed a logical mistake: by suggesting that "society" was just a rhetorical device (an idea that Strathern supports), and that it thus did not "really exist," she conveniently forgot that "family," "men," and "women" are "just" classifications, too. The whole point in all of these concepts, and in (anthropological) concepts in general, is to get a useful abstraction that names a phenomenon. Bateson (1958:281) pointed out that categories of classification, such as structure or function, are only mental categories; they are not real in the sense that they exist independently of the thought. They are just "words in that language which describes how scientists arrange data." In order to enable communication, common words have to be found, but these words do not have to be real.

"From this it follows that our categories ... are not real subdivisions which are present in the cultures which we study, but are merely abstractions which we make for our own convenience when we set out to describe cultures in words" (Bateson in Lipset 1980:147). I think that this is one of the most important rules of scientific thought in general, and should be quite obvious, especially for anthropologists. If some people are not familiar with it, that be so; but it is not the fault of the concepts, nor of the people who use classifications as abstractions that other people do not see this. With Peel (in Ingold 1996:96):

"The essential question, I contend, is this: Will it be possible to talk intelligibly about situations and contexts and how they differ from one another, that is, to talk about them comparatively, without using some overarching concept such as 'society'? I think not."
As La Barre (1989:xv,xvi) noted in a different context, but nonetheless generally valid statement:

"But does an insensate hostility to all categories really 'free' us intellectually? Or, rather, does it not make all intellectual activity and communication impossible? Of course all categories of meaning are 'artificial' - but is communication possible without agreed-upon categories?"

1.1 Comparison and Difference

If I understand Strathern correctly, she does not want comparisons of "discrete holistic units", and as every comparison needs - on the abstract level - two such discrete units of comparison, she probably is not in favor of comparative studies. At first sight, this, then, seems to be almost the same argument as that used by Abu-Lughod (1993:6-36), for example, for "writing against culture". The difference between culture and society notwithstanding, both, Strathern and Abu-Lughod focus on the dichotomy between culture or society and the individual. While Strathern argues against the tendency to abolish society on the altar of individualism, however, and therefore wants to abolish the concept of society in a preemptive move, Abu-Lughod wants to abolish the concept of culture because it creates difference between individuals, and thus argues for more emphasis on the individuals. The result is the same in both arguments, however: comparative studies between societies or cultures as units become impossible. Strathern does not want to create difference between a larger entity and a smaller entity, both parts of each other, while Abu-Lughod does not want to create difference between large entities for fear of creating difference between the small entities that are part of them.

I hope to have shown above that Strathern's objection to the concept of society can be solved by an analysis of what concepts really are - useful, necessarily abstracted classifications - and by keeping this analysis in mind. Not only did Thatcher make "an abstract entity out of the particular concept" (Strathern in Ingold 1996:65); she then discards the term because this abstract entity is an abstract concept, not a particular entity. I am convinced that Abu-Lughod's argument is based on a similar misunderstanding, and as for me, this goes to the heart of anthropology, leaving "society" for a quick diversion into "culture", I would like to show why comparative studies are still ethically possible.

It is, of course, true that every comparison creates difference between the two entities compared: the point is exactly that there could be no comparison without difference. In order to compare two entities, they have to be that: two distinct entities. And distinctiveness requires difference - any difference, at least in space or time. If there is no difference between two entities, then they are one, the same. Every relation between two entities therefore necessarily entails difference. Relationship needs difference. And, on the other hand, every statement of difference is a statement of relationship. Even "a is not b" is a statement on one aspect of the relations between a and b. The statement of difference, then, is not problematic; what is problematic is the generalization of difference from one level of a statement to others. That two entities are different in one thing in no way implies that they are different in any other, and the fact that they are different on one level does not imply that they are different on another level. In fact, the possibility of comparison between two entities implies a necessary similarity or sameness on at least one other level. It should also be kept in mind that statements of comparative difference are always relative. They are made in the specific context of a comparison of two specific entities, not as general statements. Turquoise might look

blue next to green, but green next to blue. The statement that two cultures are different does not say anything about the difference of the individual members of these cultures, but implies that they are at the very least so similar that this comparison makes sense. As Schwartz (1982:107,108) argues, "Man generally discovered (as anthropologists did much later) that cultures, too, are 'good to think'." And,

"in order for people to 'have ethnicity' they must have at least two (and usually more) ethnic groups. The same may be true for religion [...]. That is, it would be a cultural trait characteristic of one group in contrast to others, at once emblematic of the group's solidarity and of the group's contrasting identity and relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison."

To say that the differences or the similarities between two cultures are the differences and similarities of their individual members, however, and to say that these differences are absolutely valid is to support a rather fundamentalist interpretation of configurationalism or cultural determinism. As fundamentalism is diametrically opposite to the project of anthropology (Geertz 1996), I do not see how anthropologists could hold such views. I agree that classic monographs - The Nuer is probably the most famous, but there are numerous others - are etically defining cultural boundaries that probably were not present from an emic perspective. But I am convinced that Evans-Pritchard knew that Nuer and Dinka had a lot in common and that members of the relative societies sometimes could not be culturally distinguished from each other. One can blame those authors for not describing peaceful intercultural contacts and thus giving the picture of cultural wholes; and I have blamed them. But those contacts were personal, and these anthropologists wanted to describe the culture. The task of the day was to compare cultures and societies. Personal intercultural networks transcend that category. Authors like Evans-Pritchard looked for the ideological center of the cultures they described, just like Wissler and Kroeber looked for the geographic center of their culture areas. They may have thought that their interpretations of the cultures they described were scientifically correct and true, and not just one interpretation of many possible ones. But in speaking about culture or society, they knew that they were speaking in categories - mere abstractions, useful to describe abstract phenomena. Kroeber's (1939:6) request for "cultural maps without boundary lines" is telling for the dilemma of having to intelligently describe something clearly abstract. Leach (1982:8,9) says that

"when an individual progresses through time from social state 'A' to another social state 'B', the progression is always of the continuous/discontinuous kind represented by the sequence '-1', '0', '+1'."

In this model, '0' is not only in the middle, but also of a different kind, and yet necessarily passed through in the continuum. To expand this formulation, if '-1' and '+1' are representing cultural centers, then personal intercultural relationships are '0'.

The people who used anthropological concepts found it useful to reify the concepts; these were the men who wanted to know how "the Nuer," "the German," "the Japanese," or "the Serb" thought (and fought). What is easier than to deduct the ways of the individual from the ways of their group? This holds especially true in a situation of war, when the enemies have to be dehumanized and thus depersonalized into "the enemy" and the own population sworn into a unitary group. Colonization and cultural evolutionism, too, had to deal with groups, not persons. Looking at individuals would have shown that there were differences, but no hierarchy of difference. Alfred Wallace (1989; Smith

1991) shows that tendency.

Some anthropologists collaborated with this misuse of concepts, some fought against it and were silenced, and some ignored it. But the concepts were clearly misused by certain people. The concept of culture, then, just like the concept of society, difference and comparison, is not to blame; to blame are the people who use these concepts faultily and those who do not point this out. Rather than giving up a concept because somebody misuses it for political reasons, and thus giving in to the misuse, one should claim it back.

1.2 Society

Some people might say that concepts like "society" were framed exactly for the colonial enterprise, and therefore should be discarded. But as Peel (in Ingold 1996:67-69,96) points out, the idea of "society" is much older, and the use of the term very diverse.

However, as Hobbes (1991:28,34) says, the one who trusts other people's conclusions without researching and rethinking the problems herself is studying for nothing, for he does not know anything but is only believing. And who wants to stay with doxa, instead of trying to reach episteme? As I do not want to restudy the concept of society throughout the ages, however, I will cut this study short, for once following Strathern's (in Ingold 1996:94) rather unhistorical argument:

"I am unmoved, then, by general references to what happened in the 1860s here, there and everywhere; I am very interested in what happened in the 1960s because that has produced the generation of ideas which has brought us to our present pass in 1989."

This argument, by the way, almost seems to be derived from social anthropology with its clear emphasis on synchronicity, not diachronicity. I would not want to limit myself by absolute numbers, however. Suffice it to say that the following will be a view on British social anthropology's perspective on social structure and identity, and that I keep the option to divert into deeper history whenever I deem it necessary.

It might be necessary to mention that I was conditioned to see myself as a cultural anthropologist, not a social anthropologist. I might therefore be one of those "anthropologists who already have established a theoretical position and who are prepared to defend their private prejudices to the last ditch" (Leach 1982:9). However, I agree with almost everything that Leach (1982:49-54) says about social anthropology. And if a social anthropologist's concern "is with moral (cultural) diversity within a matrix of (approximate) species-wide biological uniformity" (Leach 1982:123), then count me in. However, I have the feeling that social anthropology in contrast to cultural anthropology is something a little bit different.

I will not repaint a picture of Tallensi, Zulu, or Tikopia society, here. What I would like to do is to arbitrarily take some important points on social and personal identity from the writings of British social anthropologists and look at them and their consequences. I will also not study models of kinship structure, as these categorizations are not in need of being analyzed, themselves: they are clear enough. And finally, I will not do these anthropologists justice, in that I simply will not have the space to expressively study the change of their views over time, but will just have to try to include statements - sometimes contradictory - from different periods of their lives.

Let me also say that basically, taking anthropologists' theories and extending them to their final

consequences is not necessarily an exercise worthy in itself, just like theory by itself is essentially not anthropology. The test of the pudding comes in the eating, and the test of anthropology comes in the mixture of ethnography and ethnology. An eclectic but detailed - and sometimes much too detailed - discussion is important, however, because it is always a clarifying, learning, and disputing process, a mirror for one's own concepts. This, I hope, is going to be an "unblunting" of my dull stone on the sharp theories of social anthropologists. I will try to avoid too many repetitions, and where they occur anyway, I will try to at least bring different facets of the argument, different colors to the pencil sketch. This, however, is rather going to be a puzzle, and I hope that the resulting image will not show too many holes.

Social anthropology did not originate nor was it only practiced in Great Britain and its colonies (see for example Mead 1933). And nobody, in my opinion, can do cultural or any other sort of anthropology without looking at society. Having said this, British social anthropology, as I use it, means the ideas of "the structural-functionalist followers of Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes and Gluckman in particular" (Leach 1982:44). I do not count Malinowski in, for example, as I was taught that he was a cultural anthropologist. But beyond the hundreds of ways one can classify anthropologists into varying groups - an example of how the multiplication of categories is obstructing the picture, not clearing it - the difference might well be one between a relativistic and a generalizing science. In order to see the differences - and similarities - one perhaps should keep in mind that,

"The Boasian tradition [...] considered that the search for meaning was dubious enough, but scientific generalization in anthropology was close to original sin" (La Barre 1989:xiii).

2. RADCLIFFE-BROWN

Leach (1982:21) sees the beginnings of social anthropology when "the failure of the anthropologist's historical endeavour" was recognized in the 1920s:

"In Britain most of the younger anthropologists were adapting their thinking to a new fashion which affirmed that the goal of anthropology was not historical reconstruction at all but the establishment of a general theory of comparative sociology."

The division between social anthropologists and cultural anthropologists is the one "between those who took their affiliation with sociology seriously [...], and those who retained a hankering for reconstructed history" (Leach 1982:24):

"The crux of this difference is that where social anthropologists are still carrying on a dialogue with Durkheim and Max Weber the cultural anthropologists are still arguing with Tylor" (Leach 1982:37,38).

Radcliffe-Brown, rather than Malinowski, thus becomes the father figure of social anthropology, as he is following Durkheim more closely (Leach 1982:24-35).

"If we, in sociological anthropology, now look to the past, it is, as I have said, to Durkheim and Max Weber, to Maine and to Engels, and thinkers of that kind, rather than to Frazer and Tylor. For us, Van Gennep and Frazer and Tylor did not understand society well enough to be of use to us" (Gluckman 1962:14).

Durkheimian sociology is also the source of the idea that societies should be treated "as naturally existing, self-sustaining systems with closed boundaries". This might have been a consequence of

the idea that a society has to be functionally integrated, and that a society whose institutions are not in a stable, homeostatic equilibrium is doomed with collapse (Leach 1982:35). But it is important to mention, I think, that Radcliffe-Brown (1965:182,183) rejects Durkheim's attempt to formulate a science of social pathology. Societies rarely die from "functional disunity or inconsistency:" they "struggle toward some sort of eunomia, some kind of social health" and may change their "structural type" in this process. It is clear, then, that these "structural types" of society are necessarily eunomic, in the state of "a condition of the harmonious working together of its parts." Societies that are in a dysnomic state are not healthy, and therefore in the process of change from one structural type to another, from one eunomic state to another.

This is a very different approach than, for example, that of Burch and Correll (1972:28-35), who make the point that every social structure can simultaneously be eufunctional and dysfunctional: increase and decrease the "adaptation of a unit to that unit's setting." There are no healthy societies, and changing societies are not unhealthy. Change and a dysnomic state are normal and built into the very existence of social structure.

"A general methodological point arises from our findings on the simultaneous occurrence of inter-regional alliances and conflicts in aboriginal North Alaska. This point has to do with the eufunctional - as opposed to dysfunctional - bias of a great deal of social research. Few, if any structures in human societies are exclusively eufunctional. [...] The conflict between the eufunctions and dysfunctions of a particular set of activities is an inherent source of stress and change in any society. The analysis of this conflict provides one of the most fruitful leads into the understanding of the dynamics of human social systems operating in the real world even during very restricted periods of time" (Burch & Correll 1972:35).

Leach (1982:24), in his above quoted definitions of social and cultural anthropology, follows Radcliffe-Brown (1965:186,187), who sees two "kinds of study - the historical and the functional." Ethnology is the "historical and geographical study of peoples" in close association with archaeology, while social anthropology is "the functional study of social systems." These are two separate disciplines. "[M]ixing the two subjects together and confusing them" will lead to many disadvantages. The historical and geographical method, however, according to Radcliffe-Brown, is still dependent on a functional unity of social systems and on scientific, sociological laws. Culture is not an accidental collection of disparate entities, and human society follows discoverable scientific laws. Radin (1966:169-179), against whose critique the latter argument is pointed, said that in looking for data to formulation of laws, Radcliffe-Brown was "crying for the moon." This is another formulation of La Barre's description of the Boasian tradition. Sociologists are looking for laws, Radin contends; ethnologists are looking at people.

2.1 Sociological Laws

"[T]here are no 'laws' of sociological probability," says Leach (1982:51). While I agree with that, it might be important to look into the argument a bit deeper.

Scientific laws are generalizations that "have been verified or demonstrated by a systematic examination of evidence afforded by precise observations systematically made," says

Radcliffe-Brown (1965:187). He then proceeds to say that,

"Those who hold that there are no laws of human society cannot hold that there are no generalisations about human society because they themselves hold such generalisations and even make new ones of their own. They must therefore hold that in the field of social phenomena, in contradistinction to physical and biological phenomena, any attempt at the systematic testing of existing generalisations or towards the discovery and verification of new ones, is, for some unexplained reason, futile [...]. Argument against such a contention is unprofitable or indeed impossible."

While argumentation against this position might be impossible, reasoning for that position does not at all have to be unexplained.

Searle (1986:71-85) explains the impossibility of scientific sociological laws exactly by that point. To have scientific laws in social science, there has to be a systematic correlation between social phenomena and physical phenomena. Social phenomena, however, are defined by ideas, by people believing things to be what they believe they are. The meaning of "marriage," "money," or "promise" is largely dependent upon what people think to be to be a marriage, money, or a promise. This means that these categories are not materially definable; there are no material limitations for the meaning of the concepts. If I believe that a person is married to me, in other words, this believe and the neurophysiological realization of it might be absolutely different from the same believe of somebody else, who defines marriage differently. We might see a person who stands in the same relative biological relation to us and react differently. This means that there can be no systematic correlation of the higher level (the reaction) and the lower level (the object or happening perceived).

On another level, this explanation might sound too simplistic at first sight. After all, if I see somebody whom I believe to be married to me, it does not matter what biological person (or even object) I see. But in a particular situation, I will always react to more than one object or occurrence. In other words, my reaction will be dependent on a variety of inputs. Every situation is a puzzle of inputs, and if each input can have a different meaning dependent on my beliefs, then my reaction to every situation can be widely different. To say it simpler, departing from the level of the individual through the levels of various social groups to the final level of humanity, or perhaps living being, one can make fewer and fewer generalizations on how all people included react to an objectively same situation.

2.2 Individual, Person and Culture

Radcliffe-Brown avoids this problem by disregarding the uniqueness of the individual on any level. "Science [...] is not concerned with the particular, the unique, but only with the general, with kinds, with events that recur" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:192).

Relationships between bees or cats, or animals in a herd, Radcliffe-Brown (1965:189) says, are relations between individual organisms and therefore social phenomena. Following that argument, relations between ants or between plants would also be social phenomena. Social anthropology studies the forms of association between human beings, but not the culture, only the social structure. Culture is but an abstraction and can therefore not be observed, while the social relations can, being actually existent. Just like chemistry is the natural science of molecules, so is social anthropology

the natural science of "those social structures of which the component units are human beings" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:189,190). This is remarkable in that already Aristotle had noticed that human beings have an essentially different sociality from bees and all other animals living in herds. Humans know language, and language is known to differentiate the good from the bad, the right from the wrong. It is the common acknowledgement of what is right and what not that makes society possible (Aristoteles 1994:47).

Radcliffe-Brown (1965:193,194) tries to solve the problem by distinguishing individual from person: "Human beings as individuals are objects of study for physiologists and psychologists. The human being as a person is a complex of social relationships." An individual, to him, is the biological organism. For Christians, he says, god is three persons, but one individual. But as I see it, the human psyche is only developing in relation to other people. How, then, can the individual be the object of study for psychologists? This is, I think, Radcliffe-Brown's mistake; in theory, he is not acknowledging psychological influences in social relations. By defining human sociality as of the same kind as the sociality of bees, Radcliffe-Brown is necessarily stripping it from that which makes it essentially human: moral judgement and situationality, or individuality. This might be the reason why culture is an abstraction for him. In practice, he acknowledges, "Morals, law, etiquette, religion, government, and education are all parts of the complex mechanism by which a social structure exists and persists" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:195). Speaking of religion, he even says that "an orderly social life amongst human beings depends upon the presence in the minds of the members of a society of certain sentiments, which control the behaviour of the individual in his relation to others" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:157). This is a different usage of "individual". But even if replaced by "person," there rest some inconsistencies between the statements. If the persons are controlled by sentiments in their relations to others, then there is interpersonal psychology. And if religion incorporates these sentiments, how can culture be only an abstraction? On the other hand, if psychology and individuality play into the social structure, how can that be studied scientifically?

Fortes (1969:44), following Radcliffe-Brown, says that, "social organization rests upon 'relations of actual interconnectedness' [...] that subsist between persons, and are mediated through their customary behavior." Customary behavior (culture?) is thus simply the mediation of social structure. Religion, morals, and etiquette are the actualization of kinship structure. They control the behavior of persons in their relations with each other, but are a function of these social structures in order to perpetuate themselves (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:157).

2.2.1 Anthropology

Culture is, in Radcliffe-Brown's anthropology, simply the actualization of social relations. As its only, or at least main, function is to perpetuate the social order, and a healthy society has to be eunomic, possessing a functional unity, every individual diversion from the norm has to be regarded as being dysfunctional. In a healthy society, individualism does not occur, therefore. The health of societies being measured by their stability is only consequential. It also follows that the healthiest societies are the ones of bees or ants, or generally the ones where individual organisms are persons in Radcliffe-Brown's sense and can be exchanged for other organisms without any impact on the society. This is, in fact, a totalitarian anthropology in its most radical sense. Even the Platonian ideal society needs philosophers to guide it, needs politics and culture to perpetuate itself. But by

reducing culture to the actualization of social organization, which then controls the persons, Radcliffe-Brown posits social structure as the absolute mechanism (and it really is a mechanism) of society.

Granted, Radcliffe-Brown (1965:6) does speak about change: "the problems of social dynamics deal with the conditions of change of forms of social life." He also says that,

"Continuity and change in the forms of social life being the subjects of investigation of comparative sociology, the continuity of cultural traditions and changes in those traditions are amongst the things that have to be taken into account" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:5).

The social reality, he says, is a process, and culture and cultural tradition are names for certain aspects of this process. But this is not a process of change, it is a process of tradition, of handing down: "The transmission of learnt ways of thinking, feeling and acting constitutes the cultural process, which is a specific feature of human social life" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:5). There is, after all, a difference between human social life and that of other animals, namely the existence of culture and cultural tradition. Bees do not have a superstructure that acts as actualization of their social structure, I am inclined to say, using Marxist terminology. Change in social structure, however, is primarily a form of adaptation (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:8,9): "A living organism exists and continues in existence only if it is both internally and externally adapted." There are three aspects of the "total system" of "social life amongst human beings." First, social life has to be adapted to the physical environment. Second, there have to be "institutional arrangements by which an orderly social life is maintained." Third, there is the social process, which can also be called "cultural adaptation, in accordance with the earlier definition of cultural tradition as process." What, then, is this cultural process? It is the "process by which an individual acquires habits and mental characteristics that fit him for a place in the social life and enable him to participate in its activities." In other words, it is the process of transformation from individual to person.

Culture can only be dynamic in the sense that it has to adjust to the dynamics of social structure, and these are the adaptation to external and internal exigencies in the interests of stability. "The stability of the system, and therefore its continuance over a certain period, depends on the effectiveness of the adaptation" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:9). As a healthy society is internally adapted, change can really only come from external influences. Radcliffe-Brown thus employs evolutionary theory for the explanation of social forms.

"[Adaptation] is a key concept of the theory of evolution. It is, or can be, applied both to the study of the forms of organic life and to the forms of social life amongst human beings" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:8).

The difference between humans and other social animals for Radcliffe-Brown is that humans are not directly controlled by social structures, but actualize them in cultural traditions. These can be changed, reacting to necessary adaptations to changes of external exigencies. Humans, therefore, are better able to adapt than animals. This theory is taking away all individuality from persons. Religion, politics, even art, are only expressions and the perpetuation of the social structure, changing upon the requirement of that structure. Culture is accidental; the social structure is essential.

2.2.2 Evolution vs. Culture

I would like to argue that Radcliffe-Brown's evolutionary theory of adaptation as the form of social process and change is a direct consequence of his anthropology, which strips persons of individual initiative and thus compares them to bees.

"I suggest to you that what makes and keeps a man a social animal is not some herd instinct, but the sense of dependence in the innumerable forms that it takes. [...] We can face life and its chances and difficulties with confidence when we know that there are powers, forces and events on which we can rely, but we must submit to the control of our conduct by rules which are imposed. The entirely asocial individual would be one who thought that he could be completely independent, relying only on himself, asking for no help and recognising no duties" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:176).

I absolutely agree with the last sentence. But the fact that the one who takes herself to be completely independent is entirely asocial does not say that the one who is social has to be completely dependent and under control.

Some people might say that Radcliffe-Brown's theory is not evolutionary. Stocking (1992:356) says that,

"Radcliffe-Brown moved away from evolutionism via the more functionalist sociology of Emile Durkheim. His break with Rivers [...] involved a general rejection of any 'conjectural' approach to diachronic problems in 'social anthropology'".

He is obviously right in that. But although Radcliffe-Brown was not somebody to draw tables of the evolution of societies through time and their present relation to each other in terms of their relative evolution to an absolute scheme, his theory of social adaptation is deeply evolutionary. He is saying that social (and cultural) evolution can be described by the same concepts as biological evolution. Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1986:37) contends for the same reasons that a given society can only adapt to any input in small steps. If there is no adaptation at all, the society is doomed, but that is also true if there is an attempt at too much adaptation. Unlike him, Radcliffe-Brown does not see societies in a dysnomic state as doomed: they will struggle towards stability and social health. This, he states (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:183), is a difference between an organism and a society. But he apparently failed to see that this difference prevents the usage of the same theory for both phenomena. In his theory, he still clings to the evolutionary concept.

Bateson (1932:440) placed a little bit more emphasis on the possibility of change:

"In its nature the society [...] is curiously like the organisms studied in the biological laboratory. A human society, like an animal, is a complex mechanism, internally coordinated and externally adapted to its environment. Its organization is not fixed, but labile, undergoing constant slow changes and occasional sudden mutation."

But he, too, rests tangled in the idea of evolution towards internal stability. And although he sees that the reality of social interaction is not really following the supposed rules and that there is local and individual variation of the system, he still supposes a systematic whole or the evolution towards one (Bateson 1932:450,451).

Wallace (1898 in Smith 1991:182), however, speaking about mimicry, had pointed out that evolutionary adaptation is totally involuntary, and that

"this, and all other arguments drawn from the animal or vegetable kingdoms are valueless,

because in social and civilised man the mental and moral nature rules over the physical; and ... a new and high kind of selection will come into action as soon as he learns how to subordinate the latter to the former, and how to so organise his social state as to satisfy the economic requirements of all."

Smith (1991:119) says that Wallace

"viewed social change as being no more nor less a part of evolution than biological change, the only fundamental difference being that human beings, unlike other living things, were capable of recognizing toward what end the overall process was leading, and consciously modifying their actions accordingly."

But this is a very fundamental difference. Humans cannot only modify their actions in favor of these evolutionary processes, but also against them. They, by virtue of their reason, in other words, step out of the biological evolutionary process.

Hobbes (1991:133,134), following Aristotle, shows why human beings are essentially different from bees in their social relations. Men, he says, have reason, which makes their private goals different from the goals of society, their private good different from the general good. That is why human social systems are not natural, for they need something more and essentially different from social systems of animals: they need politics.

Radcliffe-Brown (1965:5) is right in saying that Montesquieu looked for social laws, and Sahlins (1994:31,32) shows how he influenced Fortes' theory of kinship as a bridge between moral axioms and social structure. But Montesquieu (1989:97) also says that there is an essential difference between the world of reason and the world of physics, and this difference is reason itself. Reasonable beings, he says, naturally act for their own reasons and therefore do not always follow their own rules and laws. And while Cicero (1992:136-141) affirms that the duty to the society is higher than the quest for knowledge, he is also saying that there are debates in a society about what act is more honorable. Milton (1987:32) argues that reason is nothing else than the freedom to decide for one's own. He shows that if all human behavior really was controlled by rules and orders, virtue would be nothing than a name, and social respect impossible. One could almost argue that human social order rests upon the social laws not being translated into action by the majority.

Kant (1989:319-323) formulates his ethics explicitly not on the base of anthropology, but as imperative, general laws for behavior in any society. But he also sees that culture and human laws are based on human reason and experience, and are therefore not perfect.

"[Der Mensch] entdeckte in sich ein Vermögen, sich selbst eine Lebensweise auszuwählen und nicht gleich anderen Thieren an eine einzige gebunden zu sein" (Kant 1968:112,116-118).

Cicero's duty towards society and Kant's general ethics would rid society of the need for politics. But as Hobbes (1991:133) argues, close to Milton, it is the fact that humans think they know better than others how to achieve the common good, and apply those ethics, that brings about reforms, renewals, turmoil and civil wars. And without application, ethics are just ideals.

Following Herodotos (in Müller 1997:118-124), societies are most often traditional; they adhere to their own traditions because they think them to be best, and their identity as societies is dependent on their traditions. But tradition is not just actualization of the social structure, and the differences between them are not adaptations to external impacts. Human creativeness is responsible for the invention of religious ceremonies, games, time concepts, etc. These inventions

or innovations, then, are diffused to other groups and societies. If culture were only the actualization of social structure, however, cultural inventions would always have to go hand in hand with and be dependent on changes in social structure in the society that invents changes or adopts them from another society.

"Social change is not an automatic or evolutionary process; concrete groups must introduce innovations and gain the economic, political, and social support necessary for the innovation to endure" (Champagne 1989:3).

I do not propose that other animals have no reason. And I do not equate reason with rationality. Leach (1982:97), I think, is right in saying that, "it is precisely the non-rationality of our behaviour which marks us out as human beings." It is the "capacity for exercising moral choice" (Leach 1982:121) that makes us human and that is at the base of culture. What I contend, then, is that culture is a process of limited choice.

"Societies, like individuals, make a series of decisions, which are often subconscious, about what is important to them; these decisions are reflected in their lives more than in their words" (Isichei 1997:24).

2.3 Adaptation and Choice

As I have tried to show above, Radcliffe-Brown's concept of society is homeostatic - showing the tendency to maintain internal stability by coordinated responses to disruptive impetus. And this in turn leads to a theory of social change as adaptation, as response to external changes and requirements.

"The frequently accepted view of the cultural system as a homeostatic entity regulated by various negative feedback processes, in particular, has required us to look outside the system for forces of change. [...] Thus, the explicit (or often inexplicit) use of homeostatic models has led to an overemphasis on the importance of the natural environment in cultural change" (Plog 1990:178).

This is something that links Radcliffe-Brown to Montesquieu, of course, and it also explains statements like the one that patrilineal descent in Australia has a real advantage in adaptation to a difficult environment (Fortes 1969:44).

I do not want to argue adaptation away. There are severe limitations on individual and cultural or social choice. But there is choice.

"I would maintain that the social order or the natural species are domains to which the human intellect (the culturally implemented intelligence) is applied. The 'mode' is man's. The model is a human construction, but it is under the adaptive constraints of an external reality" (Schwartz 1982:107).

2.3.1 An Example: Marx, Corn and Social System

From about A.D. 800 to 900, Mississippian traditions with ranked societies, pyramid mounds, and meticulously planned cities evolved east of the Missouri. At the same time, there is a change towards corn as main subsistence seed. The guess that these two changes are somehow connected

is near (e.g. Hawkins 1992:58; Kelly 1990:139-143).

From a Marxist perspective, the advent of corn brought the economic requirements necessary for the evolution of the social superstructure. Corn is a purely economic change in subsistence strategies, with possibilities of surplus production.

From Radcliffe-Brown's perspective, culture is just the actualization of social systems; any possible cultural significance of corn would follow the newly evolving social order. Myths or ceremonies relating to corn exist to perpetuate the social system the same way that religion's function in general is to keep the society stable. Here, by the way, Radcliffe-Brown is very close to Marx, or Feuerbach at least. This is not surprising; after all, Marx' anthropology is social anthropology. In defining man as homo faber, and work as social work, he is defining mankind through society. If the superstructure is too far off from harmony with the base, the society is not healthy and will struggle towards a new equilibrium, to combine Radcliffe-Brown and Marx.

It is significant then that in the eastern woodlands corn had been known for a long time before the transformation from Late Woodland to Mississippian societies occurred. While in Ohio and Tennessee, the advent of Eastern Flint, a new corn variety, occurred at the same time, this variety only appears in the American Bottom after the decline of the Mississippian tradition there (Kelly 1990:140; Schroedl, Boyd & Davis 1990:191; Hastorf & Johannessen 1994:428). The strictly Marxist analysis thus falls away. Hastorf and Johannessen (1994:436) hold that corn had special symbolic values in North and South America in general, and "that corn appears to have had special significance in many cases before it became a staple." Bohrer (1994) thinks that this significance was similar in very different societies over a long time span.

Like Tobacco, Hastorf and Johannessen (1994:434) say, corn "was tied to a symbolic set of broad traditions that were selectively adopted by different groups for their own purposes". They (1994:441) come to the conclusion that "corn was mobilized as a sign and symbol in the process of expansive social transformation", and that,

"Shifts in the food systems served to carry messages about new social identities and new solidarities, and thus had an active role in the process of cultural redefinition."

While I agree with that, I would hold that the mobilization of corn was a mobilization of signs and symbols that apparently had been around for quite a while. There were not only social identities at stake. A strictly Radcliffe-Brownian interpretation runs into the problem of how these concepts could have evolved, or how they could be so useful to a different social system than the one they evolved in (and for).

Apparently, the cultural significance of corn was not independent of the social structure of a given culture, but neither was it just an actualization of the social system. Culture is, among else, functioning as a buffer, preventing or lessening the effects of all kinds of alienation: superstructure from base, man from man, man from nature. By reinterpreting, to a certain extent, old cultural norms, values and symbols, an equilibrium is reinstated. But this is a constant process in all societies, and it is as much an endogenous as an exogenous process. Culture has to bridge the contradictions of society. The way and the extent to which it does bridge them or does not, however, is up to choice. And by bridging the contradictions and tensions of a social system, culture is not an actualization of this system, but something essentially separate, if contemporarily interwoven.

3. GLUCKMAN

It might be better to show what I mean at the example of a "contemporary" phenomenon than to get into conjectural history, and for that, I turn to Max Gluckman.

In his doctoral thesis, Gluckman analyzes, amongst else, the first fruit ceremonies of various Bantu-speaking peoples in South Africa. He basically comes to the conclusion that although to "the natives the importance of the ceremony is that it protects them against mystical powers," the "actual effect," which "must be sought by the anthropologist," is one of social control and unification of social identity (Gluckmann [sic!] 1938). He also argues that,

"certain agricultural ceremonies had to be understood in terms of the position of women in social relations, while other agricultural ceremonies required an investigation of the distribution of people under subsistence production, of the consequent organization of the nation into provinces with delegation of power from king to princes and chiefs, struggles for power in the royal dynasty, exploitation of those struggles by subjects, and the types of simple weapons so that each leader had his private army" (Gluckman 1962:15).

Analyses of North American first fruit ceremonies, in contrast, although clearly seeing their significance for social relations and identity, emphasize their function as new year ceremonies and rites for the reaffirmation of the position in one's natural, social and spiritual environment (e.g. Witthoft 1949; Schuster 1964). Cowen (1985:224), to show the difference to Gluckman, says that in first fruit ceremonies,

"the interaction between individual plant and human is transcended by those between the human population and the supernatural forces that govern life itself. [...] Completion of these ritual obligations promotes a feeling of well-being among the human population, and is an important culturally perceived mechanism for reducing risk."

Moore and Myerhoff (1977:5) say that,

"With Durkeim's paradigm deeply learned, social anthropologists frequently have looked at particular rituals as they reflect social relationships. This approach explicates ritual in terms of the manner in which a particular rite states, reiterates or reinforces traditional social ties, or expresses social conflicts, or delineates social roles [...]. But an emphasis on the social meanings of ritual in anthropology has not excluded consideration of the way in which ritual not only propagates cultural ideas, but shapes those ideas. [...] Ritual may do much more than mirror existing social arrangements and existing modes of thought."

A good example of how social anthropologists looked at ritual is given by Fortes (1970:275), who also, in this statement, gives an example of how the supposed verifiability of laws of society needs a standard of verification - the European standard of thinking, here:

"It is not for example the ostensible purpose of a totemic rite (e.g. the increase of food supply), which we know to be futile, that is the main issue but the contribution made by the rite to the 'maintenance of that order of the universe of which man and nature are independent parts', which means, in the first place, the maintenance of the 'network of social relations binding individuals together in an ordered life'."

3.1 Society and Culture

"In social anthropology the emphasis is on the significance of custom in the relations between persons: hence social anthropology is more closely akin to sociology and political science than it is to psychology or cultural anthropology. Yet social anthropologists still treat customs as having some kind of systematic interdependence among themselves, independently of relations between persons; and, in our judgement, it is through insistence on this interdependence that anthropologists make a specific contribution within the social sciences" (Devons & Gluckman 1964b: 256,257).

Customs, exist independently of social relationships, and are acknowledged and important, but they only exist in a systematically interdependent whole. One is prompted to say that culture, then, has to be more than the actualization of social relations, but for Gluckman (1958:56), that is not really true in a sociological view:

"from the flow of social events, the sociologist abstracts types of social events as representative of the community he is studying, and these typical events are what I propose to call the community's culture."

But culture and social organization must not be confused, as Fortes and Radcliffe-Brown (1940:3) had emphasized. "Sociological relations," being abstract "invariable relations between culture parts and invariable processes by which culture functions" are similar in diverse societies, but their cultural forms are different. Also, a social system can include many cultures (Gluckman 1958:56,57).

"We may then say that in any social system culture is the particular form in which appears a variety of sociological relations, some of which are common to systems with widely different cultures" (Gluckman 1958:56).

Culture, then, is that which is the difference between varieties of sociological relations in different societies, but there is no study of why these are different independently of the study of social relations. They are different, says Gluckman (1958:61), because groups and "social personalities" must be "marked by a characteristic culture, to demarcate them from others and to express, and be the centre of, their interests." Culture is an expression of social relations, and to mark my relative distance or closeness, my culture - the form in which I live my social relations - will differ from others' cultures. "Changing sociological relations thus find expression in changes of culture" (Gluckman 1958:63). So what about the independent existence of customs from social relations?

"Changes of culture express the [sociological] movements, but the relations between cultural facts also determine what movements occur. Beliefs in sorcery and magic not only provide one form in which Zulu-White opposition is expressed, but also throughout they, with growing Zulu opposition to White political and economic domination, have restricted Zulu acceptance of White knowledge, and further this difference in knowledge is a form of the cleavage between the two groups. If Whites and Zulu had come to form one undifferentiated economic group, these beliefs would not have acted in the same way; and if the Zulu had had no beliefs in witchcraft, under present conditions their opposition to the Whites would still have existed and had to be expressed in what culture was available" (Gluckman 1958:63).

I agree with many of these points, but this statement has the tendency to explain Zulu belief in

witchcraft (or their cosmology) as a marker of social difference. While cosmology may function as a marker of social difference (see the corn discussion above), that function is not an explanation of cosmology. And as cosmology is a part of every culture, social relations do not suffice as an explanation of culture.

"Rituals in tribal societies are not thus mere congregations at which people pray: they are built out of the very texture of social relations, each person having to perform symbolical actions, or undergo symbolical operations, which emphasize his role in relation to the other participants in the ceremony" (Gluckman 1962:42).

Symbolic action of course defines or redefines social relations between participants in a ceremony, but it also defines relations to cosmological beings. And although these relations in turn may be symbolic for social relations, this is not their only meaning, I hold. In a discussion of Iatmul initiation rituals, Schuster (1988a:97) says:

"Die einzelnen Aktionen, denen wir auf unserem Weg durch den Initiationsprozess begegnet sind, zeigten ein unterschiedliches Mass symbolischer Distanz zu dem, was sie eigentlich meinen; von daher lassen sie sich in verschiedenen Positionen auf einem imaginären Kontinuum anordnen, das sich vom realen, pragmatischen Handeln, bei dem wir keine Verständnisschwierigkeiten zu haben glauben, bis hin zu jenen rituellen Vorgängen spannt, bei denen wir - ebenfalls ohne grosses Zögern - eine 'symbolische' Natur voraussetzen, sofern wir uns nicht, wie es oft geschieht, allzu schnell mit dem Ritual- oder Magiebegriff begnügen und damit zugleich unsere Fragestellung auf das im allgemeinen leichter zu beobachtende und zu analysierende Problem der sozialen Funktion solcher Handlungen beschränken."

Indeed, a study of the symbolic meaning of a cosmology was probably not something that Gluckman would have approved of, although, in my view, cosmological meanings are not "ideas separated from their production in practice," even though they might make "'scientific', cross-culturally valid, generalisations" more difficult to establish. This, Kapferer (1987:9) says, was what Gluckman wanted to avoid.

3.1.1 Mary Douglas

I would like to take a brief detour here, and a look at Douglas' view on culture and society, because she shows a "social anthropological view of cultural constraints on social choices, [in which] moral preferences are the implicit outcome of a certain kind of social structure" (Jacobson-Widding 1983:16). This is the by now familiar argument that the cultural constraints on social choices are themselves the result of the social structure. That such a society is relatively stable needs no explanation. But in view of the argument about individual choice and morals, Douglas (1983) offers an interesting argument, which, she says, is saving individual autonomy.

"Suppose that the main, effective choice is exerted in a continua monitoring of the social process and suppose that choice is made explicit whenever personal loyalties have to be defended or ditched, then every desirable bit of individual autonomy has been saved for the theory of rational behavior. The individual who shaves his beard or eats his food or marries his wife according to the conventionally prescribed ways is making free, autonomous choices to uphold the conventions and support his own cliques of friends. If each

conventional act is morally loaded, we can shift the theory to the real moment of choosing, that is, to choice of comrades and their way of life" (Douglas 1983:45).

In Jacobson-Widding's (1983:16) words, cultural choices are choices of social loyalties.

There are two aspects of Douglas' theory that I do not like. The first is her assertion that choices of social loyalties are per se free and autonomous. This argument, it seems to me, is a consequence of the division between Radcliffe-Brown's "individual" and "person", in which the individual (organism) is free of social relations and can therefore choose them freely and thus becomes a person. This is exactly the fundamental division between sociology and biology or psychology which cultural anthropology is trying to bridge.

My second objection is that not every moral or cultural choice is a choice of social loyalty. The choices to shave one's beard or eat certain foods or marry in a certain way all may be signs of social loyalties, but they do not have to. If all choices were choices of social loyalty, any social group would consist of uniform members. What about men who shave in a society of bearded men, then? What about women who do not shave their legs in a society of shaving women? About vegetarians in a society of meat eaters? Are these people not part of their societies? And there is another problem: as every person can be (or usually is) member of several social groups, how can one bring the diverse social loyalties, which are expressed in every choice, together? This theory allows for no opposing groups in one society, it allows for no freedom of deviation without changing social loyalties, and implicitly social groups. If there is no freedom of deviation within the group, by the way - what choice is there, then, except the political choice of leaving a group? If social anthropology is interpreting every act as being a social act of loyalty/disloyalty, it is a fundamentalist theory.

Of course there must be in every social group a broad base of togetherness, but the details of this can take diverse forms. Every act can be interpreted as being political, but this act does not have to be meant politically, therefore. While burning a flag is usually political, although there might be instances when it is not, wearing a flag on a T-shirt can be political - an expression of social loyalty - but it does not have to be, for example. Having white shoelaces can be a political act, but then, maybe there were no green ones. And so on. This is why in trying to understand somebody else one should try to understand what meaning she ascribes to concepts, things, persons, and, yes, social relations. Meanings are what make us act in certain ways or others, what make us act irrationally, to speak with Leach. A society, one could argue, exists as long as it means something to its members, not as long as they all act the same way (although if their actions are too diverse, the meaning will get lost). That is why bees and humans have essentially different societies. And while meanings are culturally derived and socially influenced, they are always individually varied.

3.2 Difference and Unity

Gluckman sees the problems of difference within a society and of unity between diverse identities very well.

"In fact, it is a marked characteristic of all societies that persons belong to a series of different subgroups and relationships which associate them with different fellows, so that their 'enemies' in one set of relations are their 'allies' in another; and a diversity of distinct

ties interrelates the members of a society, each set of ties striking into the autonomy and isolated loyalty of the members of another set" (Gluckman 1962:40).

But even though he says "all societies", there is, following Durkheim, "a difference in degree which passes into a difference in of kind" (Gluckman 1962:49) between "tribal society" and "modern society". In modern society, political or economic issues normally do not affect family relations; the domains of different issues are segregated. In a small-scale society, however, "every issue may be at once a domestic, an economic, and a political crisis" (Gluckman 1962:43). I do not agree with Gluckman on this, but that may well be a consequence of the changes in "modern society". His model, I think, may very well have been strongly influenced by segregated sex roles in his modern society, for example. It is probably derived from the model of a strongly hierarchical society, where there was only one official link between the family and the outside social world - the *pater familiae*. If that family model is reality, then his difference between the two societies is correct. But I would argue that for cultural reasons the fact that every issue could indeed have been a domestic, economic and political crisis was hidden and denied. To the outside, every family was a unity of opinion - of domestic opinion - and the one link to the economic and political world was the eldest capable man, who could not be contradicted or opposed. Wives and children had to keep quiet and "respect their elders". Supporting this model, of course, was a rule of endogamy: one married in one's own political, religious and economic circles. What happened behind the facades of familial unity and restriction to domestic issues, however, might have been another story. I do not believe that economic and political issues were not mixed with domestic issues informally, and I think that everybody involved knew exactly what was going on when that happened, even if their social roles may have prevented anybody from commenting on it.

Lawrence (1971:5) uses almost exactly Gluckman's argument:

"[T]hese societies [in New Guinea] are generalized rather than compartmentalized. Unlike western society, they can be analysed only as totalities and not into theoretically separate systems with specialized functions: economic, religious or political. Exactly the same groups or persons in specific relationship to each other carry out all economic, religious and political actions."

Otto (1992b:274) disputes the argument and says that New Guinea societies are just as compartmentalized as "Western" ones, but not in a functional way:

"I do not deny that there may be a specialisation of functions between different spheres, but there is always considerable overlap, even between systems that are distinguished in Western societies."

An understanding based only on the functional division, Otto says,

"is necessarily partial and biased, because the institutions of the society are taken out of their meaningful context. Therefore I take the 'emic' institutional division as my point of departure."

To arrive at the emic institutional division, however, and this makes this statement into one for cultural anthropology, one has to understand the value system of a society, the culture, not its social system.

Gluckman's emphasis on different subgroups is important, however, and I absolutely agree with him:

"A man is known and acts as the occupant of several roles, and he carries all his roles even

when one happens contextually to be dominant" (Gluckman 1962:41).

One problem with this notion is that these interwoven social relations are much too complex for a scientific analysis. How can one find cause and effect of an action of social relation if there are so many influences, themselves influencing each other in various ways, and so many effects, many of which not even known?

Marylin Strathern (in Ingold 1996:96) sees anthropological causes and effects similar to "the mechanics of the 'butterfly effect' - the notion that a butterfly stirring the air today in Peking can transform storm systems next month in New York." Gluckman, I think, knew what Strathern knows, even if perhaps he did not know it in that intensity:

"We know that we live in a world system and in an intensely parochial one; that we travel and stay in the same place; migrate and meet migrants at home; consume the world's products and contaminate our own resources" (Strathern in Ingold 1996:96).

But Gluckman could not resort to the "butterfly effect"-analysis. He wanted to do science, not metaphysical speculation, and "it is possible to study only a limited number of events, in a limited way, at one time" (Devons & Gluckman 1964a:16). Thus, he had to resort to another analysis:

"[The] situation is clarified if we remember that while for analytic purposes it is essential to isolate a man's various roles, as if he plays each role separately at one time, in real life a man does not wear and act in a particular role as if it were a suit [...]" (Gluckman 1962:41).

Basically, this is Bateson's argument about categories. But Gluckman's problem with that, for me, arises when he tries to put the separate analyses back together. For he (Devons & Gluckman 1964b:255) also recognizes that,

"a theory of inter-personal relationships within small groups, or between individuals, cannot account for stabilised institutions which persist for generations. The sum of the parts cannot account for the whole."

To me, what fills the gap between individual social relations and the ones of and in a society made up of individuals has something to do with culture, but if culture is determined itself by the system of social relations, then how can Gluckman bridge the gap? I think he, like all good anthropologists, bridges it by not absolutely adhering to his theory in his practice. After all, the sociological relations he is looking for are only abstractions, not ever occurring in reality in pure form (Gluckman 1958:56).

3.2.1 Ritual

Bridging the gap between theory and practice has something to do with ritual, in society as well as in anthropology or any other science.

On the danger of repetition, I would like to come back on Gluckman's perception of ritual, then, in the context of difference and unity. Gluckman does not see societies as undifferentiated wholes, unified and without conflict. Rituals can help to search for a temporary balance, an acceptance of social defeat. Their function is, as I have pointed out above, mainly social:

"[A]most invariably [the modern anthropologist] gives a lecture in which he shows that the rituals, which Frazer saw as fruits of mental processes and ideas, are in fact to be understood in terms of social relations which are involved in the rituals" (Gluckman

1962:14,15).

"I must pause here to make clear that I do not want to be interpreted as believing that rituals in tribal society settle conflicts. The whole point of the analysis is that they cannot do so: the conflicts are built into social life by the nature of the social rules themselves. [...] Ritual clearly does not settle disputes or act as a long-term effective catharsis for anger or ambition. But, as Turner shows, the struggle for leadership produces a series of rituals which, in aiming at reconciling the parties, in fact may lead to temporary truces, and at times conceal the basic conflicts between competitors. Hence their 'functions' are not to be sought in their relation to emotional needs alone, but in a study of social relationships" (Gluckman 1962:46,47).

Any alteration in social status or social arrangements is potentially disturbing the natural order. Social relations thus become involved with mystical beliefs.

"In short, the ritual which deals with social status as well as with environmental events is built out of the symbolical enactment of social relations themselves" (Gluckman 1962:50).

This is why "societies based on more advanced technologies" know less "ritualization" than "ancient and tribal societies" (Gluckman & Gluckman 1977:234,235):

"This shift, involves increasingly less of the 'ritualization' in our terminology that marks the ceremonies of the former set of societies, with their small-scale view of the universe in which what happens in social relationships is inextricably intertwined with what happens in the physical environment and the relations of occult powers. Increasingly ceremonies involving statements of social status are made with only (in some modern societies) initial prayer to God, but no 'ritualization' of social relationships and roles themselves. In these ceremonies, even if in some humility before God is expressed, social conflicts are not enacted; the emphasis is patently and observably on social strength, unity, etc., which are assumed to exist. There is no suggestion that harmony and unity exist despite the open, indeed the exaggerated, difference of role and relationships with all their conflicts; and this kind of ritualization of roles, it has been argued, can no longer be used when the conflicts involved are such that they threaten revolutionary as against rebellious change."

This, by the way, is strongly reminiscent of Radcliffe-Brown's evolutionary tendencies and of his theory of slow adaptation as healthy social change. The tendency of the argument is repeated a little bit stronger by Goody (1977:32), who, however, strips all rituals - or at least those of "modern" society - of their cultural values and sees only social behavior:

"I suggest it is misleading to assert that 'rituals' provide a key to deep values more than any other type of human behaviour. Indeed, I would be tempted to argue that they conceivably provide less of a clue, for the reasons I have stated, their formality, the element of culture lag, the component of public demonstration, their role as masks of the 'true' self. [...] However this may be in non-literate societies, I do not believe it possible to maintain that the public rituals of our secular society really provide 'decisive keys to the understanding of how people think and feel about (economic, political and social) relationships, and about the natural and social environments in which they operate' (Turner 1968: 6)."

This is probably also why Goody (in Gluckman 1962:21,22) is making the difference between the religious Corpus Christi Day parade and the "exclusively secular" anniversary of the October Revolution. Both, as rituals, are of equal sacred character to me: as Myerhoff (1977:201) asks:

"Without the emotional response provided by basic, deep symbols how are rituals to move and persuade participants and witnesses?"

As I tried to show by the quote of Schuster above, symbolic meaning and reality are going hand in hand in ritual; they are not to be set apart. Some rituals may be "symbolical enactment[s] of social relations," but they are always linked to something else, a sacred meaning that is independent of these specific social relations. What Myerhoff (1977:200,201) calls a "nonce" ritual is characteristic not only of "Western, urban, mobile societies," but of any ritual in any society:

"It is a complex ceremony parts of which are sacred and parts secular, parts unique improvisations (openings) and parts stable, recurrent and fixed (closed)."

Any ritual has, of course, social functions. But I doubt that any ritual's function is only social. And I also doubt that any ritual's meaning is only its function. Social functions are only the part of ritual that can be generalized, abstracted from it. There rests the question what these social functions mean in this specific cultural environment, within these specific "basic, deep symbols" that persuade the participants. We have to understand the symbols, Schuster (1988a:100) says, in order to understand the culture:

"jedenfalls verstehen wir eine fremde Kultur erst, wenn wir ihre gesellschaftlich kodierten 'Symbole' nicht durch schnelle, meist unzutreffende Übertragungen aus unseren eigenen Bedingtheiten, sondern durch die Entschlüsselung ihre kulturspezifischen Beziehungsgeflechtes begriffen, also auf unsere wichtigste Frage, was etwas bedeute, eine Antwort gefunden haben."

The "closed" parts of rituals are the ones that carry the unifying messages, the ones that suggest that "harmony and unity exist" or can be reinstated. I do not see the relationship of "closed" and "open" parts in ritual as a sequencing, however, as Myerhoff (1977:201) does. Fixed parts can be stable on a higher level, the level of meaning, and can be open in the sense that they are interpreted, enacted, differently in every occasion of an enactment of a ritual.

What rituals show is that there is unity in diversity and diversity in unity, not only in social relationships, but everywhere. And that is why they are so important in bridging the gap between theory and practice; they enable both to be slightly different from each other, a flexible system that can be adapted as necessary, always swaying, but not breaking.

3.2.2 Change

"Gluckman's central focus", Kapferer (1987:16) says, "was on change." Despite Leach's critique of him as being a proponent of social equilibrium, functional harmony and stable systems, and although Gluckman occasionally made the mistake of exploring change through concepts engaged for the analysis of unchanging systems, what he was interested in was change.

"His question was not so much 'How does change come about or what is change and the nature of change?' as 'What is stability, when society is actually in constant flux developing and shifting in relation to fundamental internal contradictions and conflicts?' Change, for Gluckman, was the normal conditions of society. Stability was the odd thing" (Kapferer 1987:16).

I do not quite see how, if Gluckman's question was "What is stability?" his central focus could have been on change, however. One's central focus is normally on that which one puts into question, on

the odd thing, not the normal conditions. Although Gluckman (1962:13) is saying that Van Gennep was right "in setting up so dynamic a model of social life and explaining rites de passage by this dynamism", he then goes on to explain ritual by social roles within society. Although mine might be the same misunderstanding as Leach's, I get the impression that this society - whichever it is - is conservatively reproduced in this way, that generation upon generation assume the same roles in the same rituals in the same way. Van Gennep (1909:272), on the other hand, says that,

"Pour les groupes, comme pour les individus, vivre c'est sans cesse se désagréger et se reconstituer, changer d'état et de forme, mourir et renaître. C'est agir puis s'arrêter, attendre et se reposer, pour recommencer ensuite à agir, mais autrement."

That Gluckman is not commenting on these changes in my (and Leach's?) reading is probably a consequence of his synchronic approach. He also thinks,

"that the dominant cleavage of a changing system must produce similar structural developments in all similar parts of the system, even if the cultural form be different" (Gluckman 1958:64).

As he is interested in the structure of the social systems, the differences in their cultural actualization are not really important to him, except as examples of the structural similarities. Even though Gluckman for sure is more focused on change than Radcliffe-Brown, I would like to ask how one can have change as the central focus of one's work if one has a synchronic approach.

3.2.3 South Africa, Leach and Cultural Difference

Saying that Gluckman's science of social anthropology was or was meant to be neutral, just discovering facts, would be a misrepresentation. As a South African, he had a definite political program, and in that, he definitely embraced practice.

"Both the culture and the members of [...] other societies remain obstinately different and obstinately alike: this latter is the fact that protagonists of apartheid, political and scholarly, are finding most obstinate. It is possible in the cloistered seclusion of King's College, Cambridge [...], to put the main emphasis on the obstinate differences: it was not possible for 'liberal' South Africans confronted with the policy of segregation within a nation into which 'the others' had been brought, and treated as different - and inferior" (Gluckman 1975:29).

The mentioning of King's College is an attack on Leach, of whom Gluckman says that his work and that of others "plays into the hands" of the South African government, because Leach emphasizes difference instead of similarities. (Before one classifies Leach as a supporter of Apartheid, one should know that Gluckman and Leach apparently had some personal issues. Kapferer (1987:7,8,16) calls Leach the most prominent among Gluckman's main critics.)

Gluckman (1975:36,37) says that Schapera brought about the foundation to "the most humane of lessons: that all men are alike in some respects and unlike in others, and that all cultures are alike in some respects and unlike in others." Schapera, he says (Gluckman 1975:36),

"drove home in anthropology the importance of studying what lay before our eyes and came to our ears: that the Africans in Southern Africa were, with Whites and others, integral parts of a single social system, so that all had to be studied in the same way - even though their roles might differ considerably."

I think that Leach would agree to almost all of the above. The one part he would probably disagree with is that because people are parts of a single social system they should be studied in the same way. I am not sure if I agree to that, either; it depends, I guess, on what exactly is meant by "the same way."

Gluckman (1975:29,30) says that an emphasis on difference, "may also be politically dangerous as we become, all of us of all cultural groups, part of what Wendell Wilkie called One World. Our problem is not only the translation of cultural languages: for it is also an assessment of the varying weight of likeness and unlikeness both in cultures and in human beings, and whether individuals of a different culture think and feel quite differently [...]." Without wanting to get into the Sahlins - Obeyesekere debate, I have tried above to show that as I see the problem, the political danger lies exactly in the "weighing" of difference and likeness. The only assessment that anthropology can give of this is one of rejection, but it cannot reject difference itself.

I agree with Mair (1974:1) that Malinowski was "endlessly reminding us of the common features, disguised under different forms, in 'their' societies and 'ours'," and he was right in doing so. But the different forms are as important as the common features; these are visible only by abstraction from the differences. I hold that individuals of a different culture think the same way in a biological way, but have different cultural concepts and therefore think differently in a cultural way. Difference or likeness should not be unduly emphasized, but both should be acknowledged as a reality. It is clear that if the category to analyze is South African society, then everybody in that society has to be included. If the category is the one world, then everybody in this world must be included. But the level of category has to be noticed and acknowledged. As a specific culture exists only in comparison to another culture at the same level, there can be no such thing as a world culture, for example. I am also not sure if a world society exists. There is a world social system, but the difference between societies might be yet another difference in degree that is used as one in kind. The world social system, by the way, we do not have to become: it has always existed.

The notion that culture is conditioned by the social system is dangerous on this level of generalization. South African culture is not the culture of any one group of the members of South African society, just like American culture is not the culture of any one group of the members of the social system of the United States. There is no American or South African or European culture per se, while there is a South African, American or European social system. This is how I read Leach (1982:42):

"The issue is of importance for a social anthropologist because there is a common assumption, which is sometimes quite explicit, that the boundaries of cultural units are the subjective counterpart of the objective boundaries of 'societies'."

Societies are socially stratified - and especially such societies as the South African or United States society - and "each stratum in the system is marked by its own distinctive cultural attributes" (Leach 1982:43). One should treat everybody in a social system in the same way, then: analytically on the same level. But one should also realize that this one social system is having very different meanings to the cultural groups of every relatively lower level. It might prove to be difficult to study a society or a social system that is made up of groups of "Western" and "non-Western" groups with "Western" concepts and to treat all of these groups "in the same way". To study a social system with concepts that do not make cultural sense in that society might bring faulty results. Anthropology being a "Western" science, its results must be presented in "Western" concepts, but they may have

to be gathered in "translation". The "'emic' institutional division" (Otto 1992b:274) has to be taken as the point of departure. And that is where the people cannot be studied in the same cultural way.

I would just like to state that different cultures are in no way implying different roles in a social system, nor are roles somehow accorded to groups in relation to their culture - that is a political process of dominance. But we have to respect in every way that we are all "alike in some respects and unlike in others," even though according to our political situation we might chose to emphasize the one or the other aspect, as Gluckman is doing.

4. FORTES

"What Radcliffe-Brown did, with that inimitable lucidity and precision for which comparison with the literary habits of present-day social scientists make us ever grateful, was to distinguish between the search for (unverifiable) historical and evolutionary origins - the preoccupation of ethnology - and the study of the (verifiable) laws of custom and social organization - the province of social anthropology" (Fortes 1970:262).

Fortes knows that data can be interpreted in different ways, and he does not say that his, or Radcliffe-Brown's way is the only possible one. Like Gluckman, social anthropologists saw "culture" as that which is the difference between varieties of sociological relations in different societies. In a social anthropologist's view, these differences are unverifiable, however. Verifiable are only the laws of the sociological relations of these societies, because they are directly comparable. Fortes (1970:274) makes the point that "most American and some Continental anthropologists" and certainly Malinowski think that "'social structure' is merely an aspect of the all-inclusive phenomenon of 'culture'." Social anthropology, on the other hand, is more modest:

"It requires us to renounce such grandiose aims and to accept the inevitability of a plurality of frames of reference for the study of society. It may well be that the concept of 'culture' [...] identifies one such frame of reference. It is certain that Radcliffe-Brown's concept of social structure defines a specific frame of analysis which is not the same as that intended by Dr Murdock and other American writers when they speak of 'culture'."

What Fortes is proposing, then, like Gluckman, is to disconnect the study of social structure from that of its frame of reference. The frame of reference is important for the laws of society, but there can be no study of the diverse frames of references of different social structures: this would not be verifiable. We just have to accept the inevitability of their diverseness.

4.1 Analysis and Cultural Historicity

"We can, with Radcliffe-Brown, fix our attention primarily on the social relations projected in custom, or we can follow Malinowski and give precedence to the personal and collective ends subserved by social relations and custom, or we can deny any analytical distinctions between custom and social relations and regard everything as 'culture' in the manner of Tylor, Frazer, Boas, Kroeber, et al." (Fortes 1969:61).

It is obvious which way Fortes thought to be the best. He chose Radcliffe-Brown's, not the least

because he, too, was convinced that anthropology was to be as close to natural science as possible. Like Gluckman, Fortes saw anthropology as a generalizing science, looking at one society at a time. The method of anthropology was not to be description, but analysis.

"The essence of description is that observations are grouped together in accordance with their actual relationships and contexts of time and place" (Fortes 1970:131).

This approach "is that of the natural historian," because, although some generalizations may be made, for instance about marriage as a rite de passage, "it still follows the sequence and concomitance of things as they actually happen."

"The analytical method is to break up the empirical sequence and concomitance of custom and social relations and group the isolates so obtained in categories of general import" (Fortes 1970:132).

These isolates "must have meaning in terms of the descriptive reality of social life," and they must form a theoretical system. The isolates, then, are isolated from their historical and cultural frame of reference and put into another frame of reference, that of a general theory of social relations. All isolates have to fit in the same, general theory, which means that these isolates are not only isolated from their cultural frame of reference: they are stripped of any cultural differences. And if they still do not really quite match, then they will have to be made to match:

"our isolates must form a theoretical system because we have to define them in relation to one another" (Fortes 1970:133).

But not only the more or less comparable isolates have to match one single category, but all categories of isolates have to fit a general system.

"Furthermore, our isolates must pass the fundamental test of a good theory, which is that it makes possible generalizations that bring together and explain empirical observations not previously seen to be related to one another" (Fortes 1970:133).

If the generalizations still make sense when compared to reality, I would like to add. Even though the distinction between social laws and their frame of reference is only analytical, at first, there evolves the consequence that in order for social structures to be verifiable, the differences of their references has to be denied. Verification is presupposing a single truth. And not for nothing is the Tallensi expression for truth "a thing of itself" (Fortes 1983:396).

4.1.1 Maps

If abstracted isolates have to be verifiable, they cease to be "words in that language which describes how scientists arrange data" (Bateson 1958:281). They become real. The map becomes the territory, which then serves for further maps. But we have to keep in mind that the map is not the territory, even though in looking at a good map, I can to a certain extent imagine the territory if I know how to read a map. This is where I do not follow Jackson (1998:35), who says that modern maps are "dissociated from practice, disembodied and static," and prefers a tour. Within the known limits of maps, by looking at one, I can interpret myself into the territory. This is, obviously, a different, more vague, less detailed territory than that which I experience directly on a tour. But standing in the territory on a tour, the only way to know what is behind the next mountains or beyond the lake, to know where the river flows to and where it comes from, to know where I am in a scale beyond the actually experienced horizon is a map and to be able to read it. A map is also not the territory

because it is synchronic. To really make the abstracted territory come alive, we need several maps over the years. This is the only way to see changes without experiencing them. And as La Barre (1989:ix) says:

"But to know only one's own tribe is to be a primitive, and to know only one's own generation is mentally to remain always a child. We all need perspective in historic time and in ethnic space in order to assess, indeed even to sense, the naïve quiddity of our own day. Imprisonment in the contemporary is the worst of all intellectual tyrannies."

I do not think that maps "ceased to be places of sensible activity and human journeying" (Jackson 1998:35). A map enables me to travel on and in it, and even though that is not the same as to travel on and in the territory, it might be the only chance to sense that territory. Maps give perspective in time and space and thus break the imprisonment in the contemporary. A good map-reader knows that she is looking at signs, abstractions, generalizations. A good map shows all the important features and leaves room enough for educated guesses of interpretation. Fortes map, however, to me, is not giving enough context to enable imagining the territory. It is a crude road map, not showing the rivers, forests, railways, mountains, houses, and small ways. Neither does it depict the roads to scale, as they are the only features shown.

Abu-Lughod (1993:18) says that, "Although intended as analytical categories, these terms [generalizations] can, however, have the unfortunate effect of creating a mechanistic view of society". They can, yes; and that is why we should not forget how generalizations should be used. But we need both, tours and maps. Only taking tours leaves us in the contemporary, only looking at maps leaves us in the abstract. As Jackson (1998:35) is reformulating Bateson:

"Anthropology has always tended to drift into the kind of abstractions and reifications that might define and justify its identity as a social science. Terms such as society, habitus, and culture can all too easily obscure the lifeworlds they are supposed to cover, and we must continually remind ourselves that social life is lived at the interface of self and other despite the fact that anonymous conceptual and material objects are sedimented there. If we are not to eclipse the interpersonal and intersubjective lifeworlds that we enter and struggle to understand as ethnographers, we must resist fetishizing the vocabularies that we have evolved to define our goals, explicate our methods, and theorize our findings."

To understand that everybody lives at the interface of self and other, of territory and map, is to be an anthropologist.

4.1.2 Frames of Reference

For social laws to be scientifically comparable, they have to be classified according to one standard, for example that of structure or function. They have to be of their own. That is true for every comparison, including one of cultures. But by consciously ignoring the frame of reference of a given object of study, one is ignoring important information on that object itself. How can one find the function of a social institution without knowing how and why it evolved, for example? Every social institution is rooted in history and a historical frame of reference, and in order to discern its function, I contend it is impossible not to look at that frame of reference, and imperative to know why that is the way it is.

"In order to understand the contemporary configuration of institutional spheres I have to

study the history of Baluan society. The spheres of gavman and lotu have their origin in colonial history and the sphere of kastam assumed its shape and content only in articulation with the two other spheres" (Otto 1992b:274).

Just to accept a plurality of frames of references is not enough. To give an example (that by the way is in its argumentation very close to Strathern's argument about not being interested in the 1860's):

"Indeed, what should be understood by the invention of ethnicity is not that such affiliations did not exist prior to colonial rule but simply that they were reconstructed during that period according to the vagaries of the interaction between colonial rule and African accommodation. What matters historically, then, is not so much the colonial roots of today's ethnic groups but the deeper processes by which their sedimentation took place, from pre-colonial times to the present, so that, for example, it is more important to understand how the present-day ethnicity of Hutu or Kikuyu evolved over time than it is to demonstrate that these ethnic groups were 'created' during the colonial period" (Chabal & Daloz 1999:57).

I agree with the authors except for their conclusion. I would point out with Otto that it is impossible to understand the deeper processes of sedimentation without knowing the frame of reference - the colonial situation, in this case. It is not more important to understand the evolving of ethnicity over time than to know that it is rooted in the colonial period, because one cannot understand the evolving of ethnicity without knowing how it started. Neither of the two is more important. The frame of reference is basic to everything else, even though it is by far not the answer in itself.

Having said this, I also have to say that I absolutely agree with Fortes (1970:275) when he details his method:

"Instead of lumping together all the customs and beliefs found in a given 'culture' to which it seems fitting to give the label of magical, and similarly with other so-called categories of ritual beliefs and practices, the procedure is to compare all the different contexts and occasions in which a defined symbol appears or in which diverse symbolic ideas and actions are associated together."

But by doing so, I think, the diversity of frames of references is not just accepted - it is studied. Fortes is not arguing against the study of the cultural context. He just maintains that its results cannot be verified and therefore are not useful, even though they would be.

"We are still left with such problems as why the persons upon whom food taboos become incumbent differ from one social situation to another in the same society; and we still have no answer to the comparative problem of food taboos occurring in societies with widely diverse child-rearing customs. This is a simple, perhaps trivial illustration. It serves to make the point, though, that we must accept the inevitability of a plurality of frames of analysis and conceptual systems, at any rate for a considerable time to come, in the study of human society" (Fortes 1970:277).

I guess it would be unfair to Radcliffe-Brown, Gluckman and Fortes not to mention that their historical context was one of looking for verifiable sciences. Their practical work shows that social structure is influenced by its frame of reference, just as it influences that frame of reference. But in their theories, they apparently could not desert the idea of generalized verifiable social laws. Their frame of reference was different from, say, Radin's, and although in their practice they found about the same facts, the interpretation was different, so that the same reality had a different function and

structure according to the relative frame of reference. Different things could or could not be called into question. For Fortes, the scientific approach of social anthropology was not to be questioned, even if it could not explain everything (yet).

"The analytical concepts and methods I have illustrated by this brief account of Ashanti marriage customs and institutions are common currency in social anthropology today. They have been most successfully used in the study of social and political organization, economic institutions, and law. The next step must be to find out how we can use them in the study of those more complex and baffling aspects of culture, religion and mythology, art and music, technical knowledge, medicine and rudimentary science" (Fortes 1970:146).

The gap between the social anthropologists' natural science theory and their anthropological knowledge is shown perfectly by Fortes (1983:392):

"One of the great mistakes that has been made in the history of anthropology is the funny idea that we have got to do so-called comparisons. You do not do comparisons. Natural scientists do not do comparisons, they do experiments. And we at least know enough now to know that we recognize ourselves in every human society."

How, then, if not by comparison, do we know "that every human society, never mind where it is, never mind how peculiar it is, is a paradigm for all human society" (Fortes 1983:392)?

4.2 Identity - Individual and Person

Fortes saw that Radcliffe-Brown's division between individual and person, necessary to the postulation of social laws and a social science as strict and generalizing as natural science, brought about some problems. There had to be some connection between individuals, as individual organisms, and persons, as the sum of social relations; some middle ground was missing, the space where there could be individual persons. Identity is both, individual and social:

"What it [a Tallensi Destiny story] implies is that a man is a person - is himself, as distinct from others - knows himself to be that person and shows himself to be that person in his work, as Tallensi would say" (Fortes 1983:390).

A person, in the Radcliffe-Brownian sense, may it be recalled, is not somebody, as distinct from others, but only somebody, as distinct from others in his social relations.

The problem might become clearer not by explanation but by example. Consider the way in which Buber (in Kirschenbaum & Henderson 1989:63) uses "individual" and "person":

"An individual is just a certain uniqueness of a human being. [...] This is what Jung calls individuation. He may become more and more an individual without making him more and more human. I have a lot of examples of man having become very very individual, very distinct of others, very developed in their such-and-such-ness without being at all what I would like to call a man. Individual is just this uniqueness, being able to be developed so and so. But a person, I would say, is an individual living really with the world. [...] I do not say only with man, because sometimes we meet the world in other shapes than in that of man."

Here, individual and person differ on another level: both have social relations, but these differ in kind. An individual can live in the world; what distinguishes individual and person is whether they

live with the world. In fact, neither are they only social relations. They are relations with the world, in any form the world takes. These are ecological relations.

For Radcliffe-Brown, an individual is only an organism, something, as distinct from something else, while being "somebody" already implies social relations for Buber, me, probably Radcliffe-Brown, and apparently for Fortes. But being "somebody" also implies a certain individuality. And this, exactly, is the problem for social anthropologists.

"My problem then is this. It seems that, from a comparative point of view, identity, which is thought of as experience of the self, cannot adequately be experienced without being 'objectified' or put out into social space, either in the form of products of my body ('natural products') or of my labour, skill, etc. ('cultural products') and with this is associated a drive to so express identity, i.e. in 'identifying myself' with anything I produce" (Fortes 1983:391).

4.2.1 Fortes, Spinoza, and Identity

Fortes (1983:394,395) recounts the story of how, at 17, he told his grandfather that he had read Spinoza, and that Spinoza, being of Jewish faith himself, said that the ceremonial demands required of Jews were just nonsense. His grandfather asked him how, if he would not follow the demands, he would know that he was a Jew.

"Now, that was a fascinating question. How does one know one is a Jew, or anything? One can only know it, obviously, by showing it in some way; to sit back in your armchair and know gets you nowhere; it is meaningless. So if you want to know who you are, you have got to show it, and anthropologists know that one way of showing it is by performing a ritual or ceremony."

This, apart from adding another piece to the theory of ritual, is a misunderstanding, I think. Spinoza was talking about knowing oneself who one is. Fortes and his grandfather are talking about letting know who one is, the need to signal identity. While Spinoza's identity is resting in its own knowledge, Fortes' identity is in need of constant (re-)affirmation, is in fact not knowing, but on the way to that knowledge. I hold that every person knows many things about her identity without having to show them. These are the identities that are not put into question by others or oneself. The need to show identities only arises if I, by myself or by others, am made to feel the need to (re-)assure myself (and others) of these identities. And if I feel the need to assure myself of something, that means that I am or others are not sure of it. The need to ritually convince myself or others of an identity arises when there might be doubts about this identity. If there are no doubts, there is no need for it.

Fortes is right in a way: as human beings are social, one has to belong to some groups and in order to belong to a group, some loyalties have to be shown from time to time in rituals. If I do not feel this need, or comply with it, I am an individual in Buber's sense: I do not live with the world. The intervals between the rituals, however, can be very long, indeed - in the extreme, there has to be no reassurance of this identity. It has to be kept in mind that everybody has a variety of identities. If one already knows what one identity of oneself is, and keeps going on knowing without a doubt, one can sit back in one's armchair and know it, and it is not meaningless. It might be meaningless towards the outside, but not for oneself, because one's identity is never meaningless to oneself. This

is what Spinoza is talking about, an identity for oneself; what Fortes is talking about is an identity for others. And most identities are, of course, a mix.

Fortes' approach allows him to see everything as an identity marker. If he says that one function of taboos is that of an identity marker, I can agree with him:

"Whatever other meaning taboos have - logically, cognitively, emotionally, affectively and morally - a taboo is a way of constantly showing who I am, what I am, in relation to others" (Fortes 1983:401).

And the same goes for other ritual rules:

"if you are a Tallensi, you show by your observance of certain ritual rules exactly who you are in terms of a kind of genealogical structure, a kind of political order, a kind of social order" (Fortes 1983:395).

But there is, I think, a difference between behavior according to rules and everyday behavior.

This is exactly Douglas' (1983) model of the freedom of choice, of cultural choices as choices of social loyalties, but without the choice. According to Fortes (1983:401), there is no choice in "simple" societies. He departs not from the socially bare individual, but from the person. In Douglas' as well as in Fortes' model, however, the fact that I have a beard, the way I marry my wife, or eat my food, everything I do, in fact, is a social identity marker:

"If you are a Tallensi, you show it in your clothes, you show it in your behaviour, and so on" (Fortes 1983:395).

Now, I do not doubt that one can see that somebody is Tallensi, Swiss, or Chinese in the way somebody is behaving, shaving, and clothed. What I doubt is that everyday culture is the product of the intent to show one's identity. I do not show the fact that I am Tallensi in my behavior, but my behavior is such that somebody else might conclude that I am Tallensi. It is the active, purposeful showing of my identity in every action that I do. If I walk into a restaurant and seat myself, it is clear that I am probably not American, but I do not do it to show that I am Swiss. I do it because I am Swiss and used to doing it that way. If some Tallensi wrap their babies in sheepskin, while others wrap them in goatskin, of course they comment on that, but in my eyes that does not necessarily mean that they "make these differences" (Fortes 1983:395), even though they of course know that they do it differently. The fact that the majority of a social group is behaving in a certain way makes it possible to (ritually) act in such a way in order to emphasize this identity, if that is desirable. But not every action that is different is meant to show this difference.

To contend this, of course, is however only consequential if you say that culture is but an actualization of social relations.

4.3 Change

Speaking of Gluckman, I wondered how somebody with a synchronic approach could focus on the study of change. Fortes, with his theory of generalizing isolates, has about the same approach as Gluckman:

"The most promising tendency in social anthropology today lies in the development of analytical methods and isolates within the framework of the functionalist hypothesis that the customs and institutions of any people make up a system of interdependent parts and

elements, which work together to maintain the system in a steady state and have value for the realization of legitimate social and personal goals" (Fortes 1970:132).

Yet, both are interested in culture change, especially that brought about by "modern", "complex" societies that are contacting "simple" societies. Gluckman studies South Africa, while Fortes looks at the situation in Ghana, the former Gold Coast. In their studies of social change, they are not looking for isolates of any kind, but are looking at the concrete situations. This is understandable, as "there is no way for human beings to forge a valid identity outside of a particular historical situation" (Bock 1988:132).

4.3.1 Choice

Their distinguishing of simple from modern societies, however, also leaves them a backdoor for maintaining implicitly that simple societies, at least, are not really changing of their own, are stable if they are healthy. Change from inside the society is implicitly denied by denying a choice to the members of simple societies (Fortes 1983:401). Leach (in Fortes 1969:288) says that,

"In all viable systems there must be an area where the individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his own advantage."

While Fortes at first seems to agree with that, he then turns the argument around and says that choice is a matter of degree, and that,

"it sometimes seems that what looks like a choice can be as plausibly regarded as a response to inescapable limitations" (Fortes 1969:288).

Change, then, in accordance with Radcliffe-Brown, comes from the outside. As I have pointed out in the discussion of Radcliffe-Brown, there may be severe limitations on choice. But, as Jackson (1998:29,30) says, even if there is really no choice left, if the limitations leave no space for alternatives, humans still contend to have or have had a choice.

"Choosing, or imagining that we choose, our lives, is such an imperative aspect of our humanity that even in the face of absolute loss of freedom we will often act as though the situation were still in our hands, that our actions might make a difference, that it is possible to think our way free of the chains that bind us" (Jackson 1998:29).

Choice is the ability, or the illusion of that ability, to project the consequences of different actions into the future and then chose the one that we hope will lead us to the desired result. All choice is limited by cultural values, and all choice can be said to be but a response to inescapable limitations. Gluckman, according to Mair (1965:247) said "that people's behaviour is a response to the situation in which they find themselves." But apparently humans need to have the illusion to be able to chose. So, either one discards choice at all, in all situations and all societies, or one accepts choice generally. Because cultural values, morals, judgements rely essentially on the thought of choice, and because I think that culture "exists," I need the illusion of having choice.

If a person is defined only by social relations, however, abstracted from values, morals, and judgements, if a person is defined by natural scientific rules and orders, and is acultural and amoral, then choice is a concept that is not necessary. This might seem to be a useful analytical view for a natural science of man, but as soon as one looks at the relation between this map and the territory, one sees that its usefulness is very limited, indeed.

It is interesting, however, that Fortes (1983:401) is conceding choice to the "more complex,"

"modern" societies. Here, apparently, culture is an influence, or maybe their rules are just so complex that they cannot be described in a natural scientific way, so that choice had to be relied upon as a sort of a black box.

4.3.2 Analysis of Change

"Culture contact is a dynamic process and not a mechanical pitch-forking of elements of culture, like bundles of hay, from one culture to another. It is a process of the same order as other processes of social interaction, both in the literate societies of Europe, America, and Asia, and in the pre-literate societies of other parts of the world. It is going on all the time both in those parts of Africa which have been familiar with the white man for centuries, and in those which have but yesterday been drawn into his orbit of attention" (Fortes 1936:26).

Thus, the kind of culture change that is interesting to Fortes is the one between traditional and modern societies, the one where traditional societies are changed. He is not so much interested in looking at how the modern societies are changed by that contact, or how traditional societies in contact change.

In order to change, there has to be choice, even in traditional society, especially because, "Individuals and communities react under contact; and not customs" (Fortes 1936:26). Individuals and step out of the traditional social structure and into new ones. This is not done as a mass movement, but by every person to himself, as,

"Individual differences in intelligence, in temperament, and in personality are as obvious behind the common patterns of behaviour in a preliterate African society as among ourselves and condition the response of an individual to missionary teaching" (Fortes 1936:34).

This sounds very different from Fortes theoretical approach.

During culture change, obviously, societies are in a Radcliffe-Brownian state of struggling towards a new social harmony. They are split. "Until the whole community becomes christianized, rival definitions of social situations exist side by side and may lead to conflict" (Fortes 1936:35). Conflict is obvious in political dissension, family discord and moral disorganization (Fortes 1936:49,50). This state can practically go on for quite a time, although I doubt that theoretically Fortes could have looked at it as more than an intermediate stage, a period of transformation with the defined goal of social unity. It is interesting that Fortes speaks of "culture change" and not of "society change." It might have something to do with the idea that a socially split society really is no society.

As culture change is brought about by individuals, Fortes takes on a rather Radinian approach to study it: he studies individual case histories. This, of course, gives him no verifiable generalizations, and he regards his data only "as working hypotheses to be checked by further research" (Fortes 1936:43). This research, however, would have to be done in the same way, and Fortes has no choice but to do something he calls "generalizing approximately":

"Just as it is, therefore, impossible to isolate this contact influence for study in the field by any special methods, so it is impossible to abstract it for description apart from the situational context in which it is disclosed. Generalizing approximately, however, one

might say that contact influence enters as a coefficient of personal conduct and of institutional process in respect to such factors as their variability, elasticity, tempo, and inevitability; as a modifier, as it were, of the categoric imperative in social relations" (Fortes 1936:47).

This is a brave effort to come up with a social law, anyway, but in vain as one notices if one looks at what, in fact, this law says. It is also the counterpoint to Fortes' own theory of analysis by abstraction of isolates.

5. AN EXCURSION INTO HISTORY

Fortes (1936:24) does not want to become a "social historian registering the end result of a period of contact, and contrasting them with an hypothetical, uncontaminated tribal life." He sees severe limitations in a "retrospective approach which treats the present state of affairs as an accomplished fact standing in contrast to a hypothetical 'untouched' tribal culture" (Fortes 1936:53).

So do I, because there are no "untouched" cultures. But, as I have explained above, I think that it is necessary to have a retrospective approach instead of only trying to discover the structure and functions of contemporaneous culture. As Wagner (1936:317) says:

"An analysis dealing merely with the phase of the process in evidence at the time of investigation, which disregarded the basis from which it started and the variety of causes that set it in motion and still keep it going, would be suspended in the air."

By departing from case histories, Fortes' approximate generalization is of course not suspended in the air. But he theoretically doubts the value of history in the study of traditional societies.

"This is not rejecting history as a source of sociological data. Verifiable history, documenting the whole period of change, is indispensable to the student of social change. But history of the 'before the deluge' kind does not, to my mind, illuminate the real problem, of which the problems raised by culture contact are but a part, namely, what are the causes of social change? [...] Bearing this in mind, I have argued that the emphasis in current research should be placed upon investigation of the dynamics of culture contact as this is actually observable in the field" (Fortes 1936:53).

Fortes' problem, I think, stems from his concept of history. He takes it directly from Radcliffe-Brown, and it lies at the root of the difference between cultural and social anthropology if I follow Leach. It is the different conception of history that lets social anthropologists conceive of "the failure of the anthropologist's historical endeavour" (Leach 1982:21).

This concept of history that, unfortunately, still survives in quite a few historians' views, sees history as a verifiable science, a looking for the truth. From this perspective, documents, historical "sources," are the truth against which historical analysis can be verified. The historical truth of sources cannot be doubted. This is probably a fetishization of the written word.

Radcliffe-Brown (1965:86) explains the necessary failure of the "historical endeavour" by "anthropologists who consider it their principal task to write the history of peoples or institutions that have no history." Lienhardt (1956:105) puts emphasis on the point that they do not have our conception of history, but he still thinks of history as being factual and true:

"We soon find that they do nothing of the sort, and that, as with our fiction, it is irrelevant

to them whether the stories are objectively true, as we might say. They lack our tradition of the critical discernment of fact from fiction in the scientific study of history, and they do not, therefore, equate the true with the factual, as we are inclined to do."

History relies on facts, on "direct evidence":

"History shows us how certain events or changes in the past have led to certain other events or conditions, and thus reveals human life in a particular region of the world as a chain of connected happenings. But it can do this only when there is direct evidence for both the preceding and succeeding events or conditions and also some actual evidence of their interconnection" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:50).

If one wants to know something about how an aspect of the social system in England came into being, then one turns to "the history books, which will give you the details of the growth of the system." However,

"For the tribes with which we are here concerned the materials for such a history are entirely lacking" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965:85).

They have no history, and we therefore cannot study it and are left with studying the contemporary structure and functions of their society. Lansing (1991:8) sees social theory primarily concerned with the historical forces that produce "the" (European) modern, secular and rational social universe. He goes on to say that,

"Jürgen Habermas puts it neatly: in premodern societies, the 'lifeworld ... is coextensive with society.' Where social formations are entirely embedded in the lifeworld, there is no historical subject. Ethnographic analysis of societies classed as premodern, therefore, have little bearing on mainstream social theory because by definition they lie outside the historical process."

Something of this argument can be found in Lopasic (in Ingold 1996:237,238): People in illiterate societies have no clear-cut conception of the divide between past and present, because they can move from one time to another in rituals, dreams "and many other ways." If people from illiterate societies move to literate societies,

"then of course the situation changes: they become aware that there is something called the reconstruction of the past, which is a very difficult problem. To do it properly, one has to go through a series of documents which must be verified, clarified, compared and contrasted, and so on, in the course of which a certain past is reconstructed."

This is not only to suggest that people in illiterate societies live without temporal conception, but also that they cannot consciously reconstruct their past. I contest both ideas vigorously. In a Iatmul initiation ceremony, for example, the creation of the world is brought to the present, but clearly next to it, not into it. The present and the past are simultaneous, but not mixed. Nobody would confuse them. And the past in its present simultaneity must constantly be reconstructed from the different and sometimes divergent pasts of the clans to be the certain past of the society. The documents, names here, have to be verified, clarified, compared and contrasted.

Historical documents are just like myths; they only make sense, and are "true", if they are constantly interpreted from the present.

"Und man war - aus europäischer Sicht verständlich - schnell mit der unnötig polarisierenden Fragestellung zur Hand, ob ein als vergangenes Geschehen mitgeteiltes Ereignis tatsächlich Geschichte im europäischen Sinne oder 'nur' etwas anderes sei, für das

man zwar nicht den Begriff der Unwahrheit oder den der freien Erfindung und auch nur selten den der Dichtung oder Erdichtung benutzte, wohl aber in kaum weniger unangemessener Weise den des Mythos. Das Abwegige dabei ist natürlich nicht dieser Begriff selbst [...]. Abwegig ist vielmehr die Abwertung, die der Mythos durch die genannte Gegenüberstellung erfährt: die - zu Recht - ungläubige Haltung des Kulturfremden erscheint - zu Unrecht - als objektive Beurteilung, der Mythos also als beliebige Erzählung, weil er mit dem nicht relativierten, stillschweigend als objektiv verstandenen und von keinem Leser in dieser Hinsicht angezweifelten europäischen Geschichtsbegriff als dessen Gegenteil auf eine Ebene gestellt wird" (Schuster 1988b:60).

I am seeing myth and historical document on one level, too, but in order to do that, one has to dispute the objectiveness of any "history". History is necessarily objectively true for one's temporal and spatial contemporaries, but this is only a relative objectivity: it is not valid for anybody else, and it is of course an abstracted truth. If we do not see this, we rest imprisoned in the contemporary, subjected to "the worst of all intellectual tyrannies" (La Barre 1989:ix).

5.1.1 Logos, Mythos and History

Mair (1965:230,231) says that,

"we must always remember the essential difference between religious and scientific thinking, that the religious model is 'sacred' and not to be questioned, while the scientist test the appropriateness of his model to the facts that he observes, and changes it if it proves not to fit them."

This would, of course, explain the difference between "scientific" history (logos) and "religious" myths (mythos). But I strongly contend that traditional, non-literate religions test and change their theses just as science does. The unquestioning in both cases lies in the sacredness of the model of thinking, itself, one level up.

Wassmann (1984:117,118), following the historian Plumb, distinguishes "history" and "past". "History" tries to objectively describe what really happened in the past. "Past", the conception of the past, can include historical facts, but is legitimizing the social, political, moral and religious order. The factual time (in the "historic", "scientific" sense of that term) is of little or no importance. Laubscher (1971:15) adds to this that it is also of no importance if myths - the "past" - are believed to be true or not; they are the truth for everybody living in the system. In this context, it is quite obvious why nobody cares to ask "whether the stories are objectively true" (Lienhardt 1956:105): they are true by definition.

Following this, one could indeed speak of unquestioned myths and critically tested history. But what is history if not the legitimization of the present? One just has to look at how the one and objective happenings of the past are depicted in the different "history" of two societies to get examples enough. The official history of any war, for example, differs considerably from one country or society involved to another. Or consider Firth's (1956:12,13) account of different economic histories and different interpretations of the same happenings in land dealings between natives and conquerors. While history pretends to be "anti-ideology" (Wassmann 1984:118), it always is ideology, just like myths. Pretending to possess the sole true interpretation of history is just one consequence of the sad misconception of power for knowledge.

The model of an unquestionable religious conception of the past fits perfectly with a stable, unchanging society, of course. And truly, Olewale (1974:220), for example, says that

"[Our teachers] could explain every natural phenomenon. They knew the myths and legends and taboos. It was a perfect system of education for a static society. But then there were changes and our teachers could no longer explain things. They were at a loss."

But if I look at occurrences such as cargo cults, for example, or other messianistic movements, people were not at a loss for very long. Their conception of the past through myths had always had the ability to adapt to a new present by adapting the past to it. The "radio-towers" that sprouted up in New Guinea at the end of the Second World War are one example of how one could integrate the new occurrences into the changing traditional system. Consider the Paliau movement on Manus, for example, where people began to employ dates, "which made it possible in principle to compare the chronology of events in parallel histories", but were not really concerned whether the dates were "correct". They used the dates in place of, and in the same way as the important events that had measured time traditionally (Otto 1992a:52,53). Factual, "historic" time still was of no importance - in the conception of the past - but one had acknowledged that the people who brought change were obsessed with it and had integrated this concept into one's own system.

The fact that people can change from one temporal domain to another in rituals or dreams, as Lopasic (in Ingold 1996:237) says, and the fact that "historic" time is of no importance in the conception of the past however in no way means that these people had no conception of "historic" time. As Laubscher (1971:16) says, mythical time and actual time are two different things:

"Mythische Zeit und profane Zeit sind zwei nicht vergleichbare Kategorien. Mythische Zeit liegt vor der profanen Zeit: veranschaulicht in den Schöpfungsmythen, nach der profanen Zeit: veranschaulicht und angekündigt in den Endzeitmythen, und unterbricht die profane Zeit immer wieder: in der Gestalt des Kultes."

Hauser-Schäublin (1997), for example, shows that different time conceptions exist next to each other, and I contend that this is not only the case in traditional societies, but just as well in our "modern" society.

5.1.2 Times and Histories

"From a different angle, the philosopher Helmut Plessner argued that the secularization and rationalization of Western society are mirrored in a similar development in the understanding of temporality. Human time is no longer a mythic or sacred time, a time endowed with meaning by the collective destiny of a group (geschick in Heidegger's terminology); Western time has become instead mere duration" (Harkin 1994:196).

This statement is undoubtedly true in some sense. For most people in Western society, time is usually mere duration. But what about the historian who looks at the French Revolution or the first nuclear bomb as the beginnings and actualizations of whole centuries? What about the physicist who counts the milliseconds that a new element is lasting? What about the astronomer who says that she "looks back" millions of years into "history"? These specialists are using the symbolic forms of a "mythic" view of life. Waardenburg (1986:197) says that such a view is expressing certain connections and a coherence of the world that are not possible to express in the scientific view. There is a mythic time in Western society, too, and even in Western science.

And there is not but mythic time in non-Western society. For most people in most societies in most situations, time is mere duration. In all societies, there are but a few experts and specialists who know the connections of time with the world, who are able to interpret the coherence of the world. Most people, even if they take part in rituals and ceremonies, in actualizations of myths, do not know the connections (Waardenburg 1986:189,190). The lifeworld, to say it with Habermas (Lansing 1991:9), is nowhere coextensive with society - or everywhere, depending on one's perspective. Wassmann (1987:552) says of Iatmul initiations:

"Für den nichtinformierten Beobachter spielt sich zwar ein dramatisches, keineswegs aber über seinen aktuellen Ablauf hinausweisendes Schauspiel ab. Erst aus dem Blickwinkel der wissenden alten Männer, der 'alten Krokodile', die alles, was sich ereignet, auf die mythologische Ebene zu transformieren vermögen, enthüllt sich das tatsächliche Geschehen, d.h. seine mythologische Bedeutung."

Historic time, the legitimization of the present, time in the sense of symbolic time and actual time as duration are different categories that are bringing past, present and future to interact in many ways in all societies.

5.1.3 The Natives' Points of View

I do not want to negate all differences between myths, oral history and written history. And neither do I want to say that all history in "traditional" societies comes in the form of myths; there are legends, landscapes, bodies, calendars, paintings, etc. The most important difference is that in literate societies the events in and interpretations of history that are not presently wanted as one's past nevertheless have been written down and can still be rediscovered. However, all societies are censoring certain aspects of history directly by making them disappear and indirectly by just not mentioning or flatly denying them.

In all societies, history, the one (con-)temporary certain past, is a selection and an abstraction of histories, and that is why it has to be constantly renegotiated. Whether there is one "official" version of ancestral wanderings or of the evolution of England's parliamentary system, this version is both an abstraction and real together. It is the natives' point of view. It is to dangerously disregard and confuse levels of abstraction if one says as Obeyesekere (1997:224):

"Even when natives write, there can be no natives' point of view because those native voices are multiple and often disparate and cannot be separated from their own thought and the history of colonization and the influence of Enlightenment ideologies on the modern world."

The fact that there are different societies in this one world, more than the one that there are different cultures, shows that there are natives' points of view. This is one of the virtues of social anthropology. Societies are based on a common ground, a common "official" interpretation of their history, even if there are always disparate voices within the society.

But the natives' point of view cannot be generalized and then used for further generalization as if it was true and real. Both extreme abstractions, the one to the society and the one to the individual are equally bad intellectual tyrannies if taken for real and if applied to each other's level of analysis. Generalizations are possible - and necessary - if one keeps in mind that they are categorizations. And they are only permissible for comparison if they are departing from the same level of analysis,

and if this analysis is sound within the context of the isolates.

If for example Lansing (1991:8) is saying that the Balinese have a "biological view of time, in contrast to an industrial one," this generalization is giving a wrong image. He (Lansing 1991:64) says that,

"Balinese calendars define time not as a linear flow but as a structure composed of many interlocking cycles, based on the rhythms of growth of the natural and social worlds."

But Balinese time conception is not cyclical, and therefore natural, in contrast to Western time conception that is linear, and therefore "industrial." Western time conceptions include many cyclical or circular patterns - the idea of a month, a year, "actual" and ceremonial seasons, etc. And Balinese time conception includes linear ideas - the changing of a landscape, personal histories, etc. Slobodin (1994:144) says that

"Christian cosmology is based upon a linear concept of the passage of time, a progression with no returning in any guise, a movement towards a goal."

The very fact that the Christian calendar is essentially a cyclical calendar, in which the messias is year after year repeating his "taking away the sins of the world" is the counterpoint to this statement. Fortes (1956:85) says that,

"In our culture time is a commodity that must not be wasted. [...] It fits in with our cosmology and with our idea of history as linear development. [...] But many primitive societies have a very different concept of time. They see it as a perpetual cycle of seasons following one another in the same succession."

It is perhaps a consequence of my primary conditioning as a catholic Alemannian peasant, but I think that a lot of people in modern society see time as a perpetual cycle of seasons. Or maybe they are all not part of the modern society. It is, I think, true that ideas about the passage of time are quite different in different cultures. But isolating these ideas from their contexts will give us the impression of cyclical and linear cultures. It is true that industrial time is teleological and linear - capitalist economy is after all defined to indefinite growth and can theoretically not repeat itself. But it is not true that all Western society is industrial. And even industrial time has originally started as a cyclical time: it made exact, repeating cycles of each day and week for the workers. Monthly payments, yearly budgets or five-year plans are other industrial cycles. While it is possible to compare different natives' points of view, even about time, to do them justice requires "more than a glib metaphor such as 'linear' or 'circular'" (Slobodin 1994:145).

6. MAIR

"Less committed anthropologists [than structuralists and Marxists] say that a society could not exist as such unless it had some way of maintaining order among its members, some commonly recognised rules governing the holding and transmission of property and the right to exercise authority, some means of passing on to the next generation its moral values and its accumulated knowledge. This is the point of view from which I am writing. It is 'functionalist' in the sense that one looks in the study of alien societies for their way of meeting these essential needs; they are not the needs that Malinowski enumerated, but they would be recognised as fundamental by a good many students of society, 'primitive'

or 'modern'" (Mair 1974:2).

There is nothing that I could add to this description of anthropology. The crucial point in it, as I tried to show above, is in the "their way," which for me implies that the essential needs might also be their needs and necessitate a look at their culture before looking at their society in order to compare it with others. In the view of what I have said above, I do not think that I have to enumerate reasons for my disputing the statement that, "Sociology, then, is the study of society, and social anthropology is a branch of this" (Mair 1965:1).

I do not dispute that sociology is the study of society. But to study only society does not mean to study man, and if social anthropology is a branch of sociology, it is not anthropology. Society is part of man, but another part is mind, meaning, culture. By laying too much or sole emphasis on society, like Layard (1956:55) one comes to the conclusion that "accepted and conventionalized norm[s] of behaviour towards kinsmen" are what makes man:

"And since these norms are that which distinguishes mankind from beasts, the emotional jungle would be let loose [if one would not adopt them], and that means murder and death."

This is Hobbes without the politics: the norms are what define mankind. I have discussed why men are not bees or ants.

6.1 Aristotle, Plato and the Dialectic of Anthropology

Sociology is the study of society, and psychology is the study of the mind, but anthropos logos is the knowledge of man, and man as zoon politikon is necessarily both, mind in society and society in mind. Or as Fortes (1956:84) says:

"I do not want to labor the point, which is simply this: a hard and fast line cannot be drawn between the inner realm of mind and the outer world of society and custom."

In an Aristotelian, "scientific" view, this is hard to understand, because one thing is either this or the other. This is why it is necessary to isolate abstracts in order to get a scientifically sound theory. In our science, a unit consists of certain, clearly distinguishable and definable smaller units that are not the same. In science, the result of an addition might be something different than just the sum of the parts - a cell is not just the summing up of its biological parts. But the parts, of which each fulfills its specific function, are clearly distinct. One can isolate the parts, then, analyze their functions, and put them back together. Aristotle holds that whenever there are contradictions in thinking, the concepts are wrongly defined (Martin 1969:122). This is science in the Western view. In anthropology, however, if one isolates an analytical part and takes it out of the unit, one holds a whole tail of connected, influencing and influenced other parts. I can isolate a person, but that already implies society, and society already implies persons.

"Whereas we are trained to think scientifically, many primitive peoples are trained to think poetically. Because we are literate, we tend to credit words with exact meanings - dictionary meanings. Our whole education is designed to make language a precise scientific instrument. The ordinary speech of an educated man is expected to conform to the canons of prose rather than of poetry; ambiguity of statement is deplored" (Leach 1956:29).

I hold that the canon of prose does not have to be the canon of dictionary meaning, the canon of

definition. And that science can do - and in fact has always done - with terms that are not objectively definable but only describable: sky, good, human, culture. It suffices to know the meaning of these words; we cannot define them satisfyingly in dictionary fashion. That is only possible with terms that are part of an axiomatic science. As Plato (in Martin 1969:123-127) shows, the One can not be the Many, and the Many not the One, but what is one can also be many; everything is and is not in all ways.

"Aristotle was the first to proclaim the existence and the reality of specific differences, to show that the means was the cause, and that there was no direct passage from one genus to another. Plato had far less sense of this distinction and this hierarchical organization, since for him genera were in a way homogenous and could be reduced to each other by dialectic" (Durkheim & Mauss 1963:5).

Everything that is, as Hegel says, is unity in the dispute of contradictions: identity of identity and non-identity. This, in my view, is and must be the dialectic of anthropology. But it has nothing to do with Leach's "poetry" against "science" or with a "fundamental confusion of all images and ideas" (Durkheim & Mauss 1963:5). Aristotle's mistake and even more so that of those who followed him since then is exactly to proclaim the reality of specific differences, to definitely posit the categorization of these differences as ontologically real.

Sahlins (1994:30,31) shows how British social anthropology was forced to go deeper and deeper into the Aristotelian classification to arrive at categories that could be isolated with some sense. This, obviously, is a reflection of the scientific search for the smallest unit. By getting down to the smallest unit, one can then explain all bigger ones, because they are made up of them. The structure of the smallest unit is also the structure of all the units made of it. Plato's strategy is the one of finding the biggest unit. The Good is the biggest unit because everything participates in it; it is the highest idea. On the other hand, it is also the smallest unit, as it is the One, and everything else is participating in it and is not one within itself. A society has to have "some way of maintaining order among its members". But by classifying the society into its smallest functional units, we might lose the perspective from where we could see this order, because the society is only partly made up of cells. A person - an individual in the social anthropologists' terms - is in its biological structure made up of cells. A society is made up of individuals - biologically. But it is also made up of persons, and a person is more than biology, as I have discussed above. The structure of society cannot be the structure of the individual, and neither can the structure of the person. There is a new structure, a new order, and we need a new perspective to see this order.

"He remembered telling Haskie Jim about modern astronomy and the cosmic mechanics of gravity and velocity. Leaphorn had said something like 'Even so, you couldn't expect to find anything except randomness in the way the rain fell.' And Haskie Jim had watched the rain awhile, silently. And then he had said, and Joe Leaphorn still remembered not just the words but the old man's face when he said them: 'I think from where we stand the rain seems random. If we could stand somewhere else, we would see the order in it'" (Hillerman 1992:256,257).

It is, I contend, very important to know what a raindrop is to know what rain is. It is important to know the functions and structures in a society that resemble those of the individual. The notion of the butterfly in Peking conjuring up a rainstorm in New York sounds nicely, but without knowing the butterfly, the rainstorm and the system that connects them it is nonsense. Knowing the parts,

some parts, however, is not the same as seeing the pattern, if the pattern is made up of those parts and something else, namely mind(s). To see the order of rain, the patterns of rainfall, the order of a society, one has to get a different perspective, both bigger and smaller together: the biggest because it lets all the pieces fall into place, and at the same time the smallest because it is but one thought. One has to understand. This is the difference between doxa and episteme. I hope it is clear that understanding is not itself a classification - defining a society or a culture by this or that category - and neither is it a word or words. I doubt if we can ever reach this goal, but that does not mean we should not try.

"Because this universe was most fundamentally characterized by incomprehensibility, it was beyond humanity's power ever to know it fully, and perhaps it was this futility that made the quest for understanding of the wakan the driving force of Lakota culture" (DeMallie 1987:32).

This, of course, means expressively trying to go beyond the "naïvety" (Devons & Gluckman 1964b) without which no knowledge can be gathered. Trying to reach episteme means to break through the "words in that language which describes how scientists arrange data" and find the "real" words, "the real world, the real place" (Amiotte 1987:89) - always keeping in mind that breaking through something means to first find and know that.

"He remembered it had been spring then, which is a wonderful time in Montana, and the breeze blowing down from the pine trees carried a fresh smell of melting snow and thawing earth, and they were all walking down the road, four abreast, when one of those raggedy nondescript dogs that call Indian reservations home came onto the road and walked pleasantly in front of them. They followed the dog silently for a while. Then LaVerne asked John, 'What kind of dog is that?' John thought about it and said, 'That's a good dog'" (Pirsig 1991:465).

6.2 Social Change

In the days of "economic stagnation and an age when the indefinite continuance of colonial rule was taken for granted", Mair (1969:2) says, the emphasis of the policy of colonial powers and thus anthropology lay on "the integration of innovation onto an existing framework". A slow change was aimed for, with the preservation of traditional culture wherever possible. Anthropologists were the custodians of culture: they, "with their greater tolerance of customs 'repugnant to humanity and natural justice', were more conservative" than the policymakers, engineers, missionaries, etc. who benefited from their research.

"In these circumstances there could be no application of anthropology in any meaningful sense; anthropologists were asserting principles that the 'practical man' was committed to reject" (Mair 1969:2).

While I do not see that too much has changed in this respect, Mair (1969:2,3) sees the change in a particular change of emphasis of anthropological research; applied anthropology came into being with "the kind of anthropology that is directed towards the study of change rather than the reconstruction of a hypothetical untouched society." Conjectural history had to be banned in order for anthropology to make sense. Applied anthropology is the study of social change and vice versa.

And as "the study of social change is inseparable from any anthropological work at the present time" (Mair 1969:3), anthropology is applied as such. I absolutely agree with that.

Anthropology, then, is the study of social change, or the study of social change at least plays a prominent role in anthropology. Not any change is in the spotlight of interest, however:

"To any British anthropologist social change is structural change" (Mair 1969:3).

The emphasis on change, however, leads to an emphasis on the individual. Social change is "the cumulative effect of individual responses to new situations" (Mair 1969:4), is "primarily a matter of extending the range of options" (Mair 1969:6). In this idea I see the notion of an evolutionary history of societies with ever greater ranges of options. This does not mean that Mair saw social structure as becoming weaker and weaker, I think, but that social structure is becoming more and more complex, offering ever more social roles to choose from, an argument not unlike Fortes' (1983:401).

Mair (1969:122,123) explicitly confronts criticism of social anthropology's supposed determinism; people like Firth, who say that the view of social structure as the configuration of role relationships is too deterministic. This is close to my argument about choice. Mair says that the existence of roles in a society is not deterministic because it leaves the interpretation of these roles open. Thus, we would have fixed roles, but no fixed interpretations. She then goes on to say that, "It is true that in societies which are not changing at a rapid rate [...] social mobility is little" (Mair 1969:123). This is obviously true. But Mair continues in saying that,

"to talk of the role appropriate to a given status [does not imply] that each man's destiny is fixed from the outset" (Mair 1969:123).

Men, even in small-scale, slow-changing societies have a "freedom of manoeuvre":

"Leaving aside the possibility of the reinterpretation of roles on a scale that would change the whole social structure, the roles themselves allow the players a freedom of choice which they use to further their personal interests" (Mair 1969:123).

While Fortes (1983:401) is denying choice to members of simple societies, Mair (1969:123) is pointing out that,

"In any society some relationships are given and some are chosen."

Still, in societies of simple technology choices are much more limited. In western societies, limits are set by circumstances, not by rules. But the rules in all societies can be broken: there is the choice whom to marry, where to live, or whose client one wants to become (Mair 1969:123,124).

"[D]etails of behaviour are not so rigidly fixed and [...] there are major fields of activity in which choice has always been open" (Mair 1969:127).

Mair does not see choice as "a response to inescapable limitations" (Fortes 1969:288): the limitations are there, but not inescapable. The limitations are on one part culture:

"[E]very society has its recognized ways of expressing the relationships in which the roles must be played. [...] These are cultural differences. Culture is the way in which social relationships are expressed and symbolized" (Mair 1965:10).

Culture is still the actualization of the social structure, then. On another part, the limitations are the scale of the society and its technical possibilities (Mair 1969:128). And this is why there are fewer choices in "traditional" societies than in western societies, and why Mair is still very close to Fortes, Radcliffe-Brown and Gluckman in her limitation of choices and in her view of history.

6.2.1 Durkheim and Mauss

This perspective on choices in and history of "traditional" societies that apparently is a tendency in British social anthropology might be influenced by Durkheim. He, with Mauss, says that,

"there are innumerable societies whose entire natural history lies in etiological tales, all their speculation about vegetable and animal species in metamorphoses, all scientific conjecture in divinatory cycles, magical circles and squares" (Durkheim & Mauss 1963:5).

In the society of *Naturvölker*, they (Durkheim & Mauss 1963:6) say, "the individual loses his personality," and there is "complete indifferentiation between sign and thing, name and person, places and inhabitants."

"Animals, people, and inanimate objects were originally almost always conceived as standing in relations of the most perfect identity to each other" (Durkheim & Mauss 1963:7).

While Durkheim and Mauss (1963:77-81) state that even "primitive classifications" are ordering things in groups that stand "in fixed relationships to each other and together form a single whole," they (1963:7) also say that,

"It is obvious what a great difference there is between these rudimentary distinctions and groupings and what truly constitutes a classification."

I do not want to say that British social anthropologists followed Durkheim and Mauss in their opinions on the classificatory ability of non-Aristotelian societies, but their perspective on science followed this perspective. Science produces Aristotelian classifications, not a general confusion, and if anthropology and history are sciences, they must follow the way. The unscientific speculations and etiological tales can and must be interpreted in a scientific way, then, to make sense.

It is also no wonder that Radcliffe-Brown, Gluckman, and Fortes almost deny personal choice in "simple" societies, while it is granted to the "more complex," "modern" societies. There is, to speak with Durkheim and Mauss, no individual in a *Naturvolk*: it is one with society and nature. While the early British social anthropologists see things a lot different in practice, their theoretical thinking is still influenced by this.

Lienhardt (1956:98) disputes Durkheim and Mauss's theory:

"We are inclined, moreover, to translate this equivalence of men and lions into a simile or a metaphor, or to look round for reasons why such a 'confusion', as we may be tempted to put it, could have occurred. But the people themselves do not confuse men with beasts; they merely do not distinguish all men from all beasts in the same way as we do. They seem to suggest that an animal nature, and a man's nature, may be co-present in the same being."

But he (Lienhardt 1956:98-107) still holds on to the idea that traditional people are lacking interest in objective knowledge and that they are "men no less rational, if less rationalizing, than ourselves." Following Durkheim and Mauss's (1963:8) statement that "[e]very classification implies a hierarchical order," there is a definite hierarchical evolutionary aspect in British social anthropology. The most developed and best way of rationalizing, the objective way, still is the Aristotelian.

6.3 History

Mair is not discarding non-literate history as being no history at all, and she does not just take literate history for the truth.

"We should do well to be more critical than we are when we do use documentary sources, and we must not ignore the traditions of their own past history that non-literate people preserve, but learn to weigh critically their value as evidence. We should realize that the simple societies did not remain wholly unchanged in the times before anthropologists could observe them; and we should learn to differentiate between history, myth, legend, anecdote and folklore" (Mair 1965:41).

Still, the last statement has a tendency to declare western history for history and everything else for non-history. Although all societies are changing in her view, Mair also has a slight leaning towards the theory that non-literate societies are changing much slower than literate, modern societies, which leads to a disregard of traditional structures and mechanisms of change. All through history, Mair (1969:126) says, mankind has increased its knowledge and the control of nature by application of that knowledge.

"By means of a series of discoveries and inventions we have moved from the curse imposed on Adam - 'in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread' - to the affluent society.

At least, part of the world has: the part in which social relationships have been reorganized in response to technical inventions, so as to exploit the possibilities of these to the full."

The bigger the society and the greater its technical knowledge - and its control of nature - the more choices there are, then. And:

"New choices can be made when new opportunities are offered" (Mair 1965:242).

As new opportunities are connected to technical advance, it is not surprising that Mair, like Gluckman and Fortes focuses on social change in small-scale societies in contact with western societies. Mair (1969:129) says that,

"in the old days we did not call it social change; we just called it history and took it for granted. [...] [S]ocial change is the sum total of actions by people, and [...] at any given time some people are clinging to the manner of life in which they grew up while others are seizing the new opportunities that are offered them by the creation of new situations."

But she thinks that one can neglect the creation of new situations by the people themselves:

"[W]hat has happened to the small-scale societies in the last hundred years is an immense widening of the field of opportunity. We do not have to consider in this context the causes of what the pundits call endogenous change, because it is a historical fact that the contemporary changes that we see in these societies have been stimulated from outside" (Mair 1969:128).

If choice is connected with opportunity, and opportunity with technical innovation to control nature, it is clear that modern societies would have more choice than traditional ones, because in Mair's (1974:2,3) view, traditional "people have to adapt themselves to their environment rather than master it." Where there is only adaptation, there is no choice. I have already discussed adaptation, human reason and choice.

Mair's reflection on the evolution from the curse on Adam to the affluent society and her connecting the technical knowledge, the control of nature and new opportunities that enable more

choices make me think of Sahlin's (1968) "original affluent society." The affluent society, according to him, is the one that limits its goals; modern society is not affluent because "every purchase is simultaneously a deprivation." Hunter-gatherers, by adapting their societies to nature and its limitations, might master nature better than an industrial society that is pursuing infinite goals in a limited world with limited means. Dumond (1980:41,42), comparing Eskimo and Athapaskan strategies of survival, makes another point. He distinguishes technology and technique; while the Eskimo relied upon technology and used an array of specialized tools, the Athapaskans relied upon technique. The Eskimo needed more transport capacity and were less mobile than the Athapaskans, who only had to carry their knowledge in their heads. Less technology thus does not mean less efficiency; more adaptation does not mean less mastering. To see history as an escape from the curse on Adam to the industrial society is a rather narrow view that has a tendency to deny history to those societies that do not or did not rely on technological means to master nature or choose to master nature by adapting to it. This, by the way, is a process that goes both ways: humans are adapting to nature, but at the same time, they are adapting nature to their needs. Or, to put it correctly, as humans are a part of nature, they are mastering survival in nature, and are adapting to the other parts of nature. Every society has a history of refining its strategies of survival in, with and against nature, whether that resulted in a technological complex or a technical knowledge. New challenges and new opportunities have been offered in multitudes along every way and have led to cultural and social changes.

Schapera, Mair (1975:7) says, "is an anthropologist who knows how to use history, aware that it is not necessary to know the whole past in order to understand any aspect of the present; [...] indefatigable in pursuing the historical records that bear on his problems." It is not necessary to know everything to solve a specific problem. History cannot be disregarded, but it is important to keep in mind what exactly one is studying, and for Mair (1965:41) that is the development of social systems.

"[T]ough once we begin working among peoples with a long recorded history, it would be equally absurd to accept the view in which the claims of history are popularly expressed, that the past as such must be known in order to understand the present. Obviously we must know what questions to ask of documents and of history books, as we must know what questions to ask of living informants."

I would like to interpret this as saying that there is not one past, but that the relevant past can be found by asking the right questions. However, I do not think Mair meant it just like this. I think she meant that the social anthropologist needs to distill that out of history which tells about the social system and can disregard the rest (which she then knows, anyway, because she has to know it in order to be able to disregard it).

I do agree that the drive to know the whole past and everything about the whole past is of no use. This is not because it would be useless, even if one knew it; it is because it is impossible to know the whole past. So we determine the problem and begin to look only at the history that stands in any connection to the problem. Somebody studying the evolution of a political system is most often looking at the previous local systems and the ones the innovators mention as their models. This is usually enough for a good study. But are not the exceptionally good studies the ones that show how a painting by Rafael influenced a decision of a colonial administrator in Macao? In a world where a butterfly in Peking can cause a storm in New York, should we not know everything

about history? We cannot, however. The crux is, then, how wide the questions should be cast.

6.4 Culture, Social System and the huthuga

I would like to emphasize that I think that Mair, just like Fortes, Gluckman and Radcliffe-Brown cast a very wide net of questions. But still they hold fast to the idea that the inquiry into social systems could be done without the inquiry of cultural symbols, just like others hold fast to the idea that the study of cultural symbols is relieving them of the study of social systems.

"As Nadel put it, culture and society are two dimensions of all social life. Nevertheless, Radcliffe-Brown said truly that the two definitions of anthropology, as concerned with culture and with society (or social structure) lead to two different kinds of study, between which it is hardly possible to obtain agreement in the formulation of problems" (Mair 1965:10).

DeMallie (1988:19) says that,

"Anthropology provides [...] a means for understanding contemporary life by analytical separation of cultural symbol and social pattern, understanding the independence and separate histories of each."

It is, I think, important that cultural symbol and social pattern can only be separated analytically, and that even though they have separate histories, they are interwoven in the contemporary. The social pattern is expressed by cultural symbols and cultural symbols are expressed by social patterns, even if their histories were, are and will be different and separate. Anthropology, in my view, is not two different studies, but one with different emphases according to different interests, and yet always leading back to the one problem, the understanding of mankind in different situations.

I would like to show what I think the specific limitation to questions of the social or the cultural system can teach and what not. My "contemporary," synchronic example is the traditional Omaha huthuga, the camp circle (Dorsey 1884; Müller 1970:130-139). It really was an actualization of their culture: their clans were placed along the circle according to their ritual functions. The clans were divided into exogamous moieties that opposed each other in ballgames; the Sky People occupied the northern half circle, the Earth People the southern one. Each clan was in possession or responsible of a ritual. The Earth People were arranged in such a way that the easternmost one was responsible for the first ritual of the year, New Year, the westernmost one for the last one. The westernmost of the Sky People clans was responsible for the mythical creation, then the rituals went eastwards. Both halves thus represented two lived cosmogonies. Life was represented by the camp circle; it started in the east and went clockwise to the west, where the mythical realm began again at the beginning at came to an end in the east. The cardinal directions were not defined according to the compass: the direction of travel defined the east - west line. Left was south and right was north.

To understand the huthuga, I contend, it is necessary to look into both, social system and cultural symbols. A strictly social study might show the functions of the clans and the moieties and will interpret the camp circle as the actualization of social structure according to ritual function of the social units. It might also show that dualistic organization was widespread among the

neighboring peoples, especially Dhegiha, though in different arrangements. But it must leave quite a few questions open, such as why was the huthuga a circle, why was it oriented along an east-west axis that was imagined but real in its actualization, what was the significance of the clans' and the moieties' names, what was the significance of the ballgames, etc. A symbolic study might come up with the huthuga being an actualization of the Omaha belief system, showing that it was a symbol of a dwelling, and that the clockwise oriented circle represents the way of life. But it might not come up with the function of this arrangement, that the Sky People were sanctioning the decisions and the Earth People were putting them into practice, for example.

Social structure and cultural symbol have separate histories, but to understand the contemporary, in which both are interwoven, we have to look at both.

7. IDENTITY, CULTURE, SOCIETY

Epstein (1978:112), though still putting an emphasis on social structure, when discussing the problem of ethnicity and the "primordialist" and "circumstantialist" perspectives on identity, comes to the conclusion that it may be useful and valid to stress one or the other aspect:

"But if we are to achieve a deeper understanding of many of the problems that ethnicity poses, we shall need to develop methods and approaches more fine-grained than those adopted hitherto which takes full account of the interplay of the external and the internal, the objective and the subjective, and the sociological and psychological elements which are always present in the formation of ethnic identity."

But Epstein is also not strictly distinguishing between the Radcliffe-Brownian (1965:186,187) historical and functional studies, anymore. "Mixing the two subjects together and confusing them" is not a disadvantage to him, I think. How else could he (Epstein 1988:22) write that, "Matupit was one of the Tolai communities in which social change had proceeded furthest"? To know which one is the society in which social change has proceeded furthest, one has to know how the societies looked and functioned when still in a "traditional" state. This is only possible by conjectural history. Here, by the way, comes again the notion that social change is only change from the traditional system to the Western one. Social change in this view had proceeded furthest on the Gazelle peninsula, of course, in regard to the rest of Papua New Guinea - in other views, social change proceeds everywhere, and no society can proceed further in it than others.

Epstein (1978:92) emphasizes that "a preoccupation with 'custom' or 'culture' leads to a blindness to social structural factors." That is just as true as the opposite statement: a preoccupation with social structure leads to blindness to culture. The difficulty is to see both aspects. Culture, and consequentially relativism, might look like a hindrance to science. If everything is relative, one cannot compare, anymore. But that is an extreme version of cultural relativism; not everything is relative. One can draw comparisons in social sciences, provided one draws them between similar units; similar meaning not only a similarity of the compared phenomena, but also a similarity of their relative socio-cultural contexts (Waardenburg 1986:118). The difference between anthropology and natural sciences is that there are no laws in anthropology. It is not an axiomatic science, but rests on people with reasons of their own and of their society and culture; these are two distinct, sometimes contradictory sources of thinking and acting.

It is of course an old dream of the scientific age to find the laws that rule societies and history, to develop something akin to what Asimov calls "psychohistory":

"Psychohistory had been the development of mental science, the mathematicization thereof, rather, which had finally succeeded. Through the development of the mathematics necessary to understand the facts of neural physiology and the electrochemistry of the nervous system, which themselves had to be, had to be, traced down to nuclear forces, it first became possible to truly develop psychology. And through the generalization of psychological knowledge from the individual to the group, sociology was also mathematicized" (Asimov 1982:418).

To begin at the level of the atom out of which everything is built, that is the scientific way: isolating ever smaller abstracts and building laws out of them. But even in Asimov's science fiction, psychohistory can only predict probabilities and fails when individuals such as *The Mule* begin to act and influence society on their own.

Radcliffe-Brown, in my view, departed from an already "mathematicized" sociology, and political science and sociology are still so to a large extent. This has something to do with the expectations our society has for a science. Knowledge is only useful if it can predict consequences. To learn from history means to learn from the past for the future in this way: to draw general conclusions about consequences from past situations. But there are no experiments in history, which could be repeated with different givens to draw scientific conclusions: history is an ongoing experiment, and mankind, at least, is not in control of it. This is the most valuable knowledge to learn from history.

"Für den gesunden Sinn der Griechen war Geschichte begrenzt auf politisches Geschehen, also hauptsächlich auf den Bericht von wechsellvollen Herrschaftsverhältnissen. Die Kunde (Historie) von solchen einmalig zufallenden Veränderungen überliessen die griechischen Philosophen den politischen Historikern, weil es vom Zufälligen, Wechselnden und Veränderlichen nur Bericht, aber kein eigentliches Wissen geben kann, welches wissen will, wie etwas immer und notwendig oder doch meistens ist" (Löwith 1969:112).

Anthropology is not teaching general laws. It teaches the relativity of absolute knowledge. It must have as its goal the philosophical - scientific - knowing of "how things are always and necessarily, or at least mostly and generally", but at the same time know that this goal cannot be reached: our perspective is too limited to see the pattern in the seemingly "accidental, changing and changeable". Our perspective is too human; we cannot go beyond culture and society and look back to detect the patterns; we can only barely go beyond one culture and one society and look back without alienating ourselves from it, and humanity.

I think I should repeat that absolute relativism is not, in my view, useful. But it can be avoided without falling into the trap of absolutism. König (1969:93) says that already the Greeks knew that peoples had gods whose skin color was the same as that of the relative people's - and even though that has probably changed with colonialism and globalization, his argument is still valuable as an example. He thinks that to go beyond the relativism of gods' colors to the one abstract god means to go beyond colors and isolate a colorless god. The analysis of social phenomena existing in multiple different forms, as for example the family, often ends in colorless schemes and models without content. Sociology, König (1969:93,94) thinks, is faced with the dilemma of either producing limited statements about unique cultures or eluding into general but empty

generalizations. But to go beyond the colors of gods, to take his example, does not mean, in my view, to abstract a colorless god; it means to abstract a god that embodies all the colors. The generalizations are not empty; they are incorporating all the differences and contradictions of the unique, limited absolutisms. They are, in fact, the ideological materialization of these contradictions in one place.

The sociologist's, and, in this case, the anthropologist's, knowledge is always questioned because her perspective is not universal but always limited while he acknowledges and feels the necessity to frame social phenomena universally (König 1969:99). But while König thinks this to be the sociologist's insurmountable weakness, I find it to be the anthropologist's unsurpassable strength.

Anthropology, as I see it, necessarily encompasses the study of both, society and culture, because while culture is partly the actualization of society, society is also partly the actualization of culture, and both are separate in their histories. Because I see human groups self-defined by meaning more than by laws or rules, or rather as I see laws and rules as actualizations of meanings, I tend to subsume society under culture, however. This is not to say that society and culture are congruent.

In a statement that could be used as the definition of the difference between classic social and cultural anthropology, Durkheim and Mauss (1963:82) think that,

"Far from it being the case, as Frazer seems to think, that the social relations of men are based on logical relations between things, in reality it is the former which have provided the prototype for the latter. According to him, men were divided into clans by a pre-existing classification of things; but quite on the contrary, they classified things because they were divided by clans."

I agree with Frazer, Durkheim and Mauss that social relations most often follow the same classifications as the relations with the non-human environment, but I do not see any necessity - or possibility - to posit a primacy of either over the other. As I tend to view social relations as a part of the wider net of relations, the social environment as but one part of the total environment, and not in any ways qualitatively different, I would rather speak of cultural than of social anthropology. If one regards all environmental relations as being social, however, I have no objection to this term. This perspective might even be better suited to see environmental relations with some societies. I doubt, however, that the British social anthropologists thought of social relations in such a way.

Is identity a cultural or a social phenomenon? I think it is necessarily both. And just as there are multiple changing levels of culture defining identity, there are also multiple changing levels of society. There are "one's people" and "one's culture", and both are constantly changing depending on the position one manoeuvres "one's person" into, relative to both and their opposites.

Anthropology can and must come up with general statements and theories, and these are not meaningless or empty; but it must always know and point to the limitations and problems of these statements. In a world that is more and more governed by simplifications, it is very important (but not popular) to state that things are not that simple. The fact that anthropology can come up with examples for almost any perspective and theory is not making it a useless discipline: on the contrary. Tolerance, as Bateson (1994) says, is not based on a world without borders or differences, but on the differentiated analysis of all the relevant facts. In order to get to a world of tolerance, we then must critically look at simplified statements and point to their errors. Simplified statements are most often those that have no internal contradictions, no "on one hand - but on the other". This does

not mean to become paralyzed by relativity. If one embraces all opinions, one does not have an opinion of one's own, and if one does not have an opinion, one cannot be tolerant. Decisions and standpoints can and must be taken; but they should not be taken for granted.

Anthropology, the bridge between psychology and sociology, culture and society, reality and projection, dysfunction and eufunction, mind and nature, cannot and does not have to dissolve their contradictions, or rather paradoxes, in an Aristotelian way. It must and can just bear them all as one, "a necessary unit", to paraphrase Bateson.

Life is a constant paradox, and to eliminate all paradoxes from a theory, to smoothen it out, is to make it lifeless, to alienate it in a Marxist sense, to take humanness away from it.

On all levels, everything is distinct and the same. The question is how.

One day a man approached Ikkyu and asked: "Master, will you please write for me some maxims of the highest wisdom?"

Ikkyu took his brush and wrote: "Attention."

"Is that all?" asked the man.

Ikkyu then wrote: "Attention. Attention."

"Well," said the man, "I really do not see too much depth in what you have written."

Then Ikkyu wrote the same word three times: "Attention. Attention. Attention."

Half-angered, the man demanded: "What does that word 'Attention' mean, anyway?"

Ikkyu gently responded: "Attention means attention."

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