

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction to Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of human differences, cultural and biological, in the context of human nature. Anthropologists identify and compare behaviour of a particular group against the full range of human behaviour. Such comparison should uncover principles that apply to all human communities.

Third World Focus was the distinguishing characteristics of this discipline. Until after the Second World-War, anthropology focused almost exclusively on non-western or 'tribal people'. For a long time, anthropologists assumed that non-European cultures were different enough to justify a different social science discipline to study them. This assumption seems less persuasive today.

How are different people in different places *similar and different*, both biologically and behaviorally? Spotting cultural patterns requires *fresh, neutral eyes*.

Anthropology as a practice of Theory [Michael Herzfield]

Anthropology : Critique of Commonsense

Social/cultural anthropology is 'the study of common sense' - this statement is misleading. It is neither common to all cultures nor is sensible from the perspective of anyone outside its particular culture.

How do we know that human being have really landed on the moon? We are usually convinced of it. How do we know that its not wrong? So, why not study science as an ethnographic object.

Anthropology is a discipline that has developed an ironic sense of its own social and cultural context. BUT well equipped to challenge the separation of :

- modernity from tradition; and
- rationality from superstition

-> because anthropology played the influential role in creation of this antimony.

Anthropology entails the unveiling of intimate practices ranging from 'that's always been our custom' to the evocation of science and logic by every modern political elite.

Anthropology provides unique critical and empirical space to examine the universalistic claims of common sense-including the common sense of western social theory. So anthropology seeks :

- field research
- intimate perspective
- Active involvement - participant observer will not suffice

A Sense of Application

Anthropology might provocatively be defined as the comparative study of common sense. It can be both *applied and academic*. It can explore into the universal logic of globalization (applied). In the same time it can historize and contextualize the conventional wisdoms (academic).

From common sense to multiple senses

Anthropology can be considered as practicing theory to expanded senses.

- focus on visualism only.
- mental-material debate
- we are what we study

Anthropology is the critical study of common sense. More intensive focus of anthropology becomes especially valuable. Intimacy of ethnographic research is an important aspect anthropology.

Core sub-fields of Anthropology

<i>Biology, Forensic, Human Anatomy, Ecology</i>	Prehistoric, Historical, Biblical, Urban, Industrial
PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY	ARCHAEOLOGY
LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY	CULTURAL ANTHRO./ ETHNOLOGY
<i>Structural Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Morphology, Comparative</i>	<i>Ecological, Demographic, Social, Political,</i>

<i>Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics</i>	<i>Psychological, Medical</i>
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Anthropological Perspectives

Several theories have been propounded in order to study the human differences and explain the aspects of cultures. For example: Culture Theories, Structural Functionalism, Moral economics, Interpretivism, Ecological approach, Marxism, Socio-biology etc. This creates a variety of lenses for anthropologists. Their explanations vary depending on which theoretical approach they use. Such approach may focus:

- on symbols and ideology
- on economy and environment
- on biology etc.

Due to heterogeneity of the theories, it is almost impossible to construct a single perspective that encompasses the variety of anthropological viewpoints. However certain major themes can be synthesized from the existing perspectives to Anthropology as follow:

- Focus on holism (study of 'all' contexts of human behaviour)
- Culture as a central concept
- Focus on ethnographical method
- Thick description (layers of cultural symbols)
- Comparative Perspective (cultures)
- Cultural relativism
- Reflexivity (self-criticism > change)
- Emic and Etic Approach (object + Process / internal and external view)
- Micro-Macro nexus
- Pro-people paradigm (people, their problems and solutions)

According to Peacock, there are broadly two elements of theoretical perspectives :

1. Study of human behavior (being free from cultural influence)
2. Holistic view

ENLIGHTENMENT & POSITIVISM

Antiquity, the period of classical Greece and Rome nurtured 3 systems of thought : Theology, Humanism and Science. The systems can be defined in contrast with one another in terms of God, People and Nature:

- Theology > People and nature known through God (epic poems of Homer)
- Humanism > God and Nature known through people (travelogues of Herodotus)
- Science > God and People known through Nature. (Democritus and early philosophers)

Enlightenment, sometimes referred to as the age of reason, refers to the florescence of rational intellectual activity in 18th century Europe.

Thinkers : Newton, Locke etc. pioneered modern 'social science'. Greatest social theoretical frameworks of the enlightenment incorporated two important 18th century concepts :

- a. Progress
- b. Culture

Europeans regarded themselves superior from the primitive aboriginal contemporaries. Universal historians of enlightenment period divided human history into 3 stages and attempted to explain how one stage led progressively to the another. In 19th century, this practice was known as 'comparative method' :

Gambattista view : 1. god 2. Heroes 3. Men

Turgot and Robertson :

1. Hunting [Savegery]
2. Pastoralism [Barbarism]
3. Farming [Civilisation]

Enlightenment's basic supposition was that: *Human progress is achieved by using human reason to solve human problems.* When the French revolution turned out - it signaled end of enlightenment.

Positivism is a theory propounded by French sociologist August Comte. [*The Course of Positive Philosophy*] Comte maintained that human thought progressed through 3 major stages:

1. Theological [phenomena explained in terms of Theological Principles]
2. Metaphysical [phenomena explained in terms of Abstract Principles]
3. Positive [phenomena explained in terms of Phenomena itself]

Newton's law of gravitation represented attainment of positive stage in Natural Science. In social science, positive stage lagged behind :

- Sociology in Middle Ages : Theological [in terms of Christianity]

- Sociology in Enlightenment : Metaphysical [abstract principle of Research Progress]
- Sociology of Comte Age: Positive [Social Phenomenon]

Sociology will be nearer to *Social Physics*. Positivism (with capital 'P') usually refers to his views narrowly constructed. Whereas, positivism (with a small 'p') assumes broader significance that social phenomena should be investigated objectively.

DURKHEIM, WEBER AND MARX IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Karl Marx

Classical Marxism, first proposed by Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, is known as the theory of dialectical materialism. These German sociologists developed this theory in the throes of Industrial Revolution as a means of catching the sources of industrial working class.

Dialectics is a process or form of change that operates throughout human history. Hegel assumed that spirit manifests through a sequence of transformation :

Thesis > Antithesis > Synthesis

Materialism

Hegel was idealist and believed that human consciousness determines human existence. Marx and Engels "stood Hegel on his head" and applied his concept to the material world. Marx believed that human existence determines human consciousness.

Concept of Class Struggle: Humanity has been organized into opposing economic classes with unequal access to the 'means of production' or material resources for making a living. The superordinate ruling class controlled the means of production while other oppressed class was subordinated.

In order to maximize profit, bourgeois capitalist attempted to minimize costs, including cost of labor. Paid less to workers, they could spend less for goods.

Capitalist over production and under-consumption would lead to recession, depression and labor unrest.

Despite the global expansion of capitalism, the labor unrest would weaken it and prime it for collapse. When the means of production were concentrated in the hands of few monopolists, it would be easy for workers to rise up and seize the means of production for themselves. This action would initiate communist revolution.

Influence : Marvin Harris, Louis Althuser, R. Firth, Godelier, Maurice Bloch

Emile Durkheim

Pioneer of Structuralism and Functionalism

By the end of 19th Century, Durkheim moved social science in the direction of epistemology of French rationalism. In 20th century, this led to the anthropological schools of structuralism and functionalism.

Durkheim combined the two logics of Descartes and Comte in a powerful way. Descartes's "logic independent of experience" mutual logic + Comte's "society is more than the sum of individuals" - sui generis (realm onto itself).

- For Durkheim, social regulations and control were subtle and largely unconscious. They were achieved by getting people to participate in activities and beliefs that makes their membership in society important.
- Social institutions are 'collective representative' of 'collective reality' in the 'group mind'.
- With symbols and ceremonies, these institutions create a sense of 'sacred' which allows them to become more powerful social motivators than they were merely 'profane'.

Influence : Marcel Mauss (The Gift), Levi Strauss, Louis Althusser, Michael Foucault

Max Weber

Anthropology is the study of people, but in the 19th century anthropologists did not very often portray people in flesh and blood. Instead they concentrated on human institutions, belief, races, languages...

Contrasted with early intellectual 'giants' such as Darwin, Marx, Durkheim - Weber saw people more than shaped by external forces. Through potentiality

of individuals they could transform the circumstances of their own lives. This potentiality was best expressed in religion.

Weber's theory of religion describes how human labor intensifies and differentiates leading to stratified socioeconomic classes.

Influence : Clifford Geertz, Bourdieu

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF COLONIALISM & CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENTALITY [Peter Pels]

Study of colonialism erases the boundaries between

- anthropology and history/literary studies
- postcolonial present & colonial past

Since 1960s the study of colonialism has increasingly presented a view-point of colonialism as struggle and negotiations. Treating western governmentality as emergent and particular, colonialism is rewriting histories of the present.

Anthropologists mostly think of colonialism in 3 ways :

1. Universal evolutionary progress of modernization
2. Particular strategy of experiment in domination and exploitation
3. Unfinished business of struggle and negotiation

Studying colonialism implies studying anthropology's context, broader field of ethnographic activity that existed before the discipline emerged and will continue influencing in future.

Anthropology, therefore, needs to be conceptualized in terms of governmentality - a set of universalist technologies of domination - a statecraft.

Both Anthropology and Colonialism projected concept of Us and Them - which in practice had to give way to much more complex and particularist negotiation of rule.

Aspects of Colonialism:

- Conquests and expeditions
- Translation, conversion and mission
- settlers, plantation and labor

Like modern anthropology, colonialism tends to bracket out part of the self to know and/or rule the other, or vice versa.

Anthropology of colonialism as anthropology of anthropology

- We are indeed separating ourselves from a phase in which anthropology and colonial rule were part of the same social formation: the world of modernity, development, and the welfare state.

This makes anthropology of colonialism + historiography of the present. After colonialism comes the postmodern age.

Further study is needed:

- Simultaneous emergence of modernity and colonialism in 17th and 18th century
- More ethnographies of de-colonization focusing on the continuity between present and past practices of development, welfare and Good Governance and the way they were constituted by anthropology, economics and political science.

ANTHROPOLOGY'S CONSTRUCTION OF 'OTHER' **The Poetics and Politics of otherness [Trouillot, 1991]**

Trouillot presents a detailed description of events of European history and the effects of empiricism, capitalism and racism on Anthropological theoretic tradition. Several events of 16th and 17th century created the European history. Europe was considered as ideal place and 'other' than Europe was considered as Second class and savage.

Euro-centric Ideas were developed through renaissance. Enlightenment through colonialism > Americal Slavery. Those different from western values were considered as second or third class. Along with renaissance, Europe was christianed and followed Greek civilization.

The Symbolic Organization of Savage Slot :

	<u>The West</u>	<u>The Rest</u>	
The observer Culture/ History	<u>ORDER</u>	<u>SAVAGE</u> Noble, Barbarism, Wise, Evil	The other Nature Stories
	<u>State - Justice</u>	<u>Utopia</u> Paradisiac, Communist, Innocent, Illusionary	
Here	<u>Thought Reason</u>		Elsewh e

Visible or not, naïve or cynical, the west was always first !!

Symbolic representation of West and the Third World on **Us and Them.**
Symbolic product of 'Others' was the main focus of Anthropology.

AMERICAN SCHOOL AND SCIENTIFIC RACISM

[Adam Dewbury]

Dewbury gives an account of 19th century America :

- wracked by war and suffering
- intellectual world was trubulent
- battle of ideas challenged the Jeffersonian ideal of equality

Social, political and intellectual climate of 19th century America - a fertile ground for the debate.

- 19th century scholars used the term anthropology - very little and mostly used ethnology.
- Early anthropologists were mostly scientific professionals such as medicine, zoology, biology etc.
 - they drew core concept of their own discipline to craft their versions of anthropology
- Three physicians (Morton, Agasiz and Nott) with strong professional interest in natural science formed a small scientiests' group called

American School. It was a group of strong and influential proponent of **Polygenism**.

Polygenism puts the idea that human racial variation is a result of separate creation. Races were created separate - not separated !!

The work of American School lent support of the institution of slavery and the massive racism in America. *The inferiority is biologically determined!!* Dewbury shows how the personal prejudices of 3 influential scientists engendered a particularly racist early American Anthropology.

Creationism

- idea of *scala naturae* (chain of being)
- All life on earth occupied a fixed predetermined point in a grand linear organization.
- Human being are placed in the chain of being by the hand of God. Species are fixed and immutable entities.
- complex relationship of internal parts of organism made significant change impossible.

Essentialism

Everything in nature was a derivation of an ideal form/essence - that existed outside of an unaffected by material world.

Scientific theories also supported the idea of black inferiority.

Morton, a physician - member of American School, was the first American to attempt a racial ranking using cranial measurement - skull's size. May be influence of anti-black prejudice, but his results were accepted by scientific, medical and academic community. Morton concludes that *physical or organic characters which distinguish several races of men, are as old as the oldest records of our species.*

Agassiz, a zoologist - member of American School, generalized the world-view as follows :

1. A divine creator is responsible for all life on earth
2. Natural world followed a predetermined plan towards a goal
3. Organisms have a natural rank in nature's order.
4. Man occupies the top position in the natural order.

Agassiz claims that the earth may be divided into *zoological provinces*, each encompassing a range of land and sea environments. The inhabitants of each province are uniquely suited to live there and can't naturally survive outside of it.

- Principal races of men are distributed amongst the zoological provinces in the same manner as the animals. The difference between them must also be the result of their separate creation.
- In one of his works, Agassiz offends that human variation should be examined solely as scientific question and without reference to politics or religion.

Josiah Nott, a physician - member of American School, was the most passionate defender of polygenism.

- a physician
- compares black and white female to illustrate great difference between the Swan vs Goose /horse vs ass / apple vs pear..
- Dangerous Anthropologist > due to this reputation as physician
- Defending slavery through science !!

Summary

- Work of American school was an important part of the genesis of biological anthropology
- Dissolution of American School and arrival of Darwin in the last decade of 19th century.
- Positive contribution of American School are overshadowed by the lasting negative impact of their core ideal - racial domination and inferiority.