Human Diversity and Human Nature:
The Life and Times of a False Dichotomy

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> I affirm, that if we consult History, both Ancient and Modern, and take a view of what has past in the World, we shall find that Human Nature since the fall of *Adam* has always been the same, and that the Strength and Frailties of it have ever been conspicuous in one part of thew Globe or another, without any regard to Ages, Climate or Religion . . . . As Human nature always continues the same, as it has been for so many thousand years, so we have no great Reason to suspect a future Change in it, while the World endures.
>
> (Bernard Mandeville)[1]

> It is very strange how certain modes of thought become general, and can, for some length of time, be maintained, and for long be regarded as something actually existing in human nature.
>
> (Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe)[2]

At first glance, it seems like a straightforward proposition. Anthropology is the study of human nature in light of human variation. Specifically, anthropologists focus on *group* variation, which, depending on the subfield of anthropology, entails some combination of biological, cultural or social differentiation. But what exactly does it mean to study human nature in light of human variation? A moment's reflection suggests that defining human nature in light of human variation appears to be more a paradox than a simple definition. It defines not so much a discipline as a dilemma, one that has been at the heart of anthropology since its inception. The study of human diversity and the study of human nature feel like quite different—even contrary—enterprises.

In this essay, I will argue that the apparent dilemma of reconciling human nature with human variability is in part a legacy of a long history of theologically motivated speculations about the relationship between human variation and human nature. Conventional wisdom within anthropology sees modern anthropology as an enlightenment reaction against traditional Christian views of the origin and nature of humanity. But there is an important sense in which the view of human nature that sees human variability as accidental rather than essential to human nature is an unexpected common ground for theological and scientific speculation. A deeply entrenched set of cultural and religious presuppositions linking human nature with universal rather than with variable aspects of humanity has had a significant impact on how modern scientists (including many anthropologists) have viewed being human.

Christian theologians, philosophers and evolutionary biologists have shared the assumption that "human nature" was sufficiently defined by human universals. So accounting for a distinctively *human nature* implied getting beneath or beyond *human variation* rather than embracing it. Throughout the history of our young discipline, anthropologists have grappled— not always successfully— with the implications of human variation for an understanding of human nature by throwing themselves headlong into the study of human diversity.

Though it appears that describing human diversity and accounting for human nature are inherently antithetical enterprises, I think this view is short sighted. In this spirit, I intend to propose a number of non-trivial generalizations about human nature that emerge not from bypassing human diversity but, on the contrary, by taking seriously the fact of cultural diversity and variability in human life. To get a sense of the scope of our problem, we begin by tracing some of the early attempts among Western thinkers to reconcile human diversity with human nature. Then we turn to specifically anthropological versions of the dilemma of how to reconcile

increasing evidence of the cultural and social diversity of our species with what became known as "the doctrine of psychic unity." Finally, I propose a number of ways to move beyond the false dichotomies that have for centuries driven a wedge between conceptions of the human which focus on human nature and those which emphasize human diversity.

Polygenesis and Monogenesis as Competing Views of Human Origins

Until the fifteenth century, Western social thought was theological in character. Human nature was the assumed to be the product of God's will and all social phenomena were understood as reflections of a divinely inspired master plan.[3] Early Christian thinkers used Genesis as evidence to support the older Aristotelian assumption of the inherent incommensurability of distinct species. "God . . ." wrote Paul of Tarsus, in *Corinthians* "giveth to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same kind of flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds."[4]

While the plan of creation ordained a different flesh (or, in Aristotle's terms, a different soul) for each creature, the special creation of man and woman meant at once that humans would be understood as both distinct from every other species, and as a single species with a common nature. Humans were assumed to be one in creation and one in Christ. The differences among humans did not escape the notice of these early thinkers. For example, in the seventh century Isadorus of Seville remarked on the differences in temperament among human groups, attributing them, as would continue to be the case for centuries to come, to climatic variation:

> In accordance with diversity of climate, the appearance of men and their color and bodily size vary, and diversities of mind appear. Thence we see that the Romans are dignified, the Greeks unstable, the Africans crafty, the Gauls fierce by nature

> and somewhat headlong in their disposition, which the character of the climates bring about.[5]

This early account of "national character" contains a number of assumptions which were characteristic of early accounts of human variation. First, there is no clear distinction made among physical, mental and cultural characteristics. Each dimension of human nature is assumed to reflect the others by a kind of analogical reasoning. Secondly, groups are reduced to a single cluster of essential characteristics. And thirdly, these characteristics, though traced ultimately to accidents of climate, are essentialized and held to define each group's "nature."

So relatively early on in Christian thought the theological doctrine of special creation came into conflict with observed differences of the "nature" of human communities. Human nature as described in *Genesis* was at risk in these ethnological characterizations, and theologians knew it. As early as the Fifth Century, St. Augustine felt compelled in his *Civitate Dei* to defend the doctrine of *monogenesis*, a single creation (and nature) for all humans:

> . . . whoever is anywhere born a man, that is a rational, mortal animal, no matter what unusual appearance he presents in color, movement, sound, nor how peculiar he is in some power, part, or quality of his nature, no Christian can doubt that he springs from the one protoplast. . . if they are human, they are descended from Adam. [6]

That observed variations among human groups might challenge the monogenist orthodoxy, and suggest the possibility of multiple creations and a plurality of human natures was a heretical notion to Christian thinkers.

Yet by the beginning of the second millennium, the known world to Christians was rapidly expanding, thanks to the Crusades which began in 1097. The Crusades brought Christians into direct and significant contact with cultures of the Near East and North Africa. The important divide in human nature became not culture or race *per se* but rather the gulf between the Christian and the infidel. While not challenging the monogenist orthodoxy of the Church, Christian thinkers used *Genesis* as a textual framework for a kind of second-order polygenist position, a division of human nature into diametrically opposed moral subspecies. Biblical history could thus provide a charter for both the original unity of the human species and its subsequent dissolution into a plurality of distinct populations.

The contest between monogenesis and polygenesis as ways of understanding human origins would continue well into the nineteenth century, persisting in different guises because it addressed some of the most basic and troubling issues about being human. George Stocking put it this way:

> [P]olygenism and monogenism can be regarded as specific expressions of enduring alternative attitudes toward the variety of mankind. Confronted by antipodal man, one could wonder at his fundamental likeness to oneself, or one could gasp at his immediate striking differences one could regard these differences as of degree or kind, as products of changing environment or

immutable heredity, as dynamic or static, as relative or absolute, as inconsequential or hierarchical.[7]

The debate between polygenism and monogenism has proven to be a resilient discourse in the West within which issues of human nature and human diversity could be played out in numerous keys. In early Western speculation about human nature, these concepts organized alternative theological positions on how to interpret Genesis. Much later the same debate would reappear, but this time orchestrating conflicting views of human evolution.

Linguistic Diversity and Human Nature: The View from Babel

Many of the early arguments about monogenesis and polygenesis focused on the issue of language. Specifically, the argument pitted those who stressed language as a common and exclusive possession of mankind, and those who saw in language a prime example of human diversity. While the original split between the righteous and the evil required only the history of Adam's sons, the more complex sort of variability suggested by the limitless diversity of human linguistic habits was accounted for by the story of the tower of Babel. The earliest Christian speculations about linguistic diversity relied heavily on an unadorned reading of the Tower of Babel story. But early Renaissance thinkers understood how language was a key to understanding *both* the unity and the diversity of the human.

By the thirteenth century, Dante's ideas about language betrayed a mixture of Biblical orthodoxy and a more modern and complex understanding of the place of language in human life. For Dante, the human was distinguished from both the angel and the animal by the possession of speech, as the natural medium of human reason. Dante proposed that language

both unites and divides the species. By possessing *language*, humans are joined in a community of sensible rationality. As the possessors of *languages*, however, humans are divided from one another and from their maker. The loss of the original Hebrew tongue marked humans as fallen creatures. For Dante, the division of our species by diverse tongues is inherently linked to the division of labor, a state that reflects not the nobility of human work, or the growing complexity of human society, but the arrogance of human pride. The higher an individual's branch of labor the lower the form of language to which he was consigned, and the greater its distance from the original prelapsarian language that unified the species. In this account, the diversification of the human species represents the loss of an original unity and a severing of a direct connection with language of creation.

While Dante's reflections on the Babel story constitute a sophisticated version of an orthodox Christian view of linguistic difference as a sign of man's having fallen away from God, Dante was in fact on the verge of a more modern and empirically informed view of human diversity. In his *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, written in 1304, Dante speculated that the confusion of tongues brought about at the Tower of Babel resulted in humans being "first scattered through all the climes of the world, and the habitable regions and corners of those climes." [8] Stemming from the "avenging confusion" following upon the disaster at Babel, "from one and the same idiom . . . various vernaculars drew their origin."[9] And with the confusion of tongues came a fundamental transformation in human nature. Having lost an original species unity in a direct connection with God, humans became pliant creatures, culture-bearing beings, destined to take on the character of their local habitation. Change and variability in language, dress and manners became the indelible signs of mankind's fallen nature.

Polygenesis: The Radical View of Human Variation

By the sixteenth century writers were becoming less reticent about challenging Church orthodoxy about creation. As travelers' accounts of variations in human appearances and manners proliferated, the idea of a single human creation, and its corollary of a common human nature, were increasingly challenged by Renaissance thinkers. An empiricist skepticism began to shape Renaissance views of human nature.

Michel de Montaigne, well traveled and cosmopolitan, struggled in his *Essaies* to reconcile his belief in a single human creation with his observations of the striking diversity of human thought and practice. Montaigne was not, in fact, a defender of polygenesis. He believed not only in a single human creation, but in what later came to be known as the "psychic unity" of mankind. "[A]ll men," he declared, "are of one species, and are provided more or less with the like tools and instruments for judging and understanding."[10] Yet Montaigne was remarkable for his appreciation of the power of local custom over human life. He betrayed what would certainly have been seen in his day as a striking skepticism, and greeted exotic beliefs and customs with a distinctly modern sense of cultural relativity. "I believe," he wrote in his *Essaies*

> that no fancy, however crazy, can enter into the human imagination, of which we do not find an example in some popular usage, and which consequently is not founded on or supported by our reason . . . ..[11]

For Montaigne, "the effects of custom" shaped not only the external appearance and the manners of humans, but, were most in evidence in "the strange impressions which [custom] makes upon our minds, where she meets less resistance."[12] Human opinions and judgements were, in Montaigne's view almost infinitely variable. While he seems to have shared with his contemporaries a belief in a universal human "reason," Montaigne asserted that the force of

custom upon the mind was so great as to effectively render much of human thought and action impervious to the dictates of reason. Montaigne tended to view human variation in thinking and judgement as the product of climatic and geographical variation rather than of any organic differences among humans. Yet he was a profound skeptic and empiricist in the matter of human nature and human variation and was notably equivocal about the question of whether there was any kind of natural law imminent in the minds and hearts of mankind.

Other thinkers of the age were less equivocal about the unity of the human species, and saw in the growing record of human diversity clear evidence of more than one human creation. Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), contemplating the newly discovered "races" of man, proposed that

> The same God that gives and has given everything, and is known by philosophy, did not allow such forms and so many kinds of people to come from one father but from many, and neither did he order anything unnatural or monstrous, but given all an equal soul, though not similar forms . . . .[13]

Attempting to reconcile the observed diversity of organic creation with a traditional vision of a divine order, William Petty (1623-87) proposed a version of "the great chain of being" idea defined by what he termed "scales of animate being." The order of nature was radically hierarchical, with an upper scale headed by God, and a lower scale of being with humans at its apex. Humans are positioned midway between God and the lower animals. Sharing with the latter basic survival reflexes[14], humans are nonetheless distinct from the rest of creation by virtue of the possession of reason, self-consciousness, speech, curiosity as to causation and the use and enjoyment of sexuality for other than purely procreative purposes.[15]

Petty's fascination with tracing the hierarchical ordering of organic creation in terms of increasing distance from God was carried though into his thinking about group differences within the human species. More clearly than most thinkers of his day, Petty laid out the implications of a polygenist alternative to the orthodox view of human creation when tied to medieval conceptions of a hierarchically ordered cosmos. Petty interpreted all differences among humans as differences of degree. Cultural differences became merged with a conception of racial differences. Group differences among humans were understood as a kind of internal speciation, hierarchically conceived. I quote extensively, and in the original spelling, a remarkable statement of an influential version of a polygenic reading of human nature.

> Of man itself there seems to be severall species. To say nothing of Gyants & Pigmyes or of that sort of small men who have little speech and feed cheifly upon Fish called Uries. For of these sorts of men, I venture to say nothing, but that 'tis very possible there may be Races and generations of such; since wee know that there are men of 7 foot high & others but four foote, that is to say, the one a foote and a half above, & the other a foot and a halfe below the middle stature of mankind which I take to bee 5 foot & a half. I say there may bee Races and generations of such Men, whereof wee know the individualls; as wee see vast differences in the Magnitude of severall other Animalls which bear the same name, —as between the Irish wolf Dogg and the Bullonian Tumbler & the Iceland Shock; [etc.]. . . . And what difference is between the Bulke of one Man & another, seemes to mee, to bee also in their Memories, Witts, Judgements & withall in their externall Sences. . . .

> Besides those differences between Man & man, there bee others more considerable, that is, between the Guiny Negros and the Middle Europeans; & of Negros between those of Guiny and those who live about the Cape of Good Hope, which last are the Most beastlike of all the Souls of Men with whom our Travellers are well acquainted. I say that the Europeans do not onely differ from the aforementioned Africans in Collour, which is as much as white differs from black, but also in their Haire which differs as much as a straight line differs from a Circle; but they differ also in the shape of their Noses, Lipps and cheek bones, as also in the very outline of their faces & the Mould of their skulls. They differ also in their Naturall Manners, & in the internall Qualities of their Minds.[16]

Petty has outlined a thoroughgoing racialist doctrine whose assumptions permeate all forms of modern racism. Group differences are assumed to be categorical, defining natural types. Key physical features are used to index general distinctions not only in body type but also in the quality of manners and mind. In stark contrast with Montaigne's attempt to "denature" human differences, Petty sees mental and cultural characteristics as "natural" extensions of fixed physical types. The classic markers of race, skin color, nose and hair types are used uncritically to distinguish one group from another. And these physical differences are extended analogically to mental, behavioral and ultimately moral qualities, generating a hierarchy among the races at once physical, mental and cultural.

What is significant about Petty's version of polygenesis for our purposes is its attempt to reconcile empirical evidence of human difference with an older Christian view of a unitary theologically ordered universe. A single hierarchy of divinely created organic life, in the form of

Petty's "scales of animate being," allows diversity to be neatly reconciled with a unitary plan of creation. Differences of kind are transformed into differences of degree, and the racialist ideology emerges clearly when this logic is applied to group differences among humans. What is remarkable about this formulation is how closely it approximates a later evolutionary schema that Victorian anthropologists used to reconcile human diversity with a theory of common human origin and common human nature. Theological and evolutionary visions of human diversity, usually opposed to one another, turn up here as strange bedfellows.

Early Evolutionary Thinking about Human Nature

By the eighteenth century, an older tradition of theological speculation about human origins and human nature competed with increasingly detailed scientific observations of the diversity of biological forms. As director of the Paris Zoo, Europe's largest at the time, George Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-88) had ample opportunity to carefully observe variations among a wide range of animals in both behavior and anatomy. He was struck by the similarities of internal anatomy between humans and other animals, and concluded that the major differences among animals were in "the external cover" rather than in their internal structure.[17] When it came to the apparent external affinities between apes and humans, however, Buffon reversed himself. In the interest of defending the doctrine of special creation Buffon argued that such external similarities were superficial, and that it was their internal differences that distinguished humans from the apes, most especially the possession of a soul. A theological conservative, Buffon also went to great lengths to defend the idea of monogenesis. He proposed

that the dramatic variations that had been documented for human groups could be explained by a combination of climatic factors, differences in food and, especially, by variations in customs.

While appearing to refute polygenist claims of multiple human lines, Buffon actually simultaneously supported and undermined the idea of an essential unity of the human species. Human nature itself, he proposes, is subject to profound alterations in different environments, alterations so fundamental as to lead people to suspect that different human groups were in fact distinct species. This leads him to characterize these differences as "purely superficial." This is a clear statement of the assumption that any exogenous factors that are believed to shape human nature, no matter how profound their influences, are to be considered merely surface phenomena, rather than characteristics of human nature.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, evolutionary thought was deeply imbued with theological doctrines that had been around in one form of another for over fifteen hundred years. Though monogenist assumptions would continue to be challenged into the twentieth century, the idea of a single human origin and its corollary notion of a single human nature became the accepted views on the matter of human nature of both early evolutionary thought and orthodox Christian belief. In both traditions, the "superficial" facts of human diversity were reconciled with a single and essential human nature through the idea of a hierarchy of linked forms, ranging from lower to higher.

Rather than understanding variability and the tendency to change as fundamental features of living things, Buffon tended to interpret variation as a kind of disease or deformation, a deviation from an original and authentic unity. Indeed the tendency to variation is itself viewed as a sign of imperfection. The "more dignified" the species, Buffon claimed, the less it will be

subject to variation. The implications are unmistakable: human variability is not a constitutive feature of human nature, but rather its nemesis, a consequence of Adam's Fall.

Though sharing the older view of human nature as essentially unitary, nineteenth century thinking about human evolution turned the biblically inspired narrative of human history on its head. A progress narrative of a gradually perfecting species replaced the story of a species whose variability represented a fall from grace. But modern ideas about cultural evolution did not come about in a simple way. They gradually developed from a not always coherent set of ideas about the relationship between human variability and human nature. For example, Erasmus Darwin, Charles Darwin's grandfather, seems to have subscribed to an early version of cultural relativism of thought while simultaneously viewing human history as the working out of a perfecting tendency in nature. From a synchronic perspective, Erasmus Darwin seems to propose that human reason is simply *differentiated* linguistically and culturally. But his view of human nature is quite different when viewed historically. For the elder Darwin, organic life, including human life, develops by a kind of directed development guided by an inherent tendency towards perfection[18]

The idea of progress underlay the nineteenth-century evolutionists' conception of what Sahlins calls "general evolution."[19] Through the notion of a general evolutionary schema, human history could be viewed as a series of determinate and progressive stages. The sequence of general evolution was gradually worked out over the course of the nineteenth century, but relied heavily on technological criteria of human progress. Sir Edward Tylor (1832-1913), an ardent evolutionist strongly influenced by Darwinian thinking, believed that the sweep of human history revealed a uniform pattern of progressive change, one that demonstrated the effects of the application of human rationality to the problems of survival. Contemporary examples of

"backward" peoples could be understood as "survivals" of earlier stages of cultural evolution, people's whose evolutionary development was retarded, and who could be considered as "primitive" forms of human life. Such "primitive peoples" in this view, provided us with a window on ourselves at an earlier time, living relics of our own evolutionary history.

While we may assume that all evolutionists believed in the unity of the human species, in fact the debate between polygenesis and monogenesis continued well into the twentieth century. The late nineteenth century saw a revival of polygenetic theories of human origin, especially among American writers.[20] It is important to remember that Darwin himself was equivocal on the question of one or multiple human origins, and was predisposed to view the Negro and European races as distinct species.[21] Toward the end of the nineteenth century there was a lively debate about whether different races were in fact distinct species with different origins. Folk theories about the inability of different races to successfully mate were quite common in the United States toward the turn of the century, and were often supported by anecdotal evidence that masqueraded as scientific report. Among anthropologists of the time, polygenism was adopted by both physical and cultural anthropologists of the day. It is fashionable nowadays to assume that biologists are more interested in human universals while cultural anthropologists study human diversity. But at the turn of the century it was by and large the biological anthropoloigists who advocated polygenic theories of human origins. For their part, those interested in cultural evolution tended to support the idea of a single human species with a common origin.

Psychic Unity and "Primitive Mentality

The Victorian cultural evolutionist faced the same dilemma as the medieval theologian. Each sought to hold fast to a single human nature in the face of evidence of significant human diversity. And both found the answer to their dilemma in the idea of a *hierarchy* or *scale* of human life. Difference could be acknowledged, but only as a matter of a degree of perfection. Difference is acknowledged, but only to be overcome by reference to a scale of perfection. Christian thinkers saw perfection in the past. Present diversity represented one or another degree of degeneration. For their part, cultural evolutionists saw perfection in the future, a potentiality of human reason for perfecting the species. Diversity was understood as different stages of development or maturity.

As we have seen, the earliest attempts to classify the stages of cultural evolution focused on technological or economic criteria such as tool making and subsistence modes. But the real debate over the implications of human evolution for a conception of human nature was to take place "indoors," so to speak, over the issue that was lodged uncomfortably between the phrases "primitive mentality" and "the psychic unity of mankind."[22] The notion of psychic unity is the psychological component of a universalistic conception of human nature. The idea that all humans possessed fundamentally the same capacities for thinking and feeling has, as we have seen, been a feature of Western conceptions of the human for centuries. Within anthropology, the doctrine of the psychic unity of mankind was first formulated by the influential German ethnologist Adolph Bastian (1826-1905).

Bastian, like many thinkers of his day, was an evolutionist, who believed that cultural traits evolved according to fixed laws of cultural evolution, modified only by climatic and geographic factors. His distinction between *Elementargedanke* (primary thought) and *Völksgedanke* (local "folk" thought) was his attempt to distinguish the universal components of

human mentality from the purely and particular concepts. His ideas were widely read in his day and are believed to have had a major influence on Bronislaw Malinowski and Karl Jung. Bastian is no longer read by many anthropologists, but his notion of psychic unity has become something of an article of faith for modern anthropologists, reaffirming as it does, the fundamental unity of the species, and the common psychological capacities of all humans.

The idea of general evolution was anthropology's early way of reconciling cultural variability with psychic unity. The influential nineteenth century philosopher Herbert Spencer affirmed cultural diversity in human life while insisting that the "laws of thought" remained common human property. Human nature as embodied in human thought revealed itself in evolutionary time. In Spencer's view, the human mind was operate on laws that were independent of a particular culture, even though specific cognitive abilities were closely tied to the group's level of social evolution. The mind, unified in its essence, was pluralized in its temporal existence. Yet this complex position on the psychic unity of humankind was ambiguous at best and, at worst, was self-contradictory. In fact it was the evolutionary conception of culture that made it difficult to draw the line between what was fundamental and what was purely local. It was just these troublesome issues about psychic unity that impelled the early anthropological field-workers like Franz Boas and William Rivers to leave the university for distant lands, where they might have a firsthand look for themselves at the human mind in its diverse settings.

Boas, one of Bastian's most famous students, was deeply concerned with reconciling the notion of psychic unity with the prevailing notions of human variation. But his writings on these issues are more equivocal than most anthropologists realize. In 1909, in an address at Clark University, Boas began by claiming that the issue of psychic unity was nothing more or less than

anthropology's fundamental problem. "The fundamental problem on which all anthropological inquiry must be founded," he said "relates to the mental equipment of the various races of man".[23] Though Boas is remembered today for his anti-evolutionary sentiments, and his insistence on distinguishing race, language and culture, Boas was actually quite slow in breaking completely with the prevailing evolutionary assumptions of his day. In 1910 Boas had not yet freed himself of the notion of general evolution as a framework for understanding group differences. Distinctions between racial groups and ethnic groups were still linked in his mind with differences in evolutionary advancement.

Boas's most famous statement on the issue of psychic unity is his 1911 volume *The Mind of Primitive Man*. Here Boas is still clearly trying to sort out the issues of difference and unity in human life and to find a way out of conceptualizing difference in terms of evolutionary hierarchy. In Chapter 11, "The Mind of Primitive Man and the Progress of Culture," Boas repudiates the vision of a unilinear evolution from simple to complex cultural forms. Still, he acknowledges that "increasing intellectual achievements" have produced clear advantages for human communities in security and food production. These changes also represent to Boas clear cultural advances. In terms of the human psyche, Boas still believes in an evolutionary transformation of human sensory perception. Boas still believes that primitive thought exists as a distinct kind of cognition. As others of his time did, Boas associates primitive thinking with such characteristics as anthropomorphism, concreteness, and a tendency to reify abstract phenomena into agents or objects (as in theories of illness).

At first glance Boas would seem to be affirming the evolutionist's view of primitive mentality. But a close reading of his argument suggests that Boas is trying to transform the distinction between primitive and civilized minds to a distinction between the "traditional ideas"

of different kinds of cultures." Boas preserved the psychic unity of humankind, while freeing himself of the racial assumptions of evolutionism by distinguishing between *cultural traditions* and *mental endowment* as the basis for differences in mental life. But this apparently neat solution to the problem of psychic unity had a serious cost. And it is a cost that has continued to trouble modern anthropology. A unitary human nature is affirmed without recourse to evolution, but only at the price of disengaging culture from mind. With the "fundamental" unity of the mind assured, or at least bracketed as an issue, ethnologists were free to document the variety of cultural traditions, traditions that may held to shape a people's "mode of thought," their "style of thinking" and their "beliefs." Yet in no sense may we conclude that there is any fundamental difference between Aminds.@ The effect of culture (viewed as external) on mind (viewed as internal) is thus relatively superficial, in the same sense that any human variations must be superficial in regard to a more fundamental human nature.

If culture thus conceived is to be connected with mind, it must be as a content is related to its container. Culture is conceived as one of the *contents* of mind rather than as a constituting dimension of mind. Thus anthropology achieved an independence from psychology. The study of culture (as a dimension of human variation) could be dissociated from the study of mind (as a dimension of human nature).

The French Connection

This separation of anthropology from psychology derives in large part from the success that Durkheim and his followers had in the first quarter of this century is establishing sociology as a field, by distinguishing social facts from psychological ones.[24] Durkheim's conception of a

"social mind" whose functioning is grounded in external models is surprisingly modern in its anticipation of cognitive anthropology. In fact Durkheim and Mauss articulated an early version of what has become known as "prototype theory" in cognitive psychology, whereby basic-level categories are derived from key exemplars.[25] Yet while Durkheim proposed an enlightened view of the cultural basis of classification, his separation of psychological from social facts provided him with no way to deal with the issue of the relationship between social representations and the individual mind.

Durkheim's contemporary Lucien Lévy-Bruhl dealt with the same set of questions as Durkheim, but came up with some very different answers. French thought has long revealed a fascinating mixture of rationalism and romanticism. Whereas Durkheim followed the rationalist path in contemplating human nature, Lévy-Bruhl took the romantic path. And in so doing he came closer than anyone else to challenging the doctrine of psychic unity. Like many of his colleagues, Lévy-Bruhl encountered exotic cultures through secondary sources rather than by doing fieldwork. His ethnographic readings gave him a great appreciation for apparently exotic modes of thought. Without complete success, Lévy-Bruhl sought a way to characterize cultural variation *as pure difference*, and to avoid the sort of hierarchical classifications of thought that typified the writings of evolutionary anthropologists.

Lévy-Bruhl's most influential ideas about the psychic unity of humankind are contained his 1910 book *Les Fonctions Mentales dans Les Sociétés Inférieures* (mis-translated as *How Natives Think*). Lévy-Bruhl chose the unfortunate term "pre-logical" to describe the mystical character of "primitive" religious thought. He chose "pre-logical" more as a technical term than as a value judgement. The word denotes beliefs that violate Aristotle's principle of "non-contradiction" that governed the evaluation of formally logical statements. "Pre-logical" beliefs

and practices proposed the coexistence of apparent contradictory states such as life in death, unity and multiplicity of being, the identity of distinct forms of life or distinct species. They constituted logical and categorical anomalies. Though he used the language of his time, colored by evolutionist and racist assumptions, a close reading of Lévy-Bruhl suggests that he did not assume that “primitive thought" was inferior to logical thought, but was simply based on different assumptions.

To the extent that “psychic unity” refers only to the *capacity* of mind rather than the actual functioning of mind, Lévy-Bruhl was an ardent defender of the doctrine, though this is not always appreciated. He attributes the failure of “primitive thought” to note contradictions to a lack of interest in logical consistency, not to any innate inability to reason logically. Differences in “mentality” are a function of the "social milieu."[26] For Lévy-Bruhl pre-logical and logical modes of thought are derived from a common brain but distinct *collective representations.*, or what we would now call distinct cultural models. Logical and pre-logical thought, deeply affecting the habitual modes of thought of a people, are nonetheless matters of cultural value rather than cognitive capacity. "Undoubtedly," Lévy-Bruhl affirmed, "they have the same senses as ours. . . and their cerebral structure is like our own. But we have to bear in mind that which their collective representations instills into all their perceptions."[27]

The social value that underlies the disregard of logical consistency is positively defined in terms of "the law of participation." By “participation” Lévy-Bruhl meant that people perceived correspondences or relationships where logical thought proposes differences and oppositions. Participation is the principle behind mysticism and its identification of things that in everyday life appear to be separate. Concepts governed by the Law of Participation are sensuous, colored by feeling and by bodily activity. They are not abstractions and are not apprehended as

pure ideas: AIn its purest form, primitive mentality implied a participation which was felt and lived, both by individuals with the social group, and by the social group with the surrounding ones.@[28] Only with the emergence of individual consciousness do such sensuous concepts become true abstractions.

Lévy-Bruhl, like Montaigne three centuries earlier, understood that a doctrine of "psychic unity" might account for the universality of the most abstract potentialities of the human mind. But he also knew that it could never do justice to the actual diversity of human mental life. Rather than characterizing "mind" in its generality, he sought to characterize diverse "mentalities." "Mentality" lay at the intersection of a common human sensorium and a variable set of cultural representations (models). Had he not used a terminology tinged with condescending evolutionary assumptions, Lévy-Bruhl might well have laid the foundation for a cognitively grounded conception of culture and an intellectually vigorous and non-hierarchical vision of the psychic diversity of humanity.

Human Nature and Human Variation in Modern Anthropology

In these pages, my primarily concern has been to trace the roots of a dilemma in early writings about human nature and human variation. The detailed history of how this problem has affected more modern anthropologists is another matter that has been dealt with elsewhere.[29] Even a cursory look at the history of modern anthropological thought suggests that anthropologists have been struggling with many of the same issues that characterized the earlier speculations of theologians and Victorian evolutionists about the implications of significant group variation for a general conception of the human. Anthropology appears to be a deeply

divided discipline today, and much of the disagreement (and confusion) stems from the field's inability to come to terms with its own seemingly paradoxical mission: the characterization of human nature in light of human diversity.

In the 1960s and 70s, symbolic anthropologists like David Schneider and Clifford Geertz outlined a semiotic conception of culture that sought to define anthropology as the study of cultural diversity. In two seminal books on kinship, written two decades apart, and a series of controversial and provocative theoretical papers on the symbolic analysis of culture, Schneider outlined a radically relativistic conception of culture as "a system of symbols and meanings."[30] Human reality was, in Schneider's view, a symbolic construct, and cultures were self-contained symbolic "systems" which made cultural comparisons or generalizations difficult. Schneider was an arch cultural relativist, whose critique of traditional approaches to the study of kinship sought to transform a kinship system from a universal framework of relations through blood and marriage to a diverse and often non-comparable set of symbolic systems.

Clifford Geertz is another ardent exponent of an interpretive symbolic anthropology. For Geertz, the anthropologist's mission is to reveal (and revel in) the sheer diversity of ways of being human. In a recent essay, he proclaims the ethnographer "the connoisseur *par excellence* of alien turns of mind."[31] Geertz's most famous (and still highly influential) book was a collection of essays published in 1973 called *The Interpretation of Cultures*. The plural form of culture in the title was meant to signal that the proper subject matter of anthropology was the study not of human nature but of the variety of ways of being human.[32]

In a series of early essays, Geertz made a brilliant attempt to confront directly the relationship between culture as the source of human diversity, and culture as an aspect of human

nature. He looked to the record of hominid evolution for insights into the origins of culture (and thus of a significant kind of group diversity). The human capacity for culture (a dimension of psychic unity, strictly understood) rests on the extensive symbolic mediation of behavior. Cultural systems were made up of models or “templates” for meaning. Cultural models are both public and conventional (i.e., historically and locally contingent). Culture is a semiotic system, a set of symbolic models that function as an *extrinsic* control system for human action:

> The "control mechanism" view of culture begins with the assumption that human thought is basically both social and public that its natural habitat is the house yard, the marketplace, and the town square. Thinking consists not on "happenings in the head" (though happenings there and elsewhere are necessary for it to occur) but of a traffic in . . . significant symbols.[33]

This human reliance on what Geertz calls "symbolic sources of illumination" derives from human behavioral plasticity and the relative incompleteness of the human neonate:

> The behavior patterns of lower animals are, at least to a much greater extent, given to them with their physical structure; genetic sources of information order their actions within much narrower ranges of variation, the narrower and more thoroughgoing, the lower the animal. For man, what are innately given are extremely general response capacities, which although they make possible far greater plasticity, complexity, and, on the scattered occasions when everything works as it should, effectiveness of behavior, leave it much less precisely regulated . . . . Undirected by cultural patterns—organized systems of significant symbols—man's behavior would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless. Culture, the accumulated totality of such patterns, is not just an ornament of human existence but—the principal basis for its specificity—an essential condition for it.[34]

The human reliance on culture has significant implications for how we conceptualize human nature. Geertz's arguments are directed against what he terms "the Enlightenment view of man." This was the view that underlay Spencer's version of psychic unity: that human nature, having been laid down once and for all through evolution, is invariant and regular. In view of the plasticity and social dependence of the human mind, Geertz argues that *human variation must be viewed as a constitutive feature of human nature.* What is sometimes called "the human animal,"

human nature stripped of its historical and cultural accretions, is not a more basic vision of the human. Indeed, such an "unaccommodated man" is no human at all. Time and space, history and culture, the local dimensions of the human, must be viewed as constitutive of human nature.

Rejecting the reduction of mind to its organic basis, Geertz argued instead that the mind as a relationship between a nervous system and its extrinsic sources of activation. His views echo those of Gregory Bateson, for whom mind was the intersection of a brain and an organized environment.[35] Geertz notes that he evolution of the hominid nervous system appears to have taken place under the selective pressure of increasing dependence on culture. He notes that the increasing centralization, autonomy, and hierarchical complexity of the nervous system together produced a brain increasingly dependent for its functioning on external sources of patterning and activation.[36]

The notion of psychic unity as a feature of a biologically completed species presumes an erroneous and seriously misleading dichotomy between a fixed nervous system and a changeable environment. The fear that appears to have led Geertz along with many other anthropologists to affirm psychic unity in the face of his own devastating critique of the notion is clearly the race issue, and with it and the spectre of "primitive mentality."

> The doctrine of psychic unity of mankind, which, so far as I am aware, is today not seriously questioned by any reputable anthropologist, is but the direct contradictory of the primitive mentality argument; it asserts that there are no essential differences in the fundamental nature of thought processes among the various living races of men.[37]

The unfortunate legacy of cultural evolution, with its hierarchy of human types, underlies Geertz's commitment to a vague notion of psychic diversity. In light of his own subtle understanding of the mind as deeply dependent on cultural programming for its basic functioning, it certainly is not clear what Geertz means by "the fundamental nature of thought processes." It is hard to conceive of a more fundamental variability in mind than the kind of brain-culture interaction that Geertz describes.

Like Boas before him, but much more successfully, Geertz wrestled with anthropology's fundamental dilemma. With eloquence and erudition, he attempted to write his way out of the conundrum. Yet the result is an obscure vision of culture in its relation to mind, and a somewhat muddled vision of the relationship between human diversity and human nature. Geertz appears to subscribe to two incompatible models of mind. The one, essentially organic and fixed, underlies his belief in psychic unity. The other, emergent and contingent, is the basis for his argument for cultural diversity.

The pattern of anthropological theorizing about human nature seems to repeat itself generation after generation. In the first quarter of the twentieth century evolutionism, with its commitment to orderly processes of cultural development and the implied unity of the species, vied with the newer views of cultural particularly and contextualism in the work of Boas and his students. And in France the rationalism of Durkheim and his students contended with of Lévy-Bruhl's romantic embrace of diverse mentalities. In mid-century, two distinct semiotic views of culture and human nature competed for the attention of graduate students. In France Levi-Strauss' elegant structuralism reinforced the sense that psychic unity was tied up with human reason, and beneath the tangle of cultural tropes lay a coherent and universal code that defined the contours of the human mind. Knowledge was ultimately a property of the species—human

knowledge. At the same time, in the United States, symbolic anthropologists were insisting that cultural worlds were not fully commensurable or reducible to any kind of useful generalizations about human nature. Knowledge was ultimately a property of the neighborhood—local knowledge.

Today, the rift between those who define anthropology as the study of universals and those who focus on the local and contingent properties of human communities has, if anything, widened. The twin offspring of anthropological speculation, human nature and human variation, have not been getting along. Positions have hardened. The anthropology of human nature, carried out now largely by sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists, has become more rigidly committed to the equation of human nature with human universals. *Cultural psychologists* emphasize the contingent nature of psychological processes and the cultural diversity of cognitive, affective and motivational structures.[38] But *evolutionary psychologists* see the human psyche as a relatively stable and universal product of natural selection.[39] They define the psyche in terms of a set of universal cognitive, perceptual and motivational structures which were selected for during hominid evolution, and which constitute the psychological component of a shared human nature.

By contrast, the anthropology of human variation has been for the past several decades in a decidedly postmodern mood, wary of all generalization or even of claims to be able to make generalizations. In a style of analysis increasingly associated with the term "cultural studies" "culture," if it is acknowledged at all, is viewed as a field of contention, in which diverse discourse and representations vie for attention and power. The emphasis is on multiple voices, permeable boundaries and contested meanings. In such an intellectual milieu, the very idea of culture, once an accepted basis of significant group variation, has come under sustained attack as

a notion too coherent, too "essentialist" and insensible to the actual give-and-take of human life. The extreme particularism of the pluralist camp views tends to shift attention *from diversity between cultures* to *diversity within cultural communities*. The study of "culture" takes on a decidedly subjunctive mood. Take for example the recent comments by the distinguished Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, who proposed three modifications of the culture concept:

> 1. All concepts are embedded in practice; and so their definition and thrust can only be determined in the context of that practice.
> 2. All views are singular and positioned; and anthropological accounts and generalizations about a cultural tradition will represent will represent the anthropologist's own construction, based on her judgments and analyses.
> 3. All meaning remains contestable, within as well as between social circles and cultural traditions.[40]

At an earlier time in the study of human variation, the assumed level of variation relevant to the anthropologist was a community presumed to share a common culture. But the increasingly globalizing and unbounded world together with the anthropologist's current anti-essentialist sensibility conspire to make us look beyond cultural units for more granular levels of human variability. This is how Barth puts it:

> Perhaps we would do best if we stopped privileging the representation of "culture" and instead focused on the level of events, acts, people and processes. But to the extent to which cultural patterns remain salient as a level of description, we shall certainly have less use for structural models, since they inevitably lose

> something of their allure once we discontinue our search for the hidden essence of things. If our object of study is a diversity of positioned views and distributed cultural materials, from which ranges of events and acts are generated; and if our interest also embraces the processes whereby these events and acts may either reproduce of change their own preconditions, then we shall obviously need to construct systems models of a kind. But to represent phenomena as complex and varied as this, we must probably tackle the task of building models that represent disordered systems, systems in flux, forms which at once are both diffuse and emergent.[41]

Some Propositions about Human Variation and Human Nature

In view of the difficulties anthropologists have had in reconciling human nature with human variation, does it make any sense to define anthropology as "the study of human nature in light of human variation?" I believe that this somewhat paradoxical vision of anthropology does make sense, but only if we can clarify what we mean by "human nature." What follows is a set of propositions that are aimed at reframing the relationship between human variation and human nature. They constitute a set of reflections on what happens to human nature when human variation is moved from the sidelines of human life onto center stage.

1. Human "nature" encompasses the human capacity for and dependence upon "culture." In this sense nature and culture are not opposed, as the structuralists had asserted, but mutually and dialectically constitutive of human life.

2. As Geertz pointed out three decades ago, to be human is to be a particular kind of human. There is no general human being. There is no way out of it. Being human means being

a particular kind of human. Just as we all must realize our linguistic capacity by speaking *a language,* we can only realize our species being through being particular kinds of humans. The contingent aspects of our beings—those historical, cultural and autobiographical characteristics which are "added to" our natures after birth—are not after all secondary attributes of being human.

3. "The psychic unity of mankind" was always more a well-intentioned way to combat false notions of racial mentality than a viable concept for making sense of mind-culture relations. Narrowly construed, the psychic unity doctrine was simply a rejection of hereditary differences in mental capacities, and an affirmation of the environmentalist position.[42] Its ideological purpose was to undercut the notion of innate group differences in mental capacity or endowment. In this sense, the doctrine of psychic unity is a natural extension of the doctrine of monogenesis. If all humans are descended from Adam, then it might be reasonable to expect that all humans share (within a range) the same basic mental capacities and abilities.

But ruling out inherited group differences in mental capacity (a valid assertion) strikes me as a much more limited concept than is suggested by the name "psychic unity." Thinkers who attempted to reconcile cultural diversity with a notion of psychic unity have done so by treating culture as if it were purely a feature of the environment, and thus that culture was external to mind. On the other hand, the biological infrastructure of mind was implied to be a nervous system whose characteristics were genetically fixed and (biologically) impermeable to environmental modification. Put simply in Durkheimian terms, culture (or society) is outside, the mind (or psychology) is inside. Using a more up-to-date analogy, culture is conceived as the software of the psyche, while the brain is the hardware.

But given what we know about epigenesis in human development and about brain functioning, these distinctions will not hold. Since C. H. Waddington, human physical development is not understood simply as the unfolding of a child according to its genetic template. Ontogenesis, even prior to birth, is not simply genetic, but epigenetic, in that environmental variables will affect the developing fetus at key points of its development. So even before birth, the human is biologically a product of the interaction of genes and environmental variables.[43]

Moreover, modern neuroscience does not support the metaphor of brain as hardware. The functioning brain is more like "mushware," since both hemispheric distribution of function and the brain's neural pathways are clearly subject to constant modification. Modifications of this sort show degrees of stability, and are shaped by different orders of feedback from the environment.[44] The implications are that it is not just the person who learns, but the brain as well. Bateson appears to have been right when he defined the mind as an emergent property of the interaction of brain and environment, though even Bateson may have been using too essentialized a notion of brain.

If the functioning brain itself is to some extent environmentally (and hence culturally) configurable, then the framework of assumptions about biology and culture that shaped the discourse on psychic unity is misleading. The rejection of the notion of innate racial mentality, with its assumptions of polygenesis, is implicit in the psychic unity thesis. And this rejection is right. But the entailed assumptions that the human mind—and even the brain—are essentially the same for all humans because we are one species misrepresents the nature of brain functioning and the complex relations that appear to hold between brain structure and functioning and environment. Social representations are not simply cultural facts that belong to the external

world. They are also cognitive facts, are inscribed in the human nervous system, though epigenetically.[45] In view of modern understandings of brain functioning, it is not really possible to make the case for cultural diversity and psychic unity. Some non-trivial conception of "psychic diversity" becomes inevitable, without implying anything even close to a "racial" determination of mind.

4. The dichotomy between fixed and variable aspects of our natures is misleading, since it proposes two alternatives rather than a gradient of possible states. There is no choice to be made between some sort of fixed human "essence" and what Barth called "disordered systems, systems in flux, forms which at once are both diffuse and emergent." The opposition between the fixity of human essence and the flux of human experience is a false dichotomy. This is why I believe that "essentialism" is a straw man in the culture wars. Strictly speaking, there can be no human essences, since all human physical and mental characteristics are the products of evolutionary history and continue to be subject to both natural and cultural selection.

5. In light of the previous discussion, it is clear that there is no way to ever decide whether humans are *basically* like each other or different from each other. Both logically and empirically, both positions are equally valid. The term "basically" is meaningless in this context. It is generally used for rhetorical force, but otherwise has no empirical reference. Since there is inevitably ample evidence to support either the unity or diversity position, the question cannot be answered scientifically, but remains a matter of ideology or personal preference.

6. The dichotomy between human universals and human variation in group behavior is *not* the same as the difference between biological and cultural explanations, though it is sometimes presumed to be. Biological anthropologists are at least as concerned with human variation (at both the group and individual levels) as they are with universals. Indeed in the late nineteenth

century, it was by and large biologically oriented anthropologists and not the cultural anthropologists who defended polygenesis as a support for theories of racial speciation. Similarly, there are certainly cultural universals that can be traced to factors other than biology, factors such as global diffusion (the near-universality of money as an exchange medium in today's world) or overwhelming adaptive necessity/advantage (the universality of controlled use of fire among modern human populations). Debates about human universals vs. human variability are orthogonal, not parallel to debates about biological vs. cultural influences in human life.

7. The really important issue that gets masked by the false opposition between flux and essence is the relative degree of stability and adaptability of different aspects of the human. Human nature is found in the *relationships between different kinds of control systems governing human response*, systems operating with very different degrees of flexibility, and different rates of change. Indeed one of the selective advantages of cultural adaptation over biogenetic adaptation is the relative flexibility and speed of many (though not all) cultural changes compared with biological ones. There is no doubt that some features of human existence are more stable than others. Scholars interested in "human nature" as a matter of human universals simply select more stable features of human life to study. On the other hand, those interested in demonstrating human variation choose to focus on more flexible and variable human features.

Contemporary cultural anthropologists find ample evidence to convincingly demonstrate the fragility and mutability of the human condition, by focusing on societies whose knowledge systems are in flux, whether in New Guinea or Bali.[46] But human ethologists like Irenius Eibesfeldt, Paul Ekman or Desmond Morris are equally successful in demonstrating the persistence of common human behavior, such as violent behavior (especially of males), basic

emotion expressions, or certain universal gestures.[47] Surely the ethologist's data is of a *more stable order* than that of the cultural anthropologist. But it is not thereby more basic to being human or more consequential.

8. Recognizing a spectrum of stability-flexibility among human behavioral dispositions, allows us to see some interesting possibilities that lie somewhere between so-called "fixed" responses and flexible deliberate behavior. For example, human ritual (along with the entailed human capacity to ritualize behavior through repetition) is a significant intermediate form of behavior, positioned midway between biologically conditioned ("hard-wired" behavior) and consciously controlled behavior. Ritual is important because it has some of the characteristics of both flexible (culturally conditioned) behavior and hard-wired (genetically conditioned) behavior.

Ritualization is a valuable behavioral option for humans because it manifests *both* the flexibility of learned/invented adaptations, and the relative stability and automaticity of hard-wired responses. In this sense, ritual might be thought of as "pseudo-instinct," a kind of fixed-flexible behavior that is central to all institution making and maintenance. As the spectrum of human behaviors goes, ritual has a more "essentialist" feel than some kinds of human responses, and a more flexible feel than others.[48]

9. There are two significantly different kinds of human universals, which I will term *substantive* and *generative*. *Substantive universals* (and they are legion) like certain physical reflexes, or the yawn of fear or nervousness, or facial expressions for anger are significant in themselves because they clearly have (or had) significant adaptive value. They represent a substantive repertoire of universal human behaviors. *Generative universals* are those shared human dispositions or features which underlie and produce significant human variability.

For instance, developmental retardation, and pedomorphic characteristics (like the human body-head ratio, or relative hairlessness) are generally considered to be universal general characteristics of human ontogeny. To the extent that these universals of development contribute to delayed maturation, increased dependency and extended periods of educability of the human child, they promote the kind of diversity that comes with the production and transmission of complex cultural traditions.[49]

The retention of juvenile behavioral characteristics in adults also encourages the extension of playfulness into adulthood. Play is the mother of all invention, and underlies the human predisposition for cultural adaptation.[50] Play might be thought of as culture's answer to mutation in genetic evolution. It is a fundamental source of variability and novelty in human behavior.[51] Another example of a generative universal of human nature is a brain preadapted by evolution for plasticity of response.[52] Such generative universals are the shared preconditions for human variability. They are involved importantly in what is shared among humans and they are implicated in what must vary. Generative universals are important for many reasons, not the least of which is that they both propose, and resolve the human paradox that links human variability with human nature.

Notes

[1] Mandeville, Bernard, *The Fable of the Bees*, F.B. Kaye (ed.), Oxford, 1924, II, 229.

[2] Goethe, Johan Wolfgang von, "Letter to F. Schiller, March 18, 1801, in *Werke*, L.D. Smitz (trans.), London, 1897-98, XIV, 25-26.

[3]Slotkin, J. S. (ed.) *Readings in Early Anthropology*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965, 1.

[4]I Corinthians, 15:38-40.

[5] Isidorus of Seville, *Etymologiae*, W.M Lindsay (ed.), Oxford, 1911, cited in Slotkin, J. S., (ed.) *Readings in Early Anthropology*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965, 3.

[6]St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, E. Hoffman (ed.), M. Dodds (trans.), Edinburgh, 1871, 16.9.

[7] Stocking, George, 'The Persistence of Polygenist Thought in Post-Darwinian Anthropology', in *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, New York: The Free Press, 1968, 45.

[8] Aligheri, Dante *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, *Opere*, E. Moore (ed.), A. G. F. Howell (trans.), London, 1904, 1., 10.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de, *Essaies*, cited in Slotkin, J. S. (ed.) *Readings in Early Anthropology*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965, 61.

[11] *Ibid.*, 55.

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] Hohenheim, Theophrastus Bombastus von, *Gesta Danorum*, J. Olrik and H. Raeder (eds.), O. Elton (trans.), London: 1894, 3.

[14] Petty, William, *Papers*, Marquise of Lansdowne, ed., London, 1927, II, 219-20.

[15]*Ibid*., I, 155-56.

[16] *Ibid*., II, 30-31.

[17] Buffon, George, et. al., *Histoire Naturelle*, W. Smellie, (trans.), 3rd edition, London, 1791, VI, 3.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] On general and specific evolution see Sahlins, Marshall D., Elman Service and Thomas Harding

Evolution and Culture. Ann Arbor, 1960.

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[21] *Ibid*., 46.

[22] For a more thorough treatment of the problem of "psychic unity" in the face of cultural diversity see Shore, B. "The Psychic Unity Muddle," Chap. 1 of *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture and the Problem of Meaning*, New York, 1996.

[23] Boas, Franz, 'Psychological Problems in Anthropology', American *Journal of Psychology* 21 (1910), 371.

[24] Durkheim's views on the distinction between "individual facts" and "social facts" are founds throughout his writings. See especially *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 8th ed., George E. Catlin (ed.), Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller (trans.), New York : The Free Press,1964, and *Suicide, A Study in Sociology*, George Simpson (ed.), John A. Spaulding (trans.), Glencoe, Ill. : Free Press, 1951. For an excellent discussion of Durkheim's critique of psychological explanations of social phenomena see Parsons, Talcott, *The Structure of Social Action; A Study*

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[25] Rosch, Eleanor, and Barbara Lloyd (eds.), *Cognition and Categorization*, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979; Lakoff, George, *Women Fire and Dangerous Things*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

[26] Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, *How Natives Think*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1926, 43.

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] *Ibid*., 366.

[29] For a more detailed consideration of the psychic unity issue in modern anthropology, see Shore, Bradd, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture and the Problem of Meaning*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, especially Chapters 1, 13, 14. See also Shweder, Richard, 'Anthropology's Romantic Rebellion Against the Enlightenment, or There's More to Thinking Than Reason and Evidence', Chap.1 in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, Richard Shweder and Robert LeVine (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1984, 28-66. For a conception of human nature that takes cultural variability seriously see Shweder, Richard, 'Cultural Psychology: What is It?', in *Cultural Psychology: The Chicago Symposia on Culture and Development*, J. Stigler, R. Shweder and G. Herdt (eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1-46. The turbulent state of modern culture theory is on display in a recent collection of essays by leading anthropologists, *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, Robert Borofsky (ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.

[30] Schneider, David M., *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968; Schneider, David M., 'Notes Toward a Theory of Culture', in Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (eds.) *Meaning in Anthropology*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,

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[31] Geertz, Clifford, 'The Uses of Diversity,' in *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, Robert Borofsky (ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994, 462.

[32] Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973.

[33] Geertz, Clifford , 'The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man', *Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973, 45.

[34] *Ibid*., 45-6.

[35] Bateson, Gregory, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Novato, CA.: Chandler Publishing Company, 1972.

[36] *Ibid*., 69.

[37] *Ibid*., 62.

[38] Key recent works in cultural psychology include Shweder, Richard A., 'Anthropology's Romantic Rebellion against the Enlightenment, or There's More to Thinking Than Reason and Evidence,' in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, ed. Richard Shweder and Robert LeVine (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 28-66; Shweder, Richard, 'Cultural Psychology: What is It?', in *Cultural Psychology: The Chicago Symposia on Culture and Development*, J. Stigler, R. Shweder and G. Herdt. (eds.) New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-46; Bruner, Jerome, *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990; and Cole, Michael, *Cultural Psychology: A One and Future Discipline*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

[39] *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* , Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, John Tooby (ed.), New York : Oxford University Press, 1992.

[40] Barth, Fredrik, 'A Personal View of Present Tasks and Priorities in Cultural and Social Anthropology',in *Assessing Cultural Anthropology,* Robert Borofsky (ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994, 356.

[41] *Ibid*., 358.

[42] I am grateful to Robbins Burling (personal communication) for pointing out to me that my broader reading of the psychic unity concept and its implications for a modern theory of mind (a reading which I believe is accurate) is nonetheless somewhat different from the original sense in which the term was used.

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[48] *The Spectrum of Ritual*, Laughlin, Charles, John McManus, and Eugene D'Aquili (eds.), New York: Columbia University Press; Erikson, Erik, *Toys and Reasons : Rtages in the Ritualization of Experience*, New York : Norton, 1977; Garvey, Catherine, *Play*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.

[49] Bruner, Jerome S., The Nature and Uses of Immaturity. *American Psychologist* 27 (8), (1972), 1-22.

[50] Huizinga, Johan, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture.* London: Temple Smith, 1938.

[51] Bruner, Jerome S., The Nature and Uses of Immaturity. *American Psychologist* 27 (8), (1972), 1-22.

[52] Donald, Merlin, 'The Neurobiology of Human Consciousness: An Evolutionary Approach', *Neuropsychologia*, 33 (9) (1995), 1187-1101. See especially pp. 1093-1095.