

pology in the mass media', 'New social movements', 'Human sciences in authoritarian states', 'The technology of enchantment', and 'War and civil strife'. 'Anthropological theory tends to date rapidly', Benthall observes (p. 17), and the emphasis in his compilation is on the ethnographic. The volume adds up to a stimulating alternative 'Introduction to social and cultural anthropology', showcasing the discipline's range, relevance, commitment, and, above all, 'topicality'.

Some of the best moments in the book are provided by Benthall himself: erudite, witty – and modest. In the introduction he writes to the volume, as well as to each sub-section, one finds measured marginalia from an outsider (he came to the RAI from the ICA and the Cambridge English Tripos), reflecting on an anthropology which is archetypally and everywhere 'an "odd man out"' (p. 2). It would be good to see Benthall writing a regular anthropology column somewhere – say, improving on the coverage that anthropology receives in *The Times Literary Supplement*. There, he could develop favourite themes of his: the idea of anthropology as a 'service discipline', freely infiltrating, influencing, and offering consultation to more institutionally mainstream subjects with its 'unique access to the marginal and culturally unassimilated' (p. 10); anthropology as 'a kind of ideas processor' which subjects the theories of other disciplines to the 'fiery ordeal of fieldwork', returning them cooked for consumption (p. 11); the indispensableness to anthropology of new information and ideas deriving from overseas fieldwork; the importance in anthropology of film, feminism, and 'applied' studies of development and medicine; the 'sibling rivalry' between anthropologists and missionaries; the 'gift relationship' between fieldworker and informant; the way self-realization (individual or collective) derives from face-to-face reciprocity; the 'intellectual distinction with a whiff of subversiveness' gleaned from meetings with the contemporary discipline's founders – Firth, Richards, Fortes, Lévi-Strauss, Leach, Douglas, Pitt-Rivers, Needham, Blacking (p. 2).

Anthropology does not need to 'assume the missionary position' to know or disseminate its own value. Marshall Sahlins writes in consummation of his brief preface (p. xvi). Globalization gives a special licence to the discipline's cultural expertise: culture is everywhere, everywhere connected, and connected increasingly. Anthropology is a 'reformer's science' (Tylor), whose ethnographic expertise – of 'us' as well as 'them' – and hubris-saving (sometimes-paralysing) self-reflexivity 'best endow' us as a discipline 'to know and relate the struggles between cultural diversity and cultural hegemony that are affecting us all' (Sahlins, p. xv). The terms missing from

Sahlins's equation are provided by Anatoly Khazanov in the book's final piece. Existing beyond both cultural diversity and cultural hegemony are 'freedom of information and its collection, as well as the activities of international truth-seeking and reconciliation bodies' (p. 355). Ethnographic contributions can embody anthropology's access to a truth apart from the ideological essentialism of 'cultural diversity', embodying anthropology's imagination of a global society where freedom of information militates against ghettos of cultural hegemony.

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FOX, RICHARD G. & BARBARA J. KING (eds). *Anthropology beyond culture*. xix, 314 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berg Publishers, 2002. £42.99 (cloth) £14.99 (paper)

Anthropology – particularly the American variety – has depended for its very existence on the concept of 'culture'. Yet there is nowadays deep anxiety as to whether it means anything or remains usable at all. Biologists routinely include birds, bats, whales, and monkeys in 'the culture club'. Social learning is certainly not unique to humans. Anthropologists, for their part, have notoriously failed to settle on a definition of 'culture'. Is it 'tradition' or, on the contrary, 'innovation'? Is it 'that complex whole' or, on the contrary, 'a thing of shreds and patches'? Is it 'ideas' or, on the contrary, 'social practice'?

In view of all this, the editors of this volume recommend abandoning the concept. Anthropology can prosper, they say, 'without a global concept of culture' or even 'without any concept of culture' (p. 4). Fredrik Barth (p. 35) advocates a slimmed-down, ideational definition which he proposes placing within a new and more inclusive category termed 'human action'. Michel-Rolph Trouillot (pp. 57–8) thinks we should abandon the term 'culture' in view of its reactionary overtones, rather as politically sensitive scholars have had to abandon 'civilization' and 'race'.

To avoid some of the loaded implications of the traditional term 'culture', Barbara King (pp. 83–104) suggests a variety of alternatives more self-evidently relevant to primates than to humans. 'Lifeways', 'patterned interactions', and 'ways of becoming' are among her suggestions. If humans possess culture, then so do monkeys and apes – who routinely interact with one another 'on the basis of shared meanings'. King correspondingly supports Tim Ingold and others who see no reason to restrict social anthropology to members of the species *Homo sapiens*.

Surely language, at least, is uniquely human? Not according to Stuart Shanker (pp. 125–44). Artificially reared apes, he observes, communicate and express themselves in subtle and sophisticated ways. In both humans and apes, ‘language’ emerges as a means of co-regulating and augmenting such activities as sharing, requesting, imitating, playing, naming, describing, and apologizing. ‘The child or ape’, writes Shanker (pp. 133–4), ‘is increasingly motivated to use and develop these communicational tools so that he or she may achieve context-dependent, interactional goals – goals which themselves develop as a function of the child’s or ape’s developing communicational environment’.

The volume concludes with a chapter by Chris Hann, who advocates retaining culture – provided it can be redefined as ‘congealed sociality’. By this, Hann means ‘a transient patterning of clusters of behaviors and ideas’ (p. 273). Hann’s aim here is to avoid fostering those ethnic conflicts which may ensue when discrete, bounded so-called ‘cultures’ are identified with particular local groups or populations. ‘Culture’, for Hann, is just ‘sociality’. It sometimes gets somewhat ‘congealed’ – but, contrary to nationalist dreams, never sufficiently to form ‘discontinuous blocks congruent with entire populations’ (p. 273).

Apparently out of sympathy with the editors, William Durham (pp. 193–206) isolates ‘social transmission’ as the defining characteristic of ‘culture’, arguing forcefully for retention of the term. Rita Wright (pp. 147–68) asks what archaeologists would find to do with their time if they were no longer allowed to discriminate between cultural styles. Penelope Brown (pp. 169–92) also values ‘culture’ – not so as to exclude animals from humanity’s elitist ‘club’, but because, without it, no cross-cultural comparisons can be drawn. Reporting on fieldwork in a Mayan community of Tzeltal speakers in southern Mexico, Brown makes a powerful case that cognition in the human case is intrinsically cultural and variable, contrary to the dogmas of certain ‘evolutionary psychologists’.

On balance, I found this book intensely irritating. The editors’ agenda is clearly to deconstruct the culture concept to the point of nullifying and abandoning it. While the more scholarly and interesting contributors resist this death-wish on the part of anthropologists, few are able to find sufficient leverage to make much difference. Durham alone seems aware that scientists along the boundaries of both biological and social anthropology have widely embraced ‘selfish gene’ Darwinism. Although still unmentionable in polite social anthropological circles, this body of theory has changed the whole conceptual landscape, precluding terminological evasion of the central scientific challenge – which is precisely to account for non-genetic,

autonomously cultural evolution in our species.

Anthropology’s historic mission has been to ask: ‘What does it mean to be human?’ The founders of the discipline advocated transcending the boundaries and assumptions of Western (or any other) culture, viewing ourselves through others’ eyes. To ask what it meant to be human also entailed – in the view of many – asking what it meant to be an ape or other intelligent animal. How did syntactical speech emerge in the human lineage? What is symbolic culture? How, when, and why did cultural cognition first begin to emerge? Evolutionary anthropologists continue to address such questions. ‘Selfish gene’ theory explains why, in a Darwinian world, group-level contractual understandings are theoretically impossible. The corollary of this is that human symbolic culture, which does rest on such understandings, constitutes an anomaly crying out to be explained.

The volume under review, however, sends out a different editorial message. Modern sensitivities, we are told, no longer allow such questions to be asked. Terms such as ‘culture’, ‘mind’, ‘language’, and even ‘human’ are deemed elitist and politically divisive. Better to speak of ‘lifeways’, ‘interactions’, and ‘ways of becoming’, since these include all organisms, whether human or not.

Many a Darwinian reader will view this as abject capitulation – political paralysis and consequent verbal incoherence dressed up as alternatives to science. We can surely do better. Anthropology can resist racist agendas without having to abandon the scientific concept of ‘culture’ – a level of social and cognitive complexity in which all human populations equally participate. We can also resist threats to biodiversity without outlawing the idea that humanity is a wholly remarkable species, its unique possession of distinctively symbolic culture justifying anthropology’s continued existence.

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JAHODA, GUSTAV. *Images of savages: ancient roots of modern prejudice in Western culture*. xx, 297 pp., illus., bibliogr. London, New York: Routledge, 1999. £16.99 (paper)

Having spent much of the last few weeks listening to one of the United States’ most ‘respected’ and powerful politicians explain what he really meant when he implied in public that he was in favour of segregation, I am not overwhelmed by this book’s pronouncement that there is evidence that racial prejudice still survives in our time. Yet, it is still worthwhile regularly to shine