

INTRODUCTION

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British functional anthropology began to emerge as a distinctive discipline shortly after the First World War through the efforts of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, but it was not until after the Second World War that it gained an assured academic status in the universities. Compared with the two decades before the Second World War an enormous quantity of anthropological writing was published in the two decades after it. Within this brief period its claim to academic respectability was virtually unchallenged. By 1961 a prominent sociologist could write that "social anthropology is, among other things, a small but I think flourishing profession. The subject, like social work and unlike sociology, has prestige".¹ A few years later a political scientist contrasted social anthropology favourably with sociology, declaring that unlike the latter, but like the other bona fide social sciences, social anthropology "had built up a body of knowledge which cannot readily be described as anything else".²

Functional anthropology had barely secured its enviable academic reputation when some serious misgivings began to make themselves felt from within the established profession. In 1961, Leach claimed that "functionalist doctrine [has] ceased to carry conviction".³ Five years later Worsley wrote his trenchant critique under the signifi-

¹Donald G. Macrae, *Ideology and Society*, London, 1961, p. 36.

²W. G. Runciman, "Sociologese" in *Encounter*, December, 1965, Vol. XXV, No. 6, p. 47.

³E. R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London, 1961, p. 1.

cant title "The End of Anthropology?" By 1970 Needham was arguing that social anthropology "has no unitary and continuous past so far as ideas are concerned", "Nor is there any such thing as a rigorous and coherent body of theory proper to social anthropology".⁴ A year later Ardener observed that, "something has already happened to British anthropology (and to international anthropology in related ways such that for practical purposes text-books which looked useful, no longer are; monographs which used to appear exhaustive now seem selective; interpretations which once looked full of insight now seem mechanical and lifeless".⁵

The plausibility of the anthropological enterprise which seemed so self-evident to all its practitioners a mere decade ago, is now no longer quite so self-evident. A small minority, apart from the names just mentioned, has begun to articulate its doubts in radical terms."

What has happened to British social anthropology?

At the organisational level nothing very disturbing has happened. On the contrary, the Association of Social Anthropologists flourishes as never before; it holds annual academic conferences whose proceedings are regularly published in handsome hardcover and paperback editions. Monographs, articles and text-books by writers calling themselves anthropologists appear in increasing number. A prestigious series of annual lectures on social anthropology has recently been launched under the auspices of the British Academy. The subject is now taught in more university and college departments than ever; the profession is even negotiating to introduce it as a sixth-form option in schools. Seen in terms of its public activity, there is no crisis in social anthropology.

On the whole, professional leaders of British anthropology are not impressed by alarmist talk about crisis.⁷ They would maintain, if pressed, that as the older ideas of social anthropology became exhausted, it was natural that one should turn to fresh sources of supply.⁸ So they prefer to talk of increasing specialisation, which

⁴Rodney Needham, "The Future of Social Anthropology: Disintegration or Metamorphosis?" in *Anniversary Contributions to Anthropology: Twelve Essays*, Leiden, 1970, p. 36 and p. 37.

⁵Edwin Ardener, "The New Anthropology and its Critics" in *Man* N. S. Vol. 6, No. 3, September 1971, p. 449.

⁶The most interesting of these include Banaji, "Crisis in British Anthropology", *New Left Review*, No. 64, 1970, Copans, "Pour une histoire et une sociologie des études Africaines", *Cahiers des études Africaine*, No. 43, 1971, and Leclerc, *Anthropologie et Colonialisme*, Paris, 1972.

⁷See for example I. M. Lewis, Introduction to *History and Social Anthropology*, London, 1968, p. xv.

⁸It is this line of reasoning that Firth adopts to explain and endorse the

they see as a sign of the intellectual vitality of the profession.⁹ And more positively, they affirm that classic functionalist assumptions are still viable.¹⁰

Yet we would be well-advised not to be too easily persuaded by such bland assurances. After all, it is a tendency of establishment leaders to maintain at least the myth if not the reality of smooth continuity. There can be no doubt that at the ideological level something has indeed “already happened to British anthropology” as Ardener put it, although this event is better seen as a disintegration of the Old Anthropology rather than as a crystallization of the New.

There was a time when social anthropology could and did define itself unambiguously as the study of primitive societies. “The scope of any science”, wrote Nadel shortly after the Second World War, “is to obtain and extend knowledge. In social anthropology as it is commonly understood we attempt to extend our knowledge of man and society to ‘primitive’ communities, ‘simpler peoples’, or ‘pre-literate societies’. . . . If an anthropologist asks naïvely why, if we are only interested in studying society writ large, we should turn to primitive cultures rather than our own civilization . . . the answer is simply that our own society is not the only one, and its phenomena not the same as those found, or apt to be found, in primitive society”.¹¹ Statements of this kind do not indicate a very sophisticated concern for the definition of a problematic, but they reflected an element of pragmatic truth, and it was this that gave social anthropology a practical plausibility. When Evans-Pritchard published his well-known Introduction to Social Anthropology in 1951, it seemed reasonably clear what the subject was about. “The social anthropologist”, he explained, “studies primitive societies directly, living among them for months or years, whereas sociological research is usually from documents and largely statistical. The social anthropologist studies societies as wholes—he studies their ecologies, their economics, their legal and political institutions, their family and kinship organizations, their religions, their technologies,

recent anthropological interest in Marx, in his British Academy lecture *The Sceptical Anthropologist? Social Anthropology and Marxist Views on Society*, London, 1972.

⁹See for example the Introduction by Max Gluckman and Fred Eggan to the first four volumes in the ASA Monographs series.

¹⁰See for example Social Science Research Council’s *Research in Social Anthropology*, London, 1968.

¹¹S. F. Nadel, *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*, London, 1953, p. 2.

their arts, etc., as parts of general social systems".¹² The doctrines and approaches that went by the name of functionalism thus gave social anthropology an assured and coherent style.

Today by contrast even this coherence of style is absent. The anthropologist now is someone who studies societies both 'simple' and 'complex'; resorts to participant observation, statistical techniques, historical archives and other literary sources; finds himself intellectually closer to economists or political scientists or psychoanalysts or structural linguists or animal behaviourists than he does to other anthropologists. To describe this state of affairs in terms of scholarly specialization is surely to indulge in mystification. The 'cognate disciplines' of politics, economics, etc., have been in existence from long before the classical functionalist phase of social anthropology. The question that must be asked is, why was it only comparatively recently that they have been discovered by anthropologists? Why is it, for example, that in 1940 anthropologists could write: "We have not found that the theories of political philosophers have helped us to understand the societies we have studied and we consider them of little scientific value";¹³ and in 1966: "We consider that the time is ripe for a dialogue, if not for marriage between anthropology and the other disciplines concerned with comparative politics".¹⁴ What made the time ripe? How was it that the separate disciplines (economics, politics, jurisprudence, etc.) which reflected the fragmented self-understanding of bourgeois society, with its own historical contradictions, were ready to inspire anthropology?

The answer I would suggest is to be sought in the fact that since the Second World War, fundamental changes have occurred in the world which social anthropology inhabits, changes which have affected the object, the ideological support and the organisational base of social anthropology itself. And in noting these changes we remind ourselves that anthropology does not merely apprehend the world in which it is located, but that the world also determines how anthropology will apprehend it.

The attainment of political independence by colonial, especially African countries in the late '50s and the early '60s accelerated the trend, apparent since the war, of socio-economic change, involving

¹²E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology*, London, 1951, p. 11.

¹³M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, (eds.), *African Political Systems*, London, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁴M. J. Swartz, V. W. Turner, A. Tuden, (eds.), *Political Anthropology*, Chicago, 1968, p. 9.

these countries in the planned development of national networks of communications, electrification and broadcasting; the promotion of education and of rural improvement projects; the shift of political power from 'tribal' leaders to the nationalistic bourgeoisie. Mainly as a consequence of nationalist expectations, scholars began to recover an indigenous history.¹⁵ Some nationalist writers denounced the colonial connections of anthropology. Thus increasingly the larger political-economic system thrust itself obtrusively into the anthropologist's framework, as did the relevance of the past, both colonial and pre-colonial. At another level, mounting criticism of the functionalist tradition in American mainstream sociology contributed indirectly towards the undermining of functionalist doctrine in British social anthropology.¹⁶ Since it had never adequately clarified the distinction between a totalising method (in which the formation of parts is explained with reference to a developing structure of determinations) and ethnographic holism (in which the different 'institutions' of a society are all described and linked one to another);¹⁷ and since it had in general confused structural determination with simultaneity, concrete developments in the world outside pushed functional anthropology until it collapsed into micro-sociology. So it is that today most anthropologists have chosen to re-orient themselves in relation to a multitude of fragmentary problems—political, economic, domestic, cultic, etc.—at a 'small-scale' level, and have found in this state of fragmentation their sense of intellectual direction provided for them by their relevant 'cognate discipline'. These changes in the object of study and in the ideological supports of social anthropology might by themselves have led to a disintegration of the discipline, but the same post-war period witnessed a significant development in the organisational base of social anthropology which saved it. In 1946

¹⁵Partly by challenging the functional anthropologist's dogma that only written records could provide a reliable basis for reconstructing history. Cf. J. Vansina's *Oral Tradition, a Study in Historical Methodology*, London, 1965, originally published in French in 1961. The general tendency of functional anthropology was to assimilate indigenous history to the category of myth—i.e. to view it in terms of instrumentality rather than of truth in the classical non-pragmatist sense.

¹⁶Leading sociologists in America,—e.g. Parsons, Merton, Homans—had always taken an active and sympathetic interest in British social anthropology, and their writings in turn were a source of inspiration and support to functional anthropologists. The attack on American structural-functionalism by such writers as R. Dahrendorf and C. Wright Mills was therefore bound to affect the doctrinal self-confidence of British social anthropology.

¹⁷That this distinction remains unclear to many anthropologists even today is apparent from the over-confident remarks of Levi-Strauss in his polemic

the Association of Social Anthropologists of the British Commonwealth (ASA) was founded with under 20 members; by 1962 the membership had risen to over 150, "even though election to membership required normally both the holding of a teaching or a research post in the Commonwealth and the attainment of either a post-graduate degree (usually a doctorate) or substantial publications".¹⁸ Once this base was in effective operation, social anthropology as institutionalised practice could dispense with the doctrinal specificity it had previously insisted on. Professional distinctiveness could now be maintained through an established network of vested interests—for which the ASA was a co-ordinating agency—rather than by any particular doctrines or methods. Anthropology was now truly a 'profession'.

Ironically, the same forces that were contributing to the ideological dissolution of classical functional anthropology had also contributed to a strengthening of its organisational base. Thus Fortes notes that during the Second World War in Britain, "economic, political and especially military necessities aroused a new and lively public interest in the African and Asiatic dependencies of Britain and her allies. The plans for post-war economic and social development in these areas generated under pressure of war-time experiences included big schemes of research in the natural and social sciences. The boom in anthropological studies thus foreshadowed began after Radcliffe-Brown had retired from the Oxford chair [in 1946]".¹⁹ It was in the year of Radcliffe-Brown's retirement that the ASA was founded by scholars who were already members of the long-established but far less exclusive Royal Anthropological Institute. An exclusive 'professional' organisation was clearly far better placed to exploit the new funding possibilities for research in the changing power-pattern of the post-war world.

It is not a matter of dispute that social anthropology emerged as a distinctive discipline at the beginning of the colonial era, that it

against Sartre: "It is possible that the requirement of 'totalisation' is a great novelty to some historians, sociologists and psychologists. It has been taken for granted by anthropologists ever since they learnt it from Malinowski". *The Savage Mind*, London, 1966, p. 250. What anthropologists learnt from Malinowski was ethnographic holism, not the method of totalisation.

¹⁸M. Gluckman and Fred Eggan, "Introduction" to *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology*, London, 1965, p. xii. By 1968 the Association had about 240 members (Social Science Research Council, *Research in Social Anthropology*, London, 1968, p. 79.)

¹⁹M. Fortes, (ed.) *Social Structure*, Oxford 1949, p. xiii.

became a flourishing academic profession towards its close, or that throughout this period its efforts were devoted to a description and analysis—carried out by Europeans, for a European audience—of non-European societies dominated by European power. And yet there is a strange reluctance on the part of most professional anthropologists to consider seriously the power structure within which their discipline has taken shape. The typical attitude is well represented by the following passage from Victor Turner's Introduction to Volume Three of *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, (Cambridge, 1971), in which the problem of the relationship between anthropology and colonialism is trivialised and dismissed in the space of two short paragraphs:

It used to be argued by officials of the *ancien régime* that anthropologists, immersed as they were in the specificities of African life, came to accept the structural perspective of their informants, became their spokesmen, and by their words and works impeded the efforts of district and provincial administrators to govern efficiently. Some were even accused by white settlers and European civil servants of being 'Reds', 'socialists' and 'anarchists'. It is now asseverated by African leaders and administrators, down to the district level, that anthropologists before independence were 'apologists of colonialism' and subtle agents of colonial supremacy who studied African customs merely to provide the dominant white minority with information damaging to native interests but normally opaque to white investigation. Thus yesterday's 'socialist' has become today's 'reactionary'. Sir Alan Burns (1957) and Frantz Fanon (1961) are improbably allied.

It is true, of course, that in their personal capacity anthropologists, like everyone else, have a wide spectrum of political views. Some are known 'conservatives'; others lean far to the 'left'. But as professionals, anthropologists are trained, over almost as many years as doctors, to collect certain kinds of information as 'participant observers' which will enable them, whatever may be their personal views, to present as objectively as the current level of their discipline's development permits, a coherent picture of the sociocultural system they have elected to spend some years of their lives in studying, and of the kinds of processes that go on in it. It is their ultimate duty to publish their findings and expose them, together with an exact description of the means by which they were obtained, to the international public of their anthropological colleagues and

beyond that to the 'world of learning'. Eventually, news of their work and analyses, through their own 'popular' writings or through citations, résumés (not infrequently bowdlerised) and digests by non-anthropologists, seeps through to the general reading public. Time thus winnows their reports and rids them of much that is biased and 'loaded'. There is no point in special pleading or tendentious argument; there are professional standards against which all reports are measured, and, in the end, the common sense of the common man. (pp.1-2)

But to speak about 'professional standards' and the authority of 'common sense' is surely no less naïve than are wild remarks about anthropology being merely the handmaiden of colonialism. There are today no clear-cut standards in anthropology, there is only a flourishing professional organisation; and the common sense of Western common man, himself an alienated and exploited being, is hardly reliable as a critical test of anthropological knowledge. And yet the easy assurance of Turner's remarks is itself an indication of the kind of commonsense world that the typical anthropologist still shares, and knows he shares, with those whom he primarily addresses.

We have been reminded time and again by anthropologists of the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment in which the intellectual inspiration of anthropology is supposed to lie.²⁰ But anthropology is also rooted in an unequal power encounter between the West and Third World which goes back to the emergence of bourgeois Europe, an encounter in which colonialism is merely one historical moment.²¹ It is this encounter that gives the West access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated, and thus not only generates a certain kind of universal understanding, but also re-enforces the inequalities in capacity between the European and the non-European worlds (and derivatively, between the Europeanized elites and the 'traditional' masses in the Third World). We are today becoming increasingly aware of the fact that information and understanding produced by bourgeois disciplines like anthropology are acquired and used most readily by those with the greatest capacity for exploitation. This follows partly from the structure of research, but more especially

²⁰See for example E. E. Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., M. Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, London, 1969, R. Firth, op. cit.

²¹C. Levi-Strauss was one of the first anthropologists to note this important fact, although he has barely gone beyond noting it. See *The Scope of Anthropology*, London, 1967, pp. 51-2.

from the way in which these disciplines objectify their knowledge. It is because the powerful who support research expect the kind of understanding which will ultimately confirm them in their world that anthropology has not very easily turned to the production of radically subversive forms of understanding. It is because anthropological understanding is overwhelmingly objectified in European languages that it is most easily accommodated to the mode of life, and hence to the rationality, of the world power which the West represents.

We must begin from the fact that the basic reality which made pre-war social anthropology a feasible and effective enterprise was the power relationship between dominating (European) and dominated (non-European) cultures. We then need to ask ourselves how this relationship has affected the practical pre-conditions of social anthropology; the uses to which its knowledge was put; the theoretical treatment of particular topics; the mode of perceiving and objectifying alien societies; and the anthropologist's claim of political neutrality.

The colonial power structure made the object of anthropological study accessible and safe—because of it sustained physical proximity between the observing European and the living non-European became a practical possibility. It made possible the kind of human intimacy on which anthropological fieldwork is based, but ensured that that intimacy should be one-sided and provisional. It is worth noting that virtually no European anthropologist has been won over personally to the subordinated culture he has studied; although countless non-Europeans, having come to the West to study its culture, have been captured by its values and assumptions, and also contributed to an understanding of it.

The reason for this asymmetry is the dialectic of world power. Anthropologists can claim to have contributed to the cultural heritage of the societies they study by a sympathetic recording of indigenous forms of life that would otherwise be lost to posterity. But they have also contributed, sometimes indirectly, towards maintaining the structure of power represented by the colonial system. That such contributions were not in the final reckoning crucial for the vast empire which received knowledge and provided patronage does not mean that it was not critical for the small discipline which offered knowledge and received that patronage. For the structure of power certainly affected the theoretical choice and treatment of what social anthropology objectified—more so in some matters than in others. (We should in any case avoid the tendency found

among some critics and defenders of social anthropology of speaking as though the doctrines and analyses labelled 'functionalism' were parts of a highly integrated logical structure.) Its analyses—of holistic politics most of all, of cosmological systems least of all—were affected by a readiness to adapt to colonial ideology. At any rate the general drift of anthropological understanding did not constitute a basic challenge to the unequal world represented by the colonial system. Nor was the colonial system as such—within which the social objects studied were located—analysed by the social anthropologist. To argue that the anthropologist's expertise did not qualify him for considering fruitfully such a system is to confess that this expertise was malformed. For any object which is subordinated and manipulated is partly the product of a power relationship, and to ignore this fact is to miscomprehend the nature of that object.

Clearly the anthropologist's claim to political neutrality cannot be separated from all that has been said so far. Thus the scientific definition of anthropology as a disinterested (objective, value-free) study of 'other cultures' helped to mark off the anthropologist's enterprise from that of colonial Europeans (the trader, the missionary, the administrator and other men of practical affairs); but did it not also render him unable to envisage and argue for a radically different political future for the subordinate people he studied and thus serve to merge that enterprise *in effect* with that of dominant status-quo Europeans? If the anthropologist sometimes endorsed or condemned particular social changes affecting "his people", did he, in this ad hoc commitment, do any more or any less than many colonial Europeans who accepted colonialism as a system? If he was sometimes accusingly called 'a Red', 'a socialist' or 'an anarchist' by administrators and settlers, did this not merely reveal one facet of the hysterically intolerant character of colonialism as a system, with which he chose nevertheless to live *professionally* at peace?

I believe it is a mistake to view social anthropology in the colonial era as primarily an aid to colonial administration, or as the simple reflection of colonial ideology. I say this not because I subscribe to the anthropological establishment's comfortable view of itself, but because bourgeois consciousness, of which social anthropology is merely one fragment, has always contained within itself profound contradictions and ambiguities—and therefore the potentialities for transcending itself. For these contradictions to be adequately apprehended it is essential to turn to the historical power

relationship between the West and the Third World and to examine the ways in which it has been dialectically linked to the practical conditions, the working assumptions and the intellectual product of all disciplines representing the European understanding of non-European humanity.

The papers that follow analyse and document ways in which anthropological thinking and practice have been affected by British colonialism, but they approach this topic from different points of view and at different levels. All but Roger Owen's were presented first at a Seminar held in Hull in September 1972. Although each contributor has had the opportunity to revise his paper in the light of discussions that were held at the Seminar, no editorial attempt has been made to impose any unity on them, or for that matter to ensure that together they represent a comprehensive coverage of the problem. They stand as individual contributions to an argument that is only just beginning, and in which as yet only a handful of anthropologists are seriously interested. (It should be noted that in over a quarter of a century since it was founded, the ASA has never regarded colonialism as a topic worthy of a conference.)

The group which met wishes to thank the University of Hull for providing funds and facilities for the Seminar. Most especially, we wish to thank Ian Cunnison, Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Hull, without whose active help and constant encouragement the Seminar would probably not have taken place. It was he who canvassed Anthropology Departments in various Universities for possible contributors, and undertook most of the organisational duties in preparation for the meeting.

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Part 1: General Studies

**EMPIRICISM AND IMPERIALISM:
A REVIEW OF THE NEW LEFT CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL
ANTHROPOLOGY**

Peter Forster

The question of the relationship between anthropology and colonialism has been raised in various quarters recently by various writers who declare that they are approaching their subject from the point of view of a left-wing political value-orientation. The differences in scope, origin and perspective of the various writers are considerable, and some limitation on the subject-matter must be imposed. Particular attention will here be focused on three different sources, one British, one *Current Anthropology* Review Article, and one French. The British source will be the articles that have appeared in the *New Left Review*: Goddard¹, Banaji², and, to a lesser extent, Anderson³. The *Current Anthropology* source will be the symposium on social responsibilities, with contribution from Berreman⁴, Gjessing⁵, and Gough⁶. The French source will be the recently published book by Leclerc⁷, which deals explicitly with the

¹D. Goddard, "Limits of British Anthropology", *New Left Review*, No. 58 (1969), pp. 79-89.

²J. Banaji, "The Crisis of British Anthropology", *New Left Review*, No. 64 (1970), pp. 71-85.

³P. Anderson, "Components of the National Culture", *New Left Review*, No. 50 (1968) pp. 3-57. Reprinted in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn, "Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action", Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, pp. 214-284. Page references are to the reprint.

⁴G. D. Berreman, "Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 9 (1968) pp. 391-396.

⁵G. Gjessing, "The Social Responsibility of the Social Scientists", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 9 (1968), pp. 397-402.

⁶K. Gough, "New Proposals for Anthropologists", *Current Anthropology*,

question of the relationship between anthropology and colonialism from the point of view of 'critical' anthropology; although appearing in France, this latter work has as its prime focus of attention the British school of anthropology. This list is far from exhaustive; however, the positions adopted by the various writers here considered are sufficiently diverse and unfamiliar to mainstream British social anthropology to make it worthwhile to examine their arguments carefully. The basic unity of the critique revolves around discussion of the colonial situation and the place of anthropology within it. Sometimes the focus of attention is British imperialism (Gjessing, Leclerc, Goddard, Banaji, Anderson), sometimes American neo-imperialism (Berreman, Gough). The stand taken may be the theoretical limitations of classic anthropology (Leclerc, Anderson, Goddard, Banaji) or alternatively, a plea for social responsibility, value-awareness, and politically relevant anthropological investigation (Berreman, Gjessing, Gough). Other source-material discussing the general question of anthropology and colonialism, or of the future of anthropology, will be referred to in the text, and some other writers mentioned may well wish to associate themselves with the New Left; however, I have deliberately avoided an unfortunate tendency characteristic of certain recent exercises in 'critical' or 'radical' sociology, of investigating the left-wing credentials of the authors considered before considering their contributions as valid statements of an argument.

The origins of the New Left critique of social anthropology are fairly easy to discern. Politically and historically interest in this kind of introspection stems from the dismemberment of colonial empires which were previously the stamping ground of anthropologists; from the sociological concomitants of 'development' in the Third World; and more recently from the exposure of anthropological work sponsored by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, and the successful passing of a resolution about the Vietnam war at the American Anthropological Association meeting in 1966. Theoretically, the critique forms part of a more general disillusionment with functionalism (a characteristic of radical sociology too); with empiricism, sometimes within the framework of criticisms voiced elsewhere about the lack of comparison in a supposedly comparative science⁸, sometimes as part of a general critique of the lack of

Vol. 9 (1968), pp. 403-407.

⁷G. Leclerc, *Anthropologie et Colonialisme*, Paris, Fayard, 1972.

⁸See particularly E. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (title-essay), London, Athlone Press, 1961, pp. 1-27.

anthropological theory (Goddard, Banaji); and again, as part of a general disillusionment with microscopic studies (Gjessing, Gough). Goddard and Banaji both hold that British social anthropology has suffered from over-concentration on normative and jural phenomena; Goddard advocates a greater concern with the metaphysical elements in Durkheim's thought, while Banaji prefers a greater concern with Lévi-Straussian structural anthropology, considering that its most fruitful aspects have been either ignored or "naturalised" in British anthropology. Leclerc also, where he puts forward theoretical proposals, suggests that anthropology should avoid the objectification characteristic of its colonial past, and is critical of the behaviourism and empiricism of British anthropology; he mentions with approval writers such as Griaule⁹, for whom native cosmology is not to be seen as a mere superstructure: interpretative analysis is not to be made at the expense of indigenous interpretation. Finally, a common criticism voiced on both political and theoretical grounds is that classical anthropology has either ignored or taken insufficient account of the colonial situation. Thus Goddard criticises British anthropology for speaking of "primitive" rather than "colonised" peoples, and for its lack of a total conception of the colonial situation. Anderson is critical of Evans-Pritchard for his lack of attention in *The Nuer*¹⁰ to the colonial situation while at the same time approving of Leach (*Political Systems of Highland Burma*¹¹) for the incorporation of the colonial situation into his analysis. Banaji, by contrast, regards Leach as equally culpable in his lack of attention to the colonial situation. Leclerc suggests that much British anthropology, especially applied anthropology, was closely integrated with Indirect Rule. This he suggests prevented classical anthropologists from seeing the colonial *system* as a political and historical problem. The *Current Anthropology* symposium here considered is more concerned with neo-imperialism than with palaeo-imperialism; none the less, Gjessing particularly is critical of the a-historical (Radcliffe-Brown) or anti-historical (Malinowski) perspective of classical anthropology in the colonial situation, and of the functionalist approach which tended to be reformist with regard to the colonial administration.

Thus as can be expected from a list of issues raised by writers grouped together as the 'New Left', both political and academic

⁹M. Griaule, *Dieu d'Eau*, Paris, Editions du Chene, 1948.

¹⁰E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940.

¹¹E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London, Athlone Press, 1954.

issues are raised, the academic issues being primarily raised in the authors by their political concerns. The academic issues will be the main concern of this discussion, but the political proposals put forward are suggested by some authors as binding on the anthropological community generally, and as inseparable from the academic issues, and are too important to be ignored. I do not intend to speak of the seriousness of purpose of those who espouse the political views concerned, of the importance of the issues they raise, or of the validity of the views they hold. The importance of the political views held by the writers concerned will be taken to be the effect of these on academic scholarship. This basically resolves itself around three areas of concern: the question of a value-free social anthropology and social science generally, and the role of the anthropologist in society; the concept of relevance; and the concept of commitment. These, in different ways, are the concern particularly of the Current Anthropology Social Responsibilities Symposium.

The question of value-freedom in social anthropology and the role of the anthropologist in society are raised particularly by Berreman and Gjessing, as a response generally to the literature on responsibility in science, including the sociological literature, and more specifically to the Vietnam resolution at the AAA, and to the exposure of anthropological complicity with the CIA. Particularly in the context of serious political issues of this nature, it is welcome that the question of a value-free anthropology has been raised, as it should be in all social science; but if the discussion of the issue is to have any lasting value, a number of matters need to be clarified. This is a useful exercise, as it can also be linked up with the general question of the effect that palaeo-colonialism had on an anthropologist's academic work. Many important issues are raised by the whole question of what it means to be value-free; these have been raised many times before by non-anthropologists, but a number of common confusions remain. Thus, as far as I am aware, no social scientist has ever suggested that the investigator of society should have no value-commitments at all, and Weber strongly repudiated such a suggestion. The issue of value-freedom unfortunately does tend to submerge different issues which are easily separable. For a start, the question of value-freedom is frequently confused with the question of objectivity. In his critique of some tendencies in radical sociology, Bandyopadhyay¹² emphasises the importance of

¹²P. Bandyopadhyay, "One Sociology or Many—some issues in Radical Sociology", *Sociological Review*, Vol. 19 (1971), 5-29.

this distinction, indicating that left-wing ideology has rejected any suggestion of a value-free social science but has emphasised the importance of objectivity. In a different context, Maquet¹³ has raised the question of objectivity in specific relation to social anthropology. In the context of the present discussion, to affirm the value of objectivity would presumably be to agree with the seriously politically committed writers who plead for a relevant anthropology. If, for instance, Gough's new proposals for anthropologists are to be put into practice and thought to make a valuable contribution to the advancement of socialist revolution, the findings must be objectively valid. The same idea of objectivity would be even more important to someone with the political commitment of Frank¹⁴, for instance, in the *Current Anthropology* discussion. If the politically committed and active anthropologist is to put his knowledge to any use for the revolution, "like the guerrilla doctor who treats his wounded comrades", what he has to say had better be true. Likewise, only objectively valid information collected by the CIA can be considered dangerous; if information available to the CIA is not objectively valid, it can only work against the interests of its neo-imperialist policies. Pseudo-subjectivity is a dangerous luxury for radical anthropologists to engage in, and can be just as misleading as pseudo-objectivity. To examine the limits of objectivity in science is a very valuable exercise, but the end in view in this exercise must be to enable the scientist to move from the less objective to the more objective. The issue has also been raised not in relation to "objectivity" but in relation to "objectification" (Leclerc, p. 196); I shall return to this in considering the *theoretical* implications of the New Left critique.

A serious issue is raised by a concept which again arises out of the issues surrounding the idea of a value-free social science, namely the concept of relevance. Berreman and Gjessing both suggest that anthropology today is in danger of becoming "irrelevant", and also are heavily critical of the Ivory Tower. A number of issues again need to be disentangled here, and a number of questions need to be asked. Firstly if one accepts that anthropology arose largely out of the needs of colonial administration, anthropology will indeed suffer from a crisis of identity, now that the colonial empires are dismembered. More generally, however, the ob-

¹³J. J. Maquet, "Objectivity in Anthropology", *Current Anthropology*, Vol 5 (1964), pp. 47-55.

¹⁴A. G. Frank, *Comment to Current Anthropology Social Responsibilities Symposium*, *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 9 (1968), pp. 412-414.

vious question of relevance for what? suggests itself. Gough, to her credit, is completely consistent in putting forward counter-proposals to the activities sponsored by the CIA, drawing the anthropological community's attention to these, and declaring her own value-orientation. There is a danger however, present throughout the *Current Anthropology* symposium, of harnessing most or all anthropological research to immediate short-term aims rather than to development of the discipline, and in consigning those who have fundamental theoretical aims in view to the Ivory Tower. In the first place, future generations of scholars might have cause to see research geared to short-term aims as irrelevant, just as applied anthropology that existed in the colonial situation is now thought to be irrelevant. Anthropological research has usually been esoteric, but esoteric subjects can be of fundamental importance to the comprehensibility of history and society and this to my mind has been one of the most valuable distinctive contributions of anthropology to the social sciences generally. Do we for instance consign Gough's work on the Nayar and matrilineal kinship to the scrap-heap on the grounds of 'irrelevance'? Some of these issues are raised in the discussion to the symposium. Klejn, a Soviet contributor, is critical of this approach:

I agree completely with Gjessing when he holds that social anthropologists should approach the problems of the 'rising nations of the non-Western world' with a view to satisfying the requirements and interests of these nations themselves. I am worried, however, about the implication that we should reduce the aims of social anthropology to such narrowly pragmatic ones. Does this turn out to be the same as Malinowski's functionalism, but inside out—the same pragmatism, merely diverted from the British colonial administration to the local national interests? Of course, it would be much better to have the 'ten anthropologists' continue the job of the 'ten troops'; but I think that to limit thus the aims of our science would benefit neither the science nor the rising nations. General theoretical research is important; we need to know the laws of social life, the lessons of social history¹⁵.

Lewis in the discussion is also heavily critical of the authors' comments on relevance¹⁶:

¹⁵L. S. Klejn, *Comment to Current Anthropology Social Responsibilities Symposium*, loc. cit., pp. 415-417.

¹⁶I. M. Lewis, *Comment to Current Anthropology Social Responsibilities Symposium*, loc. cit., pp. 415-417.

I disagree with Gjessing's diagnosis that social anthropology is 'today in grave danger of becoming irrelevant'. This, indeed, is the exact opposite of what Kathleen Gough's gloomy assessment of the strategic importance ascribed to anthropological research in the United States would suggest...Social anthropology has never been *merely* an aid to enlightened colonial administration, nor should it be viewed now as *merely* an aid to development in new states. When anthropology ceases to have anything of wider interest to say, it deserves to die.

Lewis here points to the crucial danger of over-emphasis on relevance. If it leads to nothing more than the reiteration of certain views of society which anyone can hold whether he knows any anthropology or not, there is no point in having any anthropology at all. The issue of fundamental importance is surely the development of the discipline to further the comprehensibility of history and society. In the past, it has frequently been conservatives who have insisted on immediate relevance and immediate practical applicability of the findings of scientists, while those of more radical opinions have defended the value of fundamental academic definition of problems. In the current discussion of relevance, one often finds these positions reversed.

The concept of relevance leads directly to the concept of commitment, or partisanship. As with relevance, so with commitment, the question 'commitment to what?' immediately springs to mind. Are all social commitments acceptable, and if not, why not? In the case of Berreman and Gjessing's suggestions, notions of commitment are expressed which could include any kind of social commitment. In the discussion, Gulick quite reasonably remarks that¹⁷:

Consider those anthropologists, mentioned by Berreman, who are working professionally for the United States government for the primary purpose of facilitating the militaristic policies of the United States in South-East Asia. They could quite logically claim that they are being professionally responsible to society. There is an underlying assumption throughout discussion of commitment that political commitment can only be to left-wing ideology. This is surely absurd to anyone who has the slightest degree of political awareness and one could consign the perpetrators of such a myth quite rightly to the Ivory Tower. The papers here considered show quite enough disunity of commitment to the Left, let alone anywhere else, to suggest anything other than that each an-

¹⁷J. Gulick, *Comment to Current Anthropology Social Responsibilities Symposium*, loc. cit., p. 414.

thropologist can and will choose his own barricades. The real issue is the extent to which anthropologists have the right *qua* anthropologists to make collective commitments. Appeals to truth, humanism, and similar generalised beliefs exclude some commitment but accept most; the arguments for a more precise collective political commitment on the part of the anthropological community generally are not adequately presented in the *Current Anthropology* symposium. Nor does it help the advancement of the discipline to make declarations such as Haber and Haber's "We are not intellectuals above it all who say the truth to whomever will listen or asks: we are *partisans*"¹⁸. It is surely any academic's right to engage in partisanship, but it is surely also any academic institution's right to insist that its members engage in academic work. The call to subject all academic work to partisanship helps least of all those who sincerely wish to be both scholars and partisans. Further problems arise with partisanship when anthropological investigation in the field is considered. If partisanship is carried on *in the field*, the accessibility of fields of investigation for future scholars is placed in jeopardy, and anthropology is in danger of being associated in the minds of informants with a particular political and social commitment. The well-known association of anthropology with colonial administration is a good case in point; Jaspan, speaking of Hurgonje's research in Sumatra, which was openly associated with colonial ideology, warns that:

The consequences of partisan commitment almost seventy years ago and at the opposite end of a large island are still to be felt, and have a negative effect, on rapport formation by present day ethnographers. This should, if nothing else, suggest to those who tolerate or justify commitment its unpredicable consequences for other ethnographers and for the profession as a whole¹⁹.

At the same meeting at which the Vietnam resolution was passed, the AAA expressed criticism of one form of ulterior commitment:

There...is good reason to believe that some anthropologists have used their professional standing and the names of their academic institutions as cloaks for the collection of intelligence information and for intelligence operations²⁰.

¹⁸Quoted in A. G. Frank, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

¹⁹M. A. Jaspan, "Anthropology and Commitment to Political Causes", *Anthropological Forum*, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 212-219.

²⁰"Statement on Problems of Anthropological Research and Ethics by Fellows of the American Anthropological Association", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 69 (1967), p. 382.

The implications of this criticism must be borne in mind for other forms of ulterior motive in the field. Quite apart from moral objections, ulterior use of the anthropologist's position to support colonialism or the CIA is dangerous for the development of the discipline. Still, the anthropologist committed to left-wing ideology must also consider the implications of politically laudable ulterior motives for the development of the discipline as well.

I shall turn now to examine the New Left contribution to theoretical development of anthropology. One can state at the outset that the contributions to this subject at any rate have the ultimate welfare of the discipline in mind and are more worthy of being considered seriously by the profession as a whole. The argument common to them all is that anthropology has suffered *theoretically* from its association with colonialism. Theoretical critiques are presented by Goddard and Banaji, and to a lesser extent by Anderson and Leclerc. Anderson, Goddard and Banaji form a consistent series of critiques and a number of themes reappear in them all. The characteristic feature is the emphasis on the way in which British society gave rise to a distinctively empirical Weltanschauung, eliminating metaphysical elements, at the same time failing to articulate a conception of society as a totality. This criticism is voiced notably in Anderson in relation to British intellectual life as a whole. He stresses the lack of distinctive British sociology and the lack of acceptance of Marxism in Britain. Anthropology, he suggests, is a partial exception, and has been distinguished as a disciplinary tradition from sociology (in a way in which Durkheim, for instance, was not interested). A holistic view, and a functionalist framework, were adopted in the study of colonised peoples. This was also a consensus model, in which even conflict could be seen as producing ultimate cohesion (Gluckman). By excluding the colonial administration from their field of investigation (a good instance being Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer), and by so doing concentrating on fairly safe subjects, British social anthropology during the colonial period suffered *theoretically*. Only after the second World War, and the crisis in the imperial system, was any theoretical advance made, notably by Leach in *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Leach also stands outside the general empiricism of British academic life in his recognition of Lévi-Strauss and his use of structural analysis of myth. This development is characteristic of the distinctive place of anthropology in the national culture:

Both traditional functionalism and the structuralism of Leach's later work are anomalies for English empiricism. Anthropology

formed a deviant sector within English culture, because its application was outside it. The exception here is a corollary of the rule²¹.

This dogma of the New Left Review, the empiricism of British culture, is a feature pervading the general theoretical critique of social anthropology by both Goddard and Banaji. The focus of the critique is different, but Goddard and Banaji both find British anthropology just as culpable in its over-empiricism as are other aspects of British intellectual life. British social anthropology is, if anything, characteristic of British empiricism rather than deviant from it. Goddard centres his critique on the notion of structure that British social anthropology has worked with, which is deficient, he argues, in being identified with the totality of empirically given social relationships in a tribal society. This highly empirical concept was easily integrated into functionalism by Radcliffe-Brown; no investigation was made of hidden relations, principles, or forms, or even of the possibility of constructing models or theories to explain observed phenomena. As part of the structural-functional framework, a general normative emphasis and particularly, a jural focus prevailed. The jural focus was derived from Maine, and notably from Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society*. It permeated the study of all custom supported by binding sanctions, and notably, the study of kinship. This approach, Goddard argues, has severe theoretical limitations. There is an emphasis on normative facts, but there is no recognition that normative facts may be shaped by covert, non-normative "facts", accessible only to critical analysis. Method and theory completely converge. Durkheim was the main theoretical inspiration for social anthropology in Britain, but his framework was highly selectively adopted:

Durkheim's rationalist, Cartesian mode of analysis of social phenomena, by reducing them to their constituent elements, was interpreted uneasily as a 'sociological positivism' and thus made to correspond as nearly as possible to the methodological conditions of traditional empiricism. The 'metaphysical' elements on Durkheim—society as a phenomenon *sui generis*, the apparently outrageous analysis of religion—were quietly suppressed or conveniently forgotten²².

Thus British empiricism expressed itself again in British social anthropology, and the issues central to Durkheim's preoccupations

²¹Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

²²Goddard, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

were dismissed or misunderstood. Such is Goddard's explanation for the pervasiveness of empiricism and functionalism in British social anthropology. The dogma of the essentially empiricist character of British thought is again reasserted, in a yet stronger form, by Banaji who concentrates his attention on post-war anthropology, whose roots he traces in the global revolution against colonialism and in the growth of structural anthropology, the second reflecting the first. Some of Goddard's criticisms are reiterated, but the focus of Banaji's critique is primarily on the diachronic variant of functionalism, seen particularly in the work of Leach and Needham, and on the response in British social anthropology to the work of Lévi-Strauss. The argument is not always easy to decode, as the pages of Banaji's article are bespattered with trendy structuralist jargon, but the main strands can be seen as a continued critique of over-empiricism and functionalism, which have continued to be characteristic of post-war British social anthropology. Functionalism was in fact a non-theory, a theory which arose out of the practice of fieldwork, but the practice of fieldwork sometimes found functionalism wanting, Leach's work in Burma being a notable case in point. There was an anti-functionalist response *within* functionalism, from Leach, foreshadowed by Gluckman's response to Malinowski, which still appealed to the idea of a self-stabilising system. This stood in sharp contrast to Lévi-Strauss's opposition to functionalism, which concerned itself with the unconscious nature of collective phenomena and in this way broke sharply from empiricism. There has been a response in Britain to Lévi-Strauss which can be seen as the "naturalisation" of structuralism in accordance with British empiricism. Here we see an argument which corresponds closely to Goddard's assessment of the British reaction to Durkheim. Leach, the main British expositor of Lévi-Strauss, none the less took an over-empiricist model in both *Pul Eliya* and in *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. He distinguished between actors' conscious models and the empirical field so as to conform to the functionalist distinction between rules and behaviour, but it never occurred to him that the anthropologist might perceive a different reality transcending both of these. Needham, for his part, regretted the over-empiricism and lack of theory in British anthropology, but himself applied structuralism only to systems of prescriptive alliance. *Mythologiques* was neglected, and *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* was misunderstood either as a model or in its entirety. Structuralism, however, Banaji admits, has an ambiguous relation to history, and part of its limited impact on British anthropology

is due to its own limitations. Its focus of attention is quite different from that of functionalism:

Structuralism's break with functional anthropology consisted in a sharp and deliberate displacement of the entire axis of comprehension from the phenomenal space of an immediate intuitive encounter with the savage to the noumenal space of *pensée sauvage*, established like any code, by the rigorous non-intuitive procedures of science²³.

Thus while providing a break from functionalism, structuralism was uneven and distorted in its impact on British anthropology. British empiricists have done the same to Lévi-Strauss as they have done in the past to Durkheim.

Thus the critique of British social anthropology in the New Left Review can be seen as part of a general critique of empiricist philosophy which is seen as a characteristically British phenomenon. It remains therefore to consider Leclerc, a French critic of British social anthropology, who again stresses a critical, Marxist perspective. His approach centres on the relation between anthropology and colonialism, present but peripheral to the British New Left, but the key problem to Leclerc. Two issues stand out: first, and most important, the relationship between functionalism and colonialism; second, a critical view of the "objectification" characteristics of British social anthropology (to which structuralism, however, is not regarded as the automatic answer). Leclerc suggests that functionalist anthropology had no conception of colonialism as a system, and points to the ambiguous use of 'primitive' in anthropological work. In contrast to the Victorian evolutionists, who *did* have a conception of colonialism (justifying it), classic functional anthropologists saw colonialism in a neutral manner, as a specific form of social change. There were schools of applied anthropology, but the proponents of these supported Indirect Rule and hardly saw the colonial *system* as a political and historical problem. No total critique of colonial reality was provided, and functionalism was unable to provide one. American cultural anthropology was more anti-colonialist in its interests, and in the 1930-1950 period American anthropologists have been to some degree spokesmen for the indigenous inhabitants of colonised societies. Ideas of cultural relativism could compete with colonial ideology.

On the question of objectification, Leclerc considers particularly the reaction of the Third World to classical anthropology. The

²³Banaji, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

sovereign detachment characteristic of classical anthropology has not been characteristic of the African response, where objectification has been criticised. Ethnocentrism has been much more difficult to eradicate than the post-Victorian anthropologists thought. The concepts of acculturation and modernisation have also been criticised for not having given sufficient weight to exploitation and domination. Leclerc does not present any definite new proposals for anthropologists; he recognises the ambiguity of the concept of development, and the fact that some Marxists have supported colonialism. In his theoretical conclusions, however, he does give approval to the kind of anthropological work that is not 'objectifying'. He gives approval to the work of Griaule, Oscar Lewis and Jan Myrdal, but still stresses the importance of scientific investigation. Thus objectification is not to be rejected by the rejection of objectivity; the difficulty of translation of cultures is recognised as problematic, though Leclerc himself does not propose an alternative solution.

Despite the diversity of conclusions in the work here reviewed, a basic unity of concern of the writers here considered can be seen to be the general relationship between anthropology and colonialism. As one can expect, this is likely to be a concern of the intellectual Left and it remains to assess the attention that the discipline as a whole might pay to this critique. The whole concept of development is too ambiguous, from diverse standpoints, to enable one to say retrospectively what anthropologists should have done about the colonial situation. As far as the issues of relevance and commitment are concerned, it can only be stated that the advocates of such stances are putting forward a heavily *empiricist* view of social anthropology. If anthropology is to be geared directly to practical politics, the empirical conclusions are of major importance; structuralism as well as classical anthropology would be ruled out by such an emphasis on relevance and commitment. The British New Left critique, in sharp contrast, takes empiricism as one of its main targets of attack, and Banaji, at any rate, is favourable to structuralism. But although left-wing political value-orientations have led to widely divergent views of anthropology, it remains true that there are important issues to be raised about the relationship between social anthropology and the colonial situation, and the effect that had on the content of discipline during the colonial period. It can be argued that the colonial situation did make for a tendency to concentrate on empirical studies, particularly in Britain where the system of Indirect Rule was adopted. It might also be argued

that the concern for the collection of unfamiliar ethnographic data might have led some anthropologists to concentrate in their empirical studies on the *traditional elements* of the societies they investigated (though the discipline itself has produced some sharp criticism of this kind of approach²⁴). There is considerable justification for the view that functionalism and empiricism are closely related, functionalism (particularly in anthropology) emerging as a non-theory, as Goddard and Banaji both suggest. The use of the functionalist framework produced a behaviourist, normative focus in research reports, and by taking inadequate account of actor's definitions of the situation (which may not coincide) ignored the basic conflicts and power-relationships in society. The latter perspective, while by no means confined to Marxists, is the perspective that a Marxist would adopt. The issue of lack of comparison, lack of theory, and over-empiricism in social anthropology has been raised before, and a realisation of some of the issues here outlined might be helpful for those who would like to see a more theoretical anthropology. None the less, if one examines certain trends in so-called radical sociology, one should be wary of an over-contempt for the empirical. Bandyopadhyay, criticising some of these tendencies, points to one form which entertains:

The belief that sociology is not only non-objective, but cannot even be empirical, since to treat the enquiry as an empirical one is to accept some version of the correspondence theory of truth and this would lead to one-dimensional analysis leaving out the role of alternative visions or 'utopias' in changing social relations. Sociology, if empirical, would be insufficiently dialectic!²⁵

This position, associated notably with the Frankfurt school of sociologists, excludes any kind of integration of theory and empirical research: this latter problem being one that sociology has grappled with from its beginnings, and is worthy of investigation in anthropology too. If a non-empirical social science is one extreme position, then empiricism is the other extreme. It can be seen that an *empiricist* social science is likely to produce a functionalist perspective,

²⁴See particularly J. C. Mitchell, "Theoretical Orientations in African Urban Studies" in M. Banton (Ed.): *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1966; A. L. Epstein, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, Manchester U.P., 1958. M. Gluckman, "Anthropological Problems arising from the African Industrial Revolution" in A. Southall (Ed.): *Social Change in Modern Africa*, London, O.U.P., 1961, pp. 67-83.

²⁵Bandyopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

empiricism and functionalism frequently being components of the actor's conscious model of his own society. Obviously one can see from Talcott Parsons that not all functionalism is empiricist, but even here, as Mills²⁶ points out, one can see the easy coexistence in American sociology of Grand Theory and Abstracted Empiricism.

Another aspect of functionalism is its a-or anti-historical approach and it is this particularly that made for some of the deficiencies in some anthropological work in the colonial situation: a different matter it should be stressed from sweeping assertions about 'anthropologists ignoring the colonial situation'. As Evans-Pritchard points out, social anthropology has an important part to play in making the history of colonised territories more than just a history of colonial rule in such territories.²⁷ Social anthropology, like social history and many branches of sociology has made a distinctive contribution to the study of society in its investigation of those affected by the decisions of powerful men: in contrast to history (as an Arts subject), economics, and political science, which have generally been far more concerned with the study of the powerful than with those affected by political decisions. Social anthropology has never regarded the colonised as "irrelevant" and only the colonialists as "relevant": but if their comments on the "irrelevance" of microscopic studies are to be believed, some would seem to prefer to concentrate on the study of colonial rule.

Fortunately there is a tendency in a number of monographs to criticise the leading assumptions of functionalism and to adopt a historical perspective. Leach in *Political Systems of Highland Burma* questions a number of leading functionalist assumptions, notably the equilibrium model, behaviourism, the assumption of homogeneity, and the non-historical approach. Asad²⁸ in *The Kababish Arabs* is also critical of the equilibrium model and the behaviourist approach, and regards consensus as problematic rather than as given. It is true that studies of this kind are the product of empirical field-work, but this does not invalidate them, and they are clearly integrated into the mainstream of social science. There is no reason, as Banaji seems to suggest, to adopt a structuralist paradigm merely because it is called social anthropology. The fact

²⁶Mills, C. Wright, *The Sociological Imagination*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959.

²⁷Evans-Pritchard, E. E. "Anthropology and History" in *Essays in Social Anthropology*, London, Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 64.

²⁸T. Asad. *The Kababish Arabs: Power, Authority and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe*. London, Hurst, 1970.

that British scholars have directed their attention to the empirical world and thus produced the most sophisticated corpus of social anthropology does not invalidate their findings. If Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss have been 'naturalised', there is no reason to suppose that this is for the disadvantage of the discipline in its attempt to make sense of aspects of the empirical world.

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS RELUCTANT IMPERIALIST

Wendy James

Current criticisms of the social anthropology of the colonial period acknowledge that more than a handful of individual anthropologists were of liberal or even radical political outlook. But they usually maintain that this fact is not relevant for analysis of the development of the subject or its place in the colonial situation. The context is represented as fostering an essentially conservative subject, shaped within the same political ideology as colonial domination itself and bolstering its interests to such an extent that the perceptions and problems of even the liberal-radical practitioner were falsely formulated. At best, it might be admitted, in the words for example of Kathleen Gough, that

Anthropologists in those days seem to have played roles characteristic of white liberals, sometimes of white liberal reformers, in other spheres of our society...living closely with native peoples, they tended to take their part to try to protect them against the worst forms of imperialistic exploitation...

Applied anthropology came into being as a kind of social work and community development effort for non-white peoples.¹

Not much attention has been paid to the implications of this admission. The dissent indicated among anthropologists is not usually considered important enough to qualify Gough's picture of the subject as the "child of Western imperialism".

But it can be argued that the appearance of a radical element

¹K. Gough, "New Proposals for Anthropologists", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 9, 1968, 403-7, at p. 403.

among anthropologists is neither unimportant nor irrelevant; on the contrary that it has been significant for the development of certain aspects of the subject; and further, that the very existence of social anthropology in the colonial period constituted a source of potential radical criticism of the colonial order itself. The occurrence of liberal views within the subject was therefore not an accident; it was entailed by the nature of anthropological research, which by definition reaches out geographically, linguistically and philosophically beyond the bounds of received western civilisation in search of alternative modes of understanding and living. Of course a good deal of trite and mediocre work has been produced in practice, and the promise of the anthropological perspective has rarely been fulfilled. But the critical questioning of the basis of social life implicit in anthropology has remained at the heart of the subject, and its growth within western culture during the colonial period necessarily constituted a source of informed critical comment, since it was ideally based upon experience of life on the reverse side of the colonial coin inaccessible to most other members of the dominant society. The subject was not spurned by the earlier generation of nationalist politicians; and though the structures of Empire have now collapsed and cleared the way for a more profound critical appraisal, a historical perspective reminds us of some of the contradictory aspects of the place of social anthropology in the colonial situation, the arguments it provoked and the resistance it encountered from the very body of official opinion and authority with which it is now sometimes assumed to have lived in a cosy conspiracy; or at least a web of unspoken understandings. As an individual, the anthropologist can often appear as a critic of colonial policy, of the philosophy of western superiority upon which it was based and in terms of which it was justified; and he was usually at odds with the various administrators, missionaries, and other local Europeans he had dealings with. He cannot often be seen unambiguously as a willing agent of colonialism. But he was nevertheless dependent upon colonial authorities for permission to carry out his studies, and sometimes for material support; and in the inter-war period at least, open political dissent was scarcely possible within colonial society. An anthropologist who turned out to be anything more than a mild social embarrassment could scarcely have been tolerated; and thus, for anthropology to continue at all, appearances of co-operation had to be kept up.

The place of anthropology in the colonial situation was in fact doubly ambivalent. On the one hand, as I have suggested, there was an ambivalence in relation to official authority, for although anthro-

pology was supposed worthy of support, its personnel and their activities were questionable; and on the other hand, in relation to the growing nationalist and revolutionary movements, anthropology, though initially regarded with sympathy, came to appear increasingly conservative. This double ambivalence, in my opinion, explains why social anthropology has been the object of more suspicion, accusation and blame from both sides of the developing colonial situation than the low number of its practitioners and their relatively small output would appear to justify. It would also appear to have had important effects on the growth of the subject, and its changing emphases. During the period of the twenties and thirties, there was undoubtedly tension between officialdom and the expanding subject of anthropology, making it natural for there to be a strong sympathy between the subject and the early development of nationalism; but later, particularly after the Second World War, the perspective of nationalist and revolutionary ideologies made anthropology merely a conservative ally of colonial control, itself increasingly liberal and progressive.

This essay draws attention in particular to the inter-war period. The first part discusses social anthropology as the *problem child* of the colonial encounter in Africa, the ways in which it constituted a body of radical criticism and how this was necessarily tempered. The second part considers the case of Malinowski's arguments from 1929 onwards for the involvement of anthropology in the "changing" African scene, some effects of these arguments on the development of the subject, and some responses to them from representatives of both colonial officialdom and the new African nationalism.

I

What can "radical criticism" mean in the context of colonial anthropology? Examples of explicit criticism will be considered in the second part of this essay, but firstly the implicitly critical character of much anthropological writing should be noted. A large proportion of the anthropology of the inter-war period is clearly partisan; in its choice of problems, and the very formulation of substantive analysis, it is often defensive of the weaker societies and cultures; of the sophistication of their language and thought, and of the "rationality" of primitive economics, politics, witchcraft, religion and so on. This defensive position extended on occasion to matters of native land rights, and treatment of migrant labourers in the new industrial areas and under the law. This intellectual and moral defence of the rights and dignity of peoples who had previously been

regarded, under the evolutionary racist theories of the nineteenth century armchair anthropologists, as scarcely human, was more than an academic reaction to earlier theories: it was at the same time a gut-reaction to the persistence of these ideas of cultural and racial superiority among the colonial rulers, local white settlers, and in popular opinion back at home. Although colonial anthropologists could rarely be described as radicals in an active political sense, which would have been almost impossible anyway, I believe that much of their work was given direction by radicalism of a moral kind.

For example, in the thirties the problem of witchcraft was discussed a good deal in colonial circles; on the whole it was accepted that natives possessed a different quality of mind, such that apparent irrationalities could scarcely be dealt with reasonably, but only through the application of laws against the practice or accusation of sorcery or witchcraft (see the special number of *Africa*, 1935²). The common assumptions of the practical men of the colonies, I would judge, were fairly close to those of armchair anthropologists of a previous generation, concerning the relative nature of thought and rationality in primitive society. Evans-Pritchard's argument in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937) was designed at least in part as a criticism and a refutation of such theories; and on another level, it could be seen as an answer to the prejudices over native mentality commonly held by those with colonial experience, which must have been the despair of many fieldworkers. This aspect of Evans-Pritchard's work appears clearly in the following quotations from an early Zande article, *Sorcery and Native Opinion*. The article begins as follows:

It is important to understand native opinion about black magic, not only for the anthropologist but also for the colonial administrator and missionary, if they wish to show to the peoples whom they govern and teach that they understand their notions about right and wrong. The native does not so much distrust European justice and education as he despairs of the administrator and missionary ever understanding, or attempting to understand, his point of view as expressed in laws and public opinion. This despair springs largely from the handling by Europeans of such matters as sorcery, with which both missionaries and administrators frequently have to deal. The native becomes convinced finally that the European is quite

²*Africa* VIII, No. 4, Oct., 1935.

incapable of seeing the difference between right and wrong, between the proper use of a cultural weapon fully sanctioned by public opinion, such as white magic, and a heinous and cold blooded murder, such as the crime of black magic or sorcery.³

After a careful and detailed exposition of this crucial moral distinction as seen by Azande, and its significance for social and political life, Evans-Pritchard concludes with suggestions as to how administrators might benefit from understanding such questions. How far we may wonder could such hints be of much practical use to administrators? In any case, they scarcely mask the strong tone of criticism with which the article comes to a close:

In conclusion, we may address ourselves to those administrators and missionaries and doctors whose lives are spent amongst primitive peoples in Africa. If, as we think, a public opinion which classes some types of magic definitely as base and criminal, and others as virtuous and legal, whilst judging yet others with an uncertain voice, exists and functions not only amongst the Azande of the Nile-Uelle Divide but in many other savage communities, it behoves Europeans to be discreet in their dealing with it. Upon no other subject are Europeans in the tropics generally so ignorant and in no other sphere of native life is ignorance more likely to lead to infliction and destruction of good institutions. Such activities as those which we have described in this essay are, for reason which we have set forward, more conformable to preservation than breach of the peace, to conserve than subvert stable administration. We may well leave the natives to decide between good and evil, morality and immorality, right and wrong, crime and law. Moreover, the European may well be advised to remember that such acts of magic, the performance of which are public enough to be brought to the notice of his office and to be proved to have taken place, are little likely to be condemned by public opinion as illegal or immoral. Lastly, we may all do well to reflect that the mind sensitive to tales of sorcery reveals its own crudeness, for it has often been shown that when two civilizations come into contact the lesser is always accused of sorcery by half-studied and ill-formed judgements of the greater.⁴

This is not a position of ultra-relativism, of which colonial anthro-

³E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Sorcery and native opinion", *Africa* IV, 1931, 22-55, at p. 22.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

pology has (sometimes with justification) been accused. The moral rights of peoples living under colonial administration are defended in terms of universal categories; and the right of the ruling community to a monopoly of moral judgement is sharply questioned.

The practical men, however approving they were in the abstract of lending support to anthropological research, must often have been puzzled and disappointed at what the anthropologists actually produced. They must even on occasion have been resentful of rebukes such as those of Evans-Pritchard in the passages just quoted, where the anthropologist thumbs his nose at the sacred civilising mission. Without doubt a good deal of tension existed: and I consider that some of the characteristic methods and theories of this period were the outcome, not of conspiracy between scholars and officialdom, but on the contrary, of competition and intrigue between them. Impressive claims had to be made by anthropologists for their subject. Because their resources, duties and even rights were so uncertain, and because their work was so often regarded as quaint (in backward areas) or as unnecessary meddling (in central and significant areas), anthropologists were frequently obliged to defend their activities. This could hardly be done on metaphysical grounds, or in terms of a conviction of political or moral obligation; the lines of defence were rather of a kind more likely to appeal to colonial officialdom. This is partly why there was such an insistent claim by anthropology to be a proper *science*; for the idea of science carries great respectability. Science represented to the crude colonial mind a great achievement of the modern west, and the idea of its application to native peoples, as objects, was promising. (Interestingly enough, literature in anthropology of the kind which I have suggested is motivated by moral radicalism often emphasizes the *scientific* character of native thought). Thus it was good tactics for anthropologists to put forward the claim that their subject, at least the modern variety, was a dispassionate, scientific and important study of the variety of social forms, which deserved the respect and facilities granted to other sciences, like tropical medicine or geology, and like them had to be based on first-hand investigation. It was also prudent for them to add that, of course, it was a study which could yield valuable information for administrators and planners, who indeed would scarcely avoid serious mistakes without the benefit of its expert advice. This double claim gave anthropologists the advantage of being able to stress their practical value when approaching potential sponsors, and nevertheless to resist requests for direct assistance on the grounds that their subject was essentially an ab-

stract science, from which practical men would have to draw their own conclusions. The separation of the objective scientist from the committed feeling man can thus be viewed as part of the strategy of colonial anthropologists in calming any suspicions of their personal motives which might damage their claims for official support and facilities. The following passage from Firth's conclusion to *We, the Tikopia* (1936) illustrates some of the relevant emphases of the time:

A last word may be said about one practical aspect of anthropological study. In revulsion from the mere folklorist attitude of antiquarian anthropology, science today is in danger of being caught up by practical interests and made to serve them, to the neglect of its own problems. Social anthropology should be concerned with understanding how human beings behave in social groups, not with trying to make them behave in any particular way by assisting an administrative policy of a proselytizing campaign to achieve its ends more easily. The scientist gives generalizations regarding the nature of the working of institutions; it is not his duty to affix ethical values to them, nor by conniving at such an ethical evaluation to pave the way for their modification. Missionary, government officer and mine manager are free to use anthropological methods and results in their own interests, but they have no right to demand as a service that anthropology should become their handmaid. Nor can the standards which they invoke—'civilization', 'justice', 'the sanctity of human life', 'Christianity', 'freedom of the individual', 'law and order'—be regarded as binding; the claim of absolute validity that is usually made for them too often springs from ignorance, from an emotional philanthropy, from the lack of any clear analysis of the implications of the course of action proposed, and from confusion with the universal of what is in reality a set of moral ideas produced by particular economic and social circumstances.

This is not to say that the scientist himself may not have his own personal predilections based on his upbringing and social environment, his temperamental disposition, his aesthetic values. He may regard the culture of a primitive, half-naked set of people in an island of the Solomons as a pleasant way of life, giving expression to the individuality of its members in ways alien to western civilization; he may regard it as something he would like to see endure, and he may strive to preserve it in the face of ignorance and prejudice, pointing out the probable results of interference with ancient customs. This he does as a

man; his attitude is part of his personal equation to life, but it is not implicit in his scientific study. The greatest need of the social sciences today is for more refined methodology, as objective and dispassionate as possible, in which, while the assumptions due to the conditioning and personal interest of the investigator must influence his findings, that bias shall be consciously faced, the possibility of other initial assumptions be realised and allowance be made for the implications of each in the course of the analysis.⁵

But how successful were these pleas for acceptance and support on the basis of the claim of anthropology to be trustworthily objective and useful? Some doubt is thrown on the extent to which this argument carried much weight in a post-war article by Evans-Pritchard on applied anthropology. His argument is defensive of pure research, and very critical of the lack of interest on the official side:

Mr. Sol Tax remarks...that although he had spent some ten years in research into the social anthropology of the Chiapas and Guatemala Indians no one had ever asked his technical assistance in solving the social problems of the region. Other anthropologists have experienced the same thing. Professor Seligman once told me that in all the years he had worked in the Sudan or on Sudanese problems he was never asked once for his advice and that the only time he volunteered it in connection with the rain-makers of the Nuba Hills, it was not taken. During the fifteen years in which I worked on sociological problems in the same region I was never once asked my advice on any question at all.⁶

Evans-Pritchard ends with an appeal. The Colonial Office and Colonial Governments should understand that:

Much as we would like to help them, with our present limited resources research in social anthropology is only kept going and certainly does not keep pace with the deterioration of the primitive field, so that they cannot expect us to turn aside from our scientific research and teaching to investigate their practical problems and advise on their policies. If they want qualified men to assist them they must create posts in the colonies which will attract them...Colonial administrations do not expect to have the services of doctors, botanists, geologists and engineers without

⁵E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Applied Anthropology", *Africa* XVI, 1946, 92-8, p. 97.

⁶R. Firth, *We the Tikopia*, 2nd ed. 1957, pp. 487-88.

giving them appointments on their establishments. Why should they expect the services of anthropologists on different terms?⁷ The question remains as to why anthropology had not been accepted more wholeheartedly by the colonial authorities. Some indication of the answer is implied in that part of Evans-Pritchard's article where he discusses his Libyan work. He contrasts his pre-war position in the Sudan with his position in Cyrenaica in the early nineteen-forties, where he was a full member of the British Military Administration, as Tribal Affairs Officer, with access to official documents, and entitled to play a part in policy-making. The significant feature of this contrast between his status in the Sudan and Libya lies perhaps in the fact that the Italians had recently been ousted by the British when he was in Cyrenaica: and thus a critical anthropological study of native affairs would reflect on the Italians, rather than on his sponsoring authority. With such a conjunction of interests between his sponsors and himself, it was possible for Evans-Pritchard to write a book of unusually committed characters *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (1949) in its treatment of an anti-colonialist national movement and its clearly anti-Fascist sympathies, is in itself an answer to naïve radical criticisms of anthropology. In the older colonies, the anthropologist was rarely so trusted as to have access to archival materials and policy discussions which would be necessary for a historically significant study. One may well ask whether it would have been realistic to expect anthropologists to write books openly critical of any of the forms of colonial rule under which they worked.

The contradictory positions assumed simultaneously by the colonial anthropologist, that he is extremely useful to administration and at the same time that he must be free to pursue his specialist interests, arise out of the profound paradox of the subject in relation to its sponsoring authorities. Relatively peaceful and progressive colonial rule in the inter-war period was prepared to permit and even encourage field-working anthropologists to carry out personal investigations of a direct kind which had scarcely been possible previously, at least in the Old World. The "sociological" character of their work increased steadily, and with it a greater awareness of the relevance of the overall economic and political situation. The anthropologist of this period, more than the missionary, and more than the bush administrator, found himself speaking not only of, but for, the local populations he knew well. He tended more than others to

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 98.

know the common man, and to bypass the local chiefs and dignitaries. There was little possibility of a European traveller knowing the people intimately in the pre-colonial period: contacts in the nineteenth century for example, between the classic explorers and the local populations of Africa, were usually with kings and chiefs, or otherwise with servants and runaway slaves. The situation of a lone European living for months or years in an ordinary village without a retinue was only possible when benevolent colonial administration was well-established. And yet the situation of such study was often so demanding in personal as well as intellectual terms that a commitment to something stronger than data-gathering was surely required. The collection of facts from the grass-roots level of society in the industrial West has frequently grown out of, or resulted in, a radical orientation; and anthropological fieldwork in the Malinowskian tradition shared this character to some extent in relation to the colonial regimes. The colonial period thus paradoxically opened the way for the creation of a body of literature that itself reflected criticism upon the prevailing situation and the political philosophy which justified it. I see, therefore, the colonial anthropologist as a frustrated radical: and his claims to scientific status, the separation of his work from any apparent moral or political views, and the avowal of its practical usefulness, as largely determined by the need to make a convincing bid for the survival and expansion of his subject.

II

All these sides of the dilemma are clear in Malinowski's efforts, from the late nineteen twenties to the end of his life, to extend the scope of scientific anthropology to embrace the study of social and cultural change in Africa. Indeed his dilemma is more complex; for whereas in the early thirties, he was arguing that scientific study was uninvolved and therefore of use to administration, his sympathies for developing African nationalism sharpen with time and in his later writings he comes to argue that scientific research must be politically committed. Malinowski's writings on Africa are not in themselves a major contribution to the subject; but he was a most influential teacher, and his interest in the expansion of social anthropology into the area of modern African problems led to a large number of studies in this field by his students. The significance of his views is therefore greater than his actual published writings might suggest, for it is implicit in the work of others, particularly in the direction of "social change" and so forth. However "practical"

and administratively useful these studies might claim to be, and however conservative some later studies of this type turned out to be, it was the radical sympathies of Malinowski and his undoubted desire to shake up the placid colonial establishment which originally pushed anthropology in this direction.

An article of Malinowski's in 1929 on "Practical anthropology"⁸ marked the beginning of a debate on the question of the usefulness of anthropology, and a long series of defensive articles by anthropologists which continued until well after the war. Many were published in *Africa*, journal of the International African Institute (founded 1926). One of the Institute's main aims was "the closer association of scientific knowledge and research with practical affairs", and a good deal of applied anthropology was encouraged and supported. In spite of this supposed collusion of anthropology and practical affairs, the tone of the debate which followed Malinowski's initial provocative contribution suggested underlying frictions. Malinowski's own previous work had been on the "traditional" community of the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia, but in his 1929 article he is staking out a much wider claim for the subject and its relevance. He challenges the practical men who dismiss the subject, and recommends it to their notice in terms they are likely to find acceptable. He emphasises that it is politically unbiased, and therefore scientific; and highly useful and up-to-date, since it is concerned with changing conditions. The modern "functional" type of anthropology is contrasted in these terms with old-fashioned antiquarianism, of whose usefulness the practical men were justifiably sceptical. I think that by "functional" in this context Malinowski meant little more than "sociological", as against the approach of what he had referred to elsewhere as the "dusty museum-moth". He writes:

The Institute stands in the first place for the practical application of scientific knowledge. It can reach on the one hand various Colonial interests in their practical activities, while at the same time has at its disposal the knowledge of theoretically trained specialists.

I think that in the very combination of practical and theoretical interests lies the proper task of the Institute. There is a gap between the theoretical concerns of the anthropology of the schools on the one hand, and practical interests on the other.

The gap must be bridged over, and in doing this the Institute can make itself very useful.

⁸B. Malinowski, "Practical Anthropology", *Africa* II, 1929, 22-38.

The practical man is inclined to pooh-pooh, ignore, and even to resent any sort of encroachment of the anthropologist upon his domain. On the other hand it is not always easy to advise the colonial administrator or missionary just where to find the anthropological information he requires. Now I think that the gap is artificial and of great prejudice to either side. The practical man should be asked to state his needs as regards knowledge on savage law, economics, customs, and institutions; he would then stimulate the scientific anthropologist to a most fruitful line of research and thus receive information without which he often gropes in the dark. The anthropologist, on the other hand, must move towards a direct study of indigenous institutions as they now exist and work. He must also become more concerned in the anthropology of the changing African, and in the anthropology of the contact of white and coloured, of European culture and primitive tribal life...

It is then the thesis of this memorandum that there exists an anthropological No-man's land; that in this are contained studies of primitive economics, primitive jurisprudence, questions of land tenure, of indigenous financial systems and taxation, a correct understanding of the principles of African indigenous education, as well as wider problems of population, hygiene and changing outlook. Scientific knowledge on all these problems is more and more needed by all practical men in the colonies. This knowledge could be supplied by men trained in anthropological methods and possessing the anthropological outlook, provided that they also acquire a direct interest in the practical applications of their work, and a keener sense of present-day realities.⁹

Under the heading "Scientific control of colonial administration" he continues :

By the constitution of the Institute all political issues are eliminated from its activities. This can easily be done by concentrating upon the study of the facts and processes which bear upon the practical problems and leaving to statesmen (and journalists) the final decision of how to apply the results.

There follows a general statement of support for the concept of indirect rule; but unless anyone should think that anthropologists are politically biased in any way instead of being objective scientists, he adds :

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

But whether we adopt in our practical policy the principle of direct or indirect control, it is clear that a full knowledge of indigenous culture in the subjects indicated is indispensable. He then defends the usefulness of functional anthropology (as against the earlier antiquarianism) for such questions as political organisation, law, language, land tenure, economics, and the changing native. His article ends with a plea for assistance from the IAI for promoting work in the "modern Functional School of Anthropology".

The following year, 1930, two replies appeared in *Africa*. The first by Major Ruxton, formerly Lt. Governor of Southern Provinces, Nigeria, was sympathetic to Malinowski's claims, indeed strengthening them for applied anthropology:

As there is a distinction between the pure and the applied chemist, so there should be one between the pure and applied anthropologist. The latter cannot exist without the former, but it is the latter who is required to advise on the practical work of administration, and the Institute can do much to evolve him. As the field of work of the pure anthropologist is that of yesterday, so that of the applied anthropologist should be today, preferably tomorrow.¹⁰

But the second reply from P. E. Mitchell then provincial commissioner in Tanganyika, and later Governor of Kenya etc., was extremely sceptical of the usefulness of anthropology, unless the subject could enable the "practical men" of the colonies to carry out their jobs better:

Professor Malinowski...writes...as an anthropologist, and he proposes that the anthropologist shall record the facts and the 'practical' man draw his deductions therefrom. How many anthropologists would agree that a division into anthropologists and practical men is satisfactory is open to doubt: but as I am certainly not an anthropologist I hope that I may speak for the practical man.

As Malinowski points out, anthropologists have largely occupied themselves with the past, or at least with the passing; and they have developed a technique of their own in recording and discussing in particular the curious or quaint in primitive societies. Thus if an inhabitant of a South Sea Island feels obliged on some ceremonial occasion to eat his grandmother,

¹⁰F. H. Ruxton, "An anthropological no-man's land", *Africa* III, 1930, 1-12, at p. 2.

the anthropologist is attracted to examine and explain the ancient custom which caused him to do so: the practical man, on the other hand, tends to take more interest in the grandmother...

Practical men are concerned first with making secure life and property and with the complex administrative arrangements which modern economic life demands and they are of all men least likely to underrate the importance of accurate knowledge. They certainly endorse the view that any organisation, for example the Institute, which assists them to that knowledge, must be of value in proportion to the efficiency of the service that it renders, and invaluable if it reaches that point of efficiency where the correctness of its statements of fact can be taken for granted and be made generally known. But that is the difficulty.¹¹

He goes on to criticise the length of time taken by anthropologists and missionaries for their work to be completed—it is often out of date when it appears and has little bearing on the future; and the minute detail of anthropological observations, which makes the study of large areas out of the question. He compares the anthropological specialist to the laboratory scientist, and asks where is the general practitioner, who can tackle important and urgent problems when needed.

As Malinowski implies, the anthropologist has in the past been mainly interested in the ancient and the curious: he has studiously pursued knowledge of primitive mankind, and has occupied himself little, if at all, with the present and future. His method has been built up to serve his purpose; his technique is that of the laboratory and what he has been disposed to call his field-work has been the field-work of a collector for a museum. But now he is waking up to the splendid prospects of service to mankind which the science to which he has devoted himself holds out, and is casting round for the means of applying to practical things the knowledge which he possesses, or feels confident that he can acquire; and he stands a little dismayed before a world which hurries past him and seems to care little for the help which he can give.

Now it seems to me that the main difficulty lies in this, that the anthropologist is disposed to look out at the busy world from his laboratory window; and when he offers help, it is in terms

¹¹P. E. Mitchell, "The anthropologist and the practical man: a reply and a question", *Africa* III, 1930, 217-23, at pp. 217-18.

of laboratory methods. He must learn to come down into the street and join in the life which he desires to influence if he is to play the part which he wishes to play, and which I am confident he can play with great profit especially to all those who are struggling with the complex problems of twentieth-century colonisation in East Africa.¹²

He suggests there is a need for the trained "general practitioner" as well as the laboratory specialist; such men do exist, but not in an organised body, or with organised training. In this category of "general practitioner" Mitchell includes all the practical men of the colonies: and not merely administrators and missionaries, but traders and commercial men—in fact one presumes he means the whole of the expatriate community, perhaps even the European housewife. Mitchell certainly makes it clear what sort of use he reckons ought to be made of social anthropology in the interests of colonialism—but how many anthropologists of that time, let alone now, would agree with him? In explaining what he means by a general practitioner of social problems, he writes:

For example, the planter who is engaged in working out a practical and just relation between white employer and native labourer is, in this sense, a general practitioner. By organising these men, by helping them to realise the community of interests which they have, but infrequently understand, by mobilising them in fact, the Institute can perform a function of the highest value...by harnessing in the service of our common humanity those who are intimately concerned, because they are a part of it, in the life of the countries in which they live. This is to my mind the direction in which effort should be made rather than the projection of the laboratory worker into the field, into the turmoil of everyday life, into an atmosphere of which he has had no experience and which he cannot be expected to understand.

Social anthropology is dismissed as purposeless unless made to serve the interests of practical colonialism:

In the relation of man with man and race with race; in those complexities which we call 'the State' or 'Government'; in the many-sided economic life of our modern world; in all that goes to make up the great problems of our time; in all this the acquisition of knowledge is a well-developed science, but in its pursuit we have rather overlooked the means of applying our

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 220.

knowledge when we have acquired it. As I see it, its acquisition and application should be complementary branches of the same activity. Obviously the latter is impossible without the former: but the former if not followed by the latter is purposeless.

If anyone has had the patience to read this far, he will I hope have reached the same conclusions as the writer, that the true practical anthropology is that which devotes itself to enlisting and organising, as the complement of the scientific worker, those practical men, and there are many, who are ready to serve the community in which they live; at times we shall have urgent need of this specialist, but we must not, for that reason, forget the family doctor.¹³

It is clear from Mitchell's article what kind of anthropology the colonial establishment would like to have seen—a real tool of imperialism. But anthropologists were not on the whole prepared to play this part. Later in the same year (1930) Malinowski published a reply to Mitchell in the same journal. In this he defends anthropology from the suggested close co-operation with practical men; he argues its essential requirement of independence as an objective science; and to my mind at least, this claim stems from a refusal to side unambiguously with the colonial attitude. He starts by bemoaning the mechanisation and over-rapid "progress" of the modern world, which is due to science. He admits that traditional anthropology represented an escape from this, but grants that it has to change, and become of use to the science of progress. He regrets this, however, and writes:

And now, after twenty years of anthropological work, I find myself, to my disgust, attempting to make the science of man into as bad and dehumanising an agency to man as physics, chemistry, and biology have been for the last century or so denaturalising to nature. In short, I am attempting to make anthropology into a real science, and science inevitably has to introduce uniformity and rationalisation into the phenomena with which it deals.¹⁴

So that is Malinowski's opinion of the kind of anthropology that the colonial establishment would like to see. But he goes on to explain that of course anthropology will change: and that the new functional method will be both scientific and of use to the practical man. He complains that Mitchell's criticisms are out of date, that they

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁴B. Malinowski, "The rationalization of anthropology and administration", *Africa* III, 1930, 405-29, at p. 406.

may apply to antiquarian anthropology but not to the modern functional school; and that Mitchell has attacked anthropology on imaginary grounds—for example the reference to eating grandmothers in the South Seas, which Mitchell says should be called murder and dealt with accordingly. Malinowski suggests that even such judgements are not always unambiguous, and that right and justice may not all be on one side:

Fortunately or unfortunately, the custom, born in the imagination of Mr. Mitchell, does not really exist, so the functional anthropologist need not concern himself very much about it. But the practical man, who very often on equally imaginary grounds cries 'Murder' and hangs a native, might thereby provoke some other natives to retaliate and then we should have a punitive expedition in which the 'practical man' himself would act as the murderer. Mr. Mitchell's example is imaginary, but unfortunately I could quote numerous cases from the South Seas in which the practical man, having 'regretfully' and unintelligently violated native customs by the mere right of his ignorance and moral zeal, has brought whole native tribes to grief. Let Mr. Mitchell read the report of the Goaribari massacres in New Guinea; the history of 'black-birding' in the South Seas; or even the data referring to the repatriation of the blackbirded Kanakas to the Melanesian homes; for that matter, the antecedents of any of the numerous punitive expeditions in the South Seas. Africa is not my special field, but I have a vague idea that 'punitive expeditions', wholesale massacres of natives by whites, strange retaliations in the names of 'justice', 'prestige', and 'the white man's honour' did also occur in the Dark Continent, and that it is not only the coloured African there who deserves the title of 'murderer', nor is it the white European who should use such terms of abuse as marks of his own racial superiority.¹⁵

The mounting intensity of Malinowski's criticism finds more specific expression in relation to the problems of land tenure, which Mitchell suggested could not be dealt with realistically because of the length of time a full anthropological survey would take. Malinowski reminds Mitchell of the method of science:

Precision, thoroughness and accuracy do not consist in a blind and pedantic accumulation of useless evidence, but in a critical selection of the relevant by crucial tests. It is this spirit of

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 411.

relevancy as against mere accumulation, of critical selection as against groping in the dark, that the scientific anthropologist might bring to the assistance of the man who has a practical interest in the control of human affairs.

My critic confidently affirms that 'the only method which can be called practicable is that of question and answer and daily observation of the lives of the people'. Has this method, unaided by any guiding theoretical principles, given such brilliant results? In the matter of land tenure, for instance, do we know this subject in a satisfactory manner in any part of Africa?

Why is it that such serious blunders in the framing of policy have been made as the individualising of land tenure in Uganda, which avowedly led to the greatest difficulties; or the haphazard methods of dealing with this question in West Africa, which brought into being committees and commissions, the results of which could not even be published? Was the question of land tenure studied in South Africa and a wise policy laid down by the practical men who were settling and organising that country? Let Mr. Mitchell look for the answer in the *Report of the Natives' Land Commission, 1916*.

And again, why is it that the fundamental principles of British land policy in Africa have not been laid down in any consistent manner? The decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council regarding the native rights to land are contradictory. In Southern Rhodesia it was held that natives had really no rights to their land whatever. On the other hand, in Nigeria the Privy Council ruled that the rights in land were vested in the natives. What is more important for the present argument, however, is that the judgement was based on an admission of ignorance, since it was held that 'it was really a matter of conjecture to say what the rights of the original "natives" were'. Their Lordships' decision further stated that:

'The estimation of the rights of aboriginal tribes is always inherently difficult. Some tribes are so low in the scale of social organisation that their usage and conceptions of rights and duties are not to be reconciled with the institutions or the legal ideas of civilised society. Such a gulf cannot be bridged. It would be idle to impute to such people some shadow of the rights known to our law, and then to transmute it into the substance of transferable rights of property as we know them'.

Hence the Judicial Committee plainly regard the question of native land tenure as both beyond the scope of practicable

inquiry and below the dignity of legal recognition. On the contrary, I maintain that there is no people 'so low in the scale of social organisation' but have a perfectly well-defined system of land tenure. It is absurd to say that such a system 'cannot be reconciled with the institutions or the legal ideas of civilised society'. To reconcile the two is precisely the task of Colonial statesmanship.¹⁶

Malinowski also heaps criticism upon Mitchell's conception of there being a community of interests between all practical men in the colonies—including commercial men—which he invited the anthropologist to join and to advise; he takes this to be the "central misconception" of Mitchell's argument.

Why have these men not yet organised themselves nor achieved any singularly constructive results? Let us look more closely at the possibilities of team-work done by missionaries and settlers, administrators and journalists, engineers and recruiters. And here I should like to ask why does Mr. Mitchell not include among them the native African, 'savage' and detribalised alike; or the West Coast lawyer; or the black expert in yellow journalism; and incidentally also the East Coast Indian? They are also actors in the play; they also, no doubt, share in the 'community of interests'. Why does the idea of harmonious co-operation between them appear hardly plausible? Because we know that these groups, far from having any 'community' of interests, are divided by profound, indeed irreconcilable, differences. And why, again, is this the case? Because they have deeply-rooted personal interests at stake, which cannot possibly be brought into harmony with each other. And this is not because of any lack of goodwill or of knowledge. The dissensions involved far transcend any intellectual effort or emotional adjustment; they cannot be bridged over by mere goodwill.

The whole life-work of, say, an economic exploiter on the one hand and a missionary on the other, develops in either case an entirely different type of bias in the individual. The one has vested his capital, his life-interest, and his work in some venture, which may fail or succeed according as to whether he can secure an adequate supply of native labour. However much he may sympathise with the natives, he is bound to have more sympathy with his wife and children, with his dream of success and constructive enterprise, with the belief, shared by industrialists

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 414-5.

and financiers, that a maximum production of wealth is an unqualified blessing for the world at large...

To speak of a 'community of interests' between the recruiter and the missionary, or between the Indian trader and the white settler, is a travesty of facts. Above all, I doubt whether the idea of 'the planter who is engaged in working out a practical and just relation between white employer and native labourer' is not a sporadic phenomenon. On every question, whether it be land tenure and native reservations or the political power of tribal authorities, there must crop up deep-seated differences of opinion, influenced, not merely by self-interest, greed, or ruthless rapacity on the one side, and mawkish sentimentalism, wrong-headed dogma, or false humanitarianism on the other; but also by the fundamental assumptions as to what is good for the native and for the white man, and what is the aim of African development. And these assumptions are bound up with the very existence of the several classes of African workers, classes which, again, differ profoundly...¹⁷

As though feeling that he might have gone too far, for these passages are surely very strong words for 1930, Malinowski then soberly insists on the responsibility of administrators for the decisions they must take, although anthropologists can act in an advisory capacity. He anxiously emphasises that there is overall agreement on this question. But talk of economic exploiters, the land rights of natives in Southern Rhodesia, criticism of the Buganda land tenure agreement and so on must be taken as serious evidence of political dissent from colonial policies within the camp of social anthropology.

Malinowski's position is further consolidated during the thirties. He appears increasingly concerned with political realities, and less with the need to put up a pleasing case to officialdom. Significantly, the ideals of scientific integrity are evoked to justify the study of vital and relevant problems of an economic, political and legal kind in a review article of 1939. Malinowski is criticising the abstract "culture trait" approach of Herskovits to problems of change, in the latter's book *Acculturation* (1938), and recommends instead British methods, as laid out in *Memorandum XV* of the IAI, which take political realities into account.

The contact anthropologist has to study the methods of recruitment and the wage system, the effects of the Colour Bar legislation and of the anomalous contracts of African labour, as

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 421-22.

well as of the Pass Laws. He must study these facts scientifically, objectively, and in relation to each other. He need not in his scientific work be concerned with any partisan or even practical issues. But his study will reveal to him that for the present the Europeans are in a position to dictate the legal and economic terms. The conditions thus imposed are found to produce definite effects. Thus, if he studies the budgets of a family dependent on wages, he will find that the income does not really balance with expenditure. Scientific field-work reveals that the wages received by a mine labourer do not compensate the tribal economy for the total loss caused by his absence. From this it would be his duty to draw the conclusion that a system which produces inevitable impoverishment in a native reserve must lead through malnutrition, disorganization, and demoralization to gradual demographic decay . . .

Those of us who advocate "practical anthropology" insist only on the study of vital, relevant, and fundamental problems. That such problems affect practical interests directly is not our fault. That a question does not become less scientific because it is vital and relevant will only be denied by one who imagines that academic pursuits begin where reality ends. Professor Herskovits has never laid himself open to such criticism in his field-work or in his treatment of actual questions. It is therefore both regrettable and incomprehensible that he chooses to attack practical anthropology as a matter of method.¹⁶

The increasingly political stand taken by Malinowski is an indication of his sympathy for the growing nationalist movements of Africa. Jomo Kenyatta's presence at Malinowski's seminars in London in the thirties, and Malinowski's own visits to Africa, where he called on several of his own students engaged in field-work, must have opened his eyes to the explosive situation in what had been peaceful anthropological territory. In his Introduction to Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938) he touches on the dangers of totalitarianism; the current spread of political opinion in Africa; and the question of whether the minority of agitators "will be able to keep a balanced and moderate view of economic, social and political issues, or whether by ignoring them and treating them with contempt we drive them into the open arms of world-wide Bolshevism". He mentions various events which are "uniting the world of

¹⁶B. Malinowski, "The present state of studies in culture contact: some comments on an American approach", *Africa* XII, 1939, pp. 27-47.

coloured peoples against Western influence and above all against Great Britain and the United States", and introduces Kenyatta's book on the Kikuyu people as a salutary eye-opener to the West :

Mr. Kenyatta has wisely refrained from using any such language as appears in my last sentences. He presents the facts objectively, and to a large extent without any passion or feeling. That some of this is contained in his presentation of facts is a help and not a hindrance. For if the present book does nothing more but to help us to understand how Africans see through our pretences, and how they assess the realities of the Dual Mandate, it will be rendering a great service . . .¹⁹

Whatever may be thought of Kenyatta's book today, it is beyond question that at that time he saw in social anthropology something that could be turned to use as part of the growing nationalist challenge to colonial rule; and his book was regarded both in nationalist and official colonial circles as a highly political document. In his Preface, Kenyatta thanks among others "the members of the Kikuyu Central Association, my comrades-in-arms of the past, present and future" (the Mau-Mau rising was still to come) and goes on :

In the present work I have tried my best to record facts as I know them, mainly through a lifetime of personal experience, and have kept under very considerable restraint the sense of political grievances which no progressive African can fail to experience. My chief object is not to enter into controversial discussion with those who have attempted, or are attempting, to describe the same things from outside observation, but to let the truth speak for itself. I know that there are many scientists and general readers who will be disinterestedly glad of the opportunity of hearing the Africans' point of view, and to all such I am glad to be of service. At the same time, I am well aware that I could not do justice to the subject without offending those 'professional friends of the African' who are prepared to maintain their friendship for eternity as a sacred duty, provided only that the African will continue to play the part of an ignorant savage so that they can monopolise the office of interpreting his mind and speaking for him. To such people, an African who writes a study of this kind is encroaching on their preserves. He is a rabbit turned poacher.

But the African is not blind. He can recognise these pretenders to philanthropy, and in various parts of the continent he is

¹⁹B. Malinowski, "Introduction" to J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 1938, pp. x-xi.

waking up to the realisation that a running river cannot be dammed for ever without breaking its bounds. His power of expression has been hampered, but it is breaking through, and will very soon sweep away the patronage and repression which surround him.²⁰

In the body of the book the Kikuyu people are presented as a people who have suffered conquest, subjugation and loss of land; for example:

Since the coming of the Europeans the warrior organisation has been rendered powerless . . . the spirit of manhood in the youth has been almost killed by the imposition of imperialistic rule which restricts people from moving and functioning freely in their own country. The European prides himself on having done a great service to the Africans by stopping the 'tribal warfares' . . . But consider the difference between the method and motive employed in the so-called savage tribal warfares, and those employed in the modern warfare waged by the 'civilised' tribes of Europe, and in which the Africans who have no part in the quarrels are forced to fight . . . It would have been much better for the Africans to continue with their old tribal warfare, which they fought with pride and with the loss of a few warriors, rather than receiving the so-called civilising missions which means the subjugation of the African races to a perpetual state of serfdom.

In the old order of the African society, with all the evils that are supposed to be connected with it, a man was a man, and as such he had the rights of a man and liberty to exercise his will and thought in a direction which suited his purposes as well as those of his fellow-men; but today an African, no matter what his station in life, is like a horse which moves only in the direction that the rider pulls the rein. The harmony and stability of the African's mode of life, in political, social, religious and economic organisations, was based on the land which was, and still is, the soul of the people. The first step which the European civilising missions took to disorganise the Africans in order to exploit and oppress them, especially in South and East Africa, was to take away the best African lands . . .²¹

Other writers who had been trained to some extent by Malinowski were carrying out sociological investigations of a kind which re-

²⁰J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 1938, pp. xvii-xviii.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 211-13.

vealed the hard facts of survival and subsistence in rural areas of Africa drained of manpower by the developing mining and industrial towns. Audrey Richards' *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939) is an outstanding example of this kind of work. She also confronted the dilemma of why there was suspicion and non-co-operation between anthropologists and officials, when the work of anthropologists ought to be practically useful. She contributed to the debate in *Africa* in 1944,²² with an article which surveys the previous fifteen years in which there was supposedly a good deal of development in practical anthropology, but in fact real co-operation and support from the authorities for the subject was disappointingly small. Among the positive achievements in the subject she notes the change in focus away from primitive communities: "Most of Malinowski's pupils, however worked among the larger African tribes of the greatest political importance and where European contact had been at its maximum."²³ One might ask whether this could be one of the reasons why the official attitude was so lukewarm. Certainly, in giving the reasons why she judges that there had been only very moderate success for the IAI programme of closer association between research and practical affairs, reflected in the small number of research posts and the difficulty of financing research, she refers to suspicion of the social investigator. Both in such work in Britain, and in Africa,

The protests do not come from the individual questioned, for most people like to talk about themselves and to find that their views are considered important . . . The criticisms in both cases come from those in authority: the Mayor or the M.P. of the English borough, the district commissioner or the missionary in Africa. These probably fear disturbances of some kind or other as the result of the investigation, and probably feel resentment at a stranger making inquiries in an area over which they have control.²⁴

In a footnote she points out that in South Africa, the Union Government as a wartime measure was refusing permission to anthropologists to enter Native reserves. The article goes on to discuss the personal misunderstandings and suspicions which dog an anthropologist's fieldwork, and diplomatically gives a reasonable explanation of the (scientific) reasons why the anthropologist "is bound to

²²A. I. Richards, "Practical anthropology in the lifetime of the International African Institute", *Africa* XIV, 1944, 289-301.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 291.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 293.

lead a life which is very strange in the eyes of other Europeans", having the reputation of "dancing round a tom-tom in a loin-cloth". This is all directed at officialdom; and ends with an implied appeal for greater research support. For earlier in the article Audrey Richards commented that "It looks as though the anthropologist had been advertising his goods, often rather clamorously, in a market in which there was little demand for them",²⁵ and asked why. The fundamental answer to her question surely would lie in the gulf of serious mutual distrust between at least some brands of social anthropology and the authorities responsible for "good administration".

The debate over the use of anthropology, conducted in the pages of *Africa* for a couple of decades, does not appear to have led to greater understanding. On the contrary, there was in some respects a polarisation of opinion. For example, on the official side, in 1951 Sir Philip Mitchell was able to state his earlier misgivings about anthropology in an even more slighting manner than he had done over twenty years earlier. In a review of Lord Hailey's *Native Administration in the British Territories in Africa*, he writes of the contribution of anthropology as follows:

It has always been a matter of particular difficulty in colonial Africa to ensure that those who are responsible for the initiation of policy or legislation, or for important administrative action or decisions (and in African conditions a heavy responsibility may rest on very young shoulders) should be adequately informed not only of past events and old customs, but of current social, political and economic conditions, in their own country and in others offering useful analogies or experience. There was, especially during the nineteen twenties and thirties, a spate of special reports and investigations; at one time, indeed, anthropologists, asserting that they only were gifted with understanding, busied themselves with enthusiasm about all the minutae (*sic*) of obscure tribal and personal practices, especially if they were agreeably associated with sex or flavoured with obscenity. There resulted a large number of painstaking and often accurate records of interesting habits and practices, of such length that no one had time to read them and often, in any case, irrelevant, by the time they became available, to the day to day business of Government.²⁶

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 292.

²⁶P. E. Mitchell, review of "Native administration in the British territories in Africa", *J. African Administration* III, 1951, 55-65, at pp.56-57.

This clearly unfair jibe received a sober reply from Schapera,²⁷ spelling out once more the case for the usefulness of anthropology and suggesting co-operation on the ground between anthropologists and administrators, but protectively retaining the right to investigate esoteric scientific problems. The terms of the debate were thus very close to what they had been for a generation: and this in itself suggests that a fundamental opposition of interest, sympathy and commitment between the camp of colonial officials, on the one hand, and of social anthropologists on the other, had not been overcome.

Indeed, Malinowski's position had hardened even further. His most powerful statements on the need for the work of the social scientist to be politically involved appear in the collection of his writings posthumously edited by Phyllis Kaberry under the title *The Dynamics of Culture Change: an Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa* (1945). There is a markedly more intense tone in these later writings, partly perhaps a sign of increasing disaffection with the apolitical, amoral natural science approach of those influenced strongly by Radcliffe-Brown, and of a deepening personal radical commitment. In the first chapter we read:

There is a moral obligation to every calling, even to that of a scientific specialist. The duty of the anthropologist is to be a fair and true interpreter of the Native . . . In reality, the historian of the future will have to register that Europeans in the past sometimes exterminated whole island peoples; that they expropriated most of the patrimony of savage races; that they introduced slavery in a specially cruel and pernicious form; and that even if they abolished it later, they treated the expatriated Negroes as outcasts and pariahs. . . .

The Native still needs help. The anthropologist who is unable to perceive this, unable to register the tragic errors committed at times with the best intentions, at times under the stress of dire necessity, remains an antiquarian covered with academic dust and in a fool's paradise . . . Research in order to be of use must be inspired by courage and purpose . . .

Shall we, therefore, mix politics with science? In one way, decidedly "yes" . . .²⁸

²⁷I. Schapera, "Anthropology and the administrator", *J. African Administration* III, 1951, 128-35.

²⁸B. Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change: an Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, 1945; edited, with a new Introduction, by P. Kaberry, 1961, pp. 3-4.

Malinowski develops his argument that in the context of Africa, where change is proceeding everywhere, there can be no division between the theoretical and the applied aspects of anthropology. He insists on the need for a broad prospective:

We are dealing with a subject matter which is in flux; the rapidity of change confuses observation and confounds policies. The growth of new unexpected forces and factors, such as African nationalism and the development of autonomous African churches, poses difficulties of description and analysis as well as of policy. In this new work the theoretician and practitioner must take account of wide issues of Western rule, economic as well as imperial; they have to be acquainted with the rudiments at least of economic, legal, and political theory and, with all this, of anthropological method.²⁹

In the subsequent chapter he claims that "the whole range of European influences, interests, good intention, and predatory drives must become an essential part of the study of African culture change." It is not merely a question of considering local Europeans as part of an integrated community with the Africans.

The treatment of the complex situation of change as one 'well integrated whole' . . . ignores the whole dynamism of the process . . . Above all, it obscures and distorts the only correct conception of culture change in such areas: the fact that it is the result of an impact of a higher, active culture upon a simpler, more passive one.³⁰

The "contact" situation is highly one-sided; in a list of its characteristics in the fifth chapter of the collection, Malinowski notes that Europeans have not given African people instruments of physical power, "firearms, bombing planes, poison gas, and all that makes effective defence or aggression possible". Nor do "we" give instruments of political mastery; nor do we share with them the substance of economic wealth and advantages. "Even when, under indirect economic exploitation as in West Africa and Uganda, we allow the Natives a share of profits, the full control of economic organization remains in the hands of Western enterprise".³¹ Nor do we admit of social, political or even religious equality. On the whole we are more generous with spiritual gifts, while withholding wealth, power and independence. And now for the justification of his stand in terms of science:

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 57.

This argument may be mistaken by the superficial reader as an outburst of pro-Native ranting. It is nothing of the sort. All this is simply a statement of one of the most scientifically relevant factors in culture change as it occurs in parts of Africa. To ignore the fact that there is a selective giving on the part of the Europeans makes for a distortion of evidence, and this is a sin against science.³²

It is true that Malinowski was afraid of extreme nationalism and the political dangers of its spread, and was not committed to a revolutionary position. But he sketches clearly in these later writings the essential features of the developing political situation, makes plain his own sympathies, and justifies them in terms of the scientist's duty. The colour bar for example "has to be put on the methodological map", because of its theoretical importance in cultural change.

Indeed, the sooner we speak quite freely and openly about it and also with a complete scientific detachment, the better; for the educated Africans are rapidly becoming aware of, and exaggerating, the situation. The African is becoming an anthropologist who turns our own weapons against us. He is studying European aims, pretences, and all the real and imaginary acts of injustice. Such an anthropology is no doubt mutilated and misguided, full of counter-prejudices, and charged with bitter hostility. It is often blind in its intransigence and sweeping in its wholesale indictment. But it cannot be ignored by the man of science; and it would be better if the practical man did not treat it as a joke or as an insignificant and minor excrescence. For on the whole it contains a great deal of truth, and it foreshadows the formation of a public opinion, of a national and racial feeling which, sooner or later, will have to be taken into account by the practical contact agents.³³

And even more explicitly:

The various movements which have so far appeared have broken down largely because the Natives are not yet ripe for national, well-organized, collective action. By the time, however, when a European power in control may become politically embarrassed and when there is fertile ground for the combination of the Natives from the Lakes to the Cape, such a collective body of opinion may not be an irrelevant factor. The anthropologist

³²*Ibid.*, p. 58.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 59.

should have as one of his duties, not to act as a spy, still less as an *agent provocateur*, but to study the growing forces of Bantu nationalism; to insist as all those with knowledge and foresight do, that an improvement in social and, above all, economic conditions, constitutes the only way out of the difficulty; and that no price is too high to pay to prevent inevitable disaster.⁸⁴ Malinowski does not face the question of how "inevitable" disaster can be prevented. In positive terms, he merely suggests some liberal reforms, and the need for the continuance of some elements from the traditional past. On these points he could certainly be said to stand close to official colonial policy and practice.

But I have quoted extensively from Malinowski and some of his contemporaries and his pupils, in order to suggest that taken as a whole, his views nevertheless constitute a point of view of greater political perception and radical significance than might at first be thought. Of course Malinowski was not trying to overthrow the system. His students' grants would have soon dried up if that were the case. Of course his activities and writings, and those of his colleagues, were contained within the total colonial situation; how could it have been otherwise? But just as Malinowski himself rejected the concept of the "culture contact" situation as an integrated whole, we must reject the concept of the colonial situation in the inter-war period as an integrated whole. We must recognise that there were developing contradictions, not merely between the administrators and their philosophy of just rule on the one hand, and nascent nationalism and socialism on the other, but between each of these and social anthropology, caught in the middle and constrained from either side.

In the inter-war period, the main constraints were from colonial authority itself. A historical view of the subject should therefore give full weight to the ways in which social anthropology was a vehicle for criticism of that authority.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 61.

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