JASO 31/2 (2000): 149–166

FROM MICRO TO MACRO: AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM IN BRITISH ANTHROPOLOGY

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Introduction

I remember vividly when, at a meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth held in Cambridge in 1983, Peter Rivière announced in a keynote address that scientific anthropology might come to an end if anthropologists persisted in emphasizing ethnography and abandoning theory.[1] There is little doubt that in the 1980s there were obvious signs that the discipline was changing horizons, abandoning the idea that anthropology should be considered a science.

Retrospectively, it is possible to detect a tendency that had appeared much earlier. I would define it as an attempt to reject the Radcliffe-Brownian objective of creating what his book published in 1957 was entitled: *A Natural Science of Society*. In 1962, Evans-Pritchard published a collection of previously published articles, under the title *Essays in Social Anthropology*, in which he suggested that social anthropology should be thought of as a discipline that is part of the

This is a revised version of a paper presented at one of the plenary sessions of the Ninth Congress of Spanish Anthropology that took place in Barcelona on 6 September 2002.

[1] While my memory of what Rivière said is vivid, I am told he does not remember saying as much himself, nor does the claim appear in the published version of his address (Rivière 1985).

humanities, in other words, a kind of historiography. As he clearly put it: 'social anthropology...studies societies as moral systems and not as natural systems...it is interested in design rather than in process, and...it therefore seeks patterns and not scientific laws, and interprets rather than explains' (1962: 26). Evans-Pritchard's later works were perhaps not as influential as his early monographs (on the Nuer and the Azande). However, the perspective he was promulgating was progressively accepted, becoming mainstream.

A few years later, Edmund Leach (1984: 3) expressed himself as rather dismissive of any attempt to present anthropology as a science. Indeed, more or less scientific-oriented perspectives like structuralism and Marxism lost their appeal by the 1980s. Was it surprising then that in a debate among British anthropologists concerning the status of the discipline, there was a majority of voters in favour of not seeing the discipline as a generalizing science (Ingold 1996: 14)? This event took place as early as 1988 at a meeting in the series 'Key Debates in Anthropology' at the University of Manchester; apparently only 35% of those attending believed in the scientific nature of the discipline.

In 1983 a symposium was held at the University of St Andrews in Scotland to discuss the comparative method in social anthropology, and as a result a book, edited by Ladislav Holy, was published in 1987 under the title *Comparative Anthropology*. As far as I know, the issue has not been dealt with again.[2] What can be said of Holy's edited book? Some of my colleagues, Peter Skalník in conversation in particular, have insisted that Holy was not enthusiastic about comparisons as a scientific procedure. Holy insisted in his introduction on the existence of two paradigms concerning comparison and generalization (Holy 1997). What he was saying is that, although in the past anthropology became a generalizing science that relied on comparisons to reach such an objective, today the social sciences in general are envisaged differently, constituted essentially in terms of meaning.

What modern anthropologists pursue, according to Holy, is an interpretative anthropology, that is, a discipline that is mainly concerned with issues of description. In fact, some of the authors who contributed to the book (David Parkin and Joanna Overing, for example) share this perspective. It appears that comparisons were a perspective of the past; up to the 1970s, that is, universally acceptable generalizations existed. What seemed more recently to have become a popular anthropological objective is 'personal accounts of fieldwork' (Holy 1987: 7), not comparisons. As to the existing comparisons, they are of different types, some very far away from a positivist approach. Generally speaking, none of the chapters in Holy's book is 'specifically concerned with the problem of formulating generalisations through comparison and none of them advocates the hard-core positivist

[2] The publication *Anthropology, by Comparison*, edited by Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox (2002), is not relevant because it is not essentially British, though there is a foreword by Marilyn Strathern and a chapter by Adam Kuper on South Africa, which contains an interesting but brief reference to our issue.

approach' (that is, George Murdock's statistical correlations) (ibid.: 15). For practical purposes, most of the authors in the book think that comparisons should be limited to the regional level. Another point worth mentioning is that according to Holy the 'main objective of the comparative method is no longer that of testing hypotheses, but rather that of identifying or highlighting cultural specificity' (ibid.). In other words, this means the abandonment of the Durkheimian idea that social facts are things. What mostly matters is that what we are studying is meaning or culture, not social structure. The final point would be to emphasize the fact that the achievements of the comparative method are limited and the procedure has to be followed rigorously.

Not surprisingly, and with very few exceptions such as limited regional comparisons, British anthropologists have not been interested in the comparative method. As Adam Kuper has said rather bluntly, most anthropologists do not 'any longer attempt essays in cross-cultural comparison or generalisation' (2002: 144). The only thing that anthropologists count on is belonging not to the natural sciences, but to philosophy, cultural studies, and literature.

To conclude this introduction, what would be better than to refer to the book *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*, by the two distinguished *avant-gardistes*, Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing (2000)? The list of concepts included is unbelievably postmodernist. In the entry 'Science', the main point made is that science is not scientific, as people like Bruno Latour argue. In the final instance the truths of science are fabricated, as ethnographic studies of scientific communities have shown. The vicious circle has been completed. First, anthropology is not a natural science, and, in the end, natural sciences are not really sciences either.

In the past fifteen years I have often emphasized in my writings the importance of psychology and sociobiology for the survival of anthropologists as scientists. For instance, in my recent paper for the European Association of Social Anthropologists' conference at Copenhagen, held in August 2002, I considered whether historical sociology had anything to offer British anthropologists (Llobera 2002). In the past quarter of a century, the dominant American model has ruled Great Britain. However, one can also show that the American landscape is much broader and varied than some people think. The appearance, or rather re-emergence, of historical and comparative sociology was, and still is, an exciting alternative to the dominance of micro-empiricism—the prevailing feature of British social anthropology.

Major Figures in British Social Anthropology in the Last Quarter of a Century

There are different ways of looking at the history of British anthropology. A classical approach would refer to the succession of theoretical schools: evolutionism,

diffusionism, functionalism, structuralism, Marxism, and postmodernism. Another way is by referring to famous authors, let us say, from Edward Tylor to Adam Kuper. My approach aims at originality but uses, in a not altogether serious way, the model of the chronological stages of the conquest of America to discuss the development of British anthropology. In the first stage I would place those I would call the *visionaries*, that is, people like Tylor, Robertson Smith, and Frazer. The next stage groups together the people who participated in the Torres Strait Expedition (Haddon, Rivers, and Seligman), the *initiators*. With the appearance of fieldwork the true *discoverers* of social anthropology, like Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, come into view. What followed was the arrival of famous and active *explorers* (Evans-Pritchard, Gluckman, Firth, and Leach). The next three stages refer to the period that I am going to consider in detail. I have chosen people who are well-known, prolific, influential, and who represent specific tendencies or specialities. First I will present the *pioneers*, referring especially to Jack Goody, Mary Douglas, and Ernest Gellner. The second stage looks at those I call the *settlers* (Maurice Bloch, Adam Kuper, and Marilyn Strathern). Finally, there come the *young Turks*, such as Tim Ingold, Daniel Miller, and Cris Shore.

Let me introduce, rather briefly, each of the stages. The *pioneers* are extremely well-known internationally. Dealing with issues that are wider than strictly anthropological ones, they are famous in wide circles. Ernest Gellner wrote also on sociological, historical, and philosophical themes, to say the least. As for Mary Douglas, her writings have drawn on influences from Biblical studies to the humanities, from economics to cosmology, and from many other areas. Jack Goody, less well known than the other authors, has published more than thirty books. After his fieldwork in West Africa, he became a comparativist and historian dealing with two continents (Europe and Asia) and with a variety of issues (kinship, marriage, language, etc.).

As to the *settlers*, what can be said is that they all started with substantial ethnographic work and later in their careers broadened their horizons. They are all very prestigious academics with numerous publications and have had, or still have, established roles (with headships of department at major centres of anthropology, a major British and international presence, etc.). They are thinking beyond the micro perspective that has dominated the anthropological tradition, at least in the past twenty years in Great Britain. A sketch of their trajectories can be presented as follows: Adam Kuper did his ethnography in Botswana and Jamaica and later become a historian of anthropology; Maurice Bloch did fieldwork in Madagascar (among the Merina and Zafimaniry), flirted with Marxism, and has since shown an interest in psychological anthropology; the final case, that of Marilyn Strathern, begins with fieldwork in Papua New Guinea and England, followed by a growing interest in feminist anthropology, with some sympathy for postmodernism.

Finally, any consideration of the *young Turks* is undoubtedly more controversial. A clever person might say, 'Why not refer to Jeremy MacClancy, Richard

Fardon, and Henrietta Moore' (all anthropologists born in the 1950s)? To a certain extent my choice is arbitrary, although the reason for the selection is strategic, that is, it is aimed at emphasizing certain trends. The people chosen are well known and prolific; generally they are influential, though it is still difficult to judge. In my view they have all stretched the boundaries of anthropology: to the political (Shore), the philosophical (Miller), and the biological (Ingold). In this respect I regard them as demagogues, that is, as agitating preachers. Shore is a clear case of somebody who is politically oriented within the discipline, that is, an anthropologist who regularly breaks the Weberian rule of avoiding politics in the classroom and in anthropological texts. Miller, who originates from the world of material culture, thinks now from a philosophical perspective that involves a return to a visionary tradition. As for Ingold, he rejects in a combative way any penetration of evolutionary biology into social anthropology.

It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive and detailed treatment of each and every one of these British authors; this would be a mammoth task. My intention is much more modest: to present a vignette of each anthropologist, emphasizing only, and rather briefly, their position concerning comparativism and theorization.

First Stage: The Pioneers (Goody, Douglas, and Gellner)

Jack Goody (born 1919) was a student of Meyer Fortes and has always been attached to the University of Cambridge. His original theoretical approach can be described as functionalist. He did extended research in West Africa (Ghana) among the LoDagga and the LoWiili (Goody 1956). Comparative analysis was a concern of Goody's from his very early days in the discipline. At a later stage he would suggest that, compared with Europe, West Africa had an abundance of land, but low population. In West Africa he did research in both centralized and non-centralized societies and on a variety of topics: ancestry, kinship, ritual, etc.

By 1968 Goody had developed an interest in literacy, and a wide range of issues, from ethnographic to comparative and theoretical. An important issue that he was concerned with in his edited volume *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (1968) was the leap from orality to literacy. At a different level he also suggested that Greek alphabetical literacy had an obvious political function, a position that was widely criticized. His concern with Europe from a historical perspective was expressed in a number of books, among which *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (1983) is an excellent example. In this text he was able to suggest, for a wide context, the existence of a clear link between changes in a variety of areas (marriage rules, dowry payment, and inheritance patterns) and changes in political and religious domains.

In the longer run, Goody undertook comparative historical studies across three continents (Africa, Europe, and Asia). In 1990 he published *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive*, an ambitious attempt to suggest that, in the area of marriage and family taken together, there were striking parallelisms between Asia and Europe. His comparison covered China, India, the Near East, Greece, and Rome—an undoubtedly Herculean task! More recently, in his *The European Family* (2000), he has presented a far-reaching history of the family in that continent. Again, this is without doubt a comparative and historical enterprise. The approach that he definitely favours, as stated in his more autobiographical text, *The Expansive Moment*, is one that produces an 'interplay between "theory" and "practice", the general and the particular' (1995: 118). He is well aware that modern anthropology has largely rejected the comparative method and that it is obsessed with fieldwork as the only acceptable task. Finally, Goody certainly favours working with other disciplines (history, psychology, etc.), being unwilling to condemn anthropology to a narrow perspective.

Mary Douglas (born 1921) is not a thinker who is easy to understand. As her biographer Richard Fardon has noted, she combines in her writings the 'esoteric and everyday' (1999: 242). The American sociologist Lewis Coser (1988) classified her as a fox, that is, a thinker who moves incessantly from one subject to another. However, could she not rather be seen as a hedgehog, as somebody who concentrates in depth on a single topic? This classical distinction between foxes and hedgehogs, invented by the Greek poet Archilocus, is perhaps not applicable to Douglas. In any case, she has never limited herself within the discipline, as many British social anthropologists have done.

After her research on the Lele of Central Africa, she explored the society from which she herself came and in which she lived for a time, as well as, later, her new society after 1975, namely the USA. In the long run, her objective was to produce a critique of social modernity, a reality that she disliked. In practice, she projected a new type of society that would be ideal to reside in, although it is not clear which type would it be. This, without doubt, was a grandiose perspective that was far from a purely academic pursuit and entered into the area of ideals (Douglas and Ney 1998).

No doubt Douglas embraced what could be called relativism. Whatever is enunciated as a truth, it can only refer to a particular group that is characterized by a particular culture. For her, any comparison of a group of societies will inevitably lead to the conclusion that some are better than others. There is no doubt that in books like *Purity and Danger* (1966) she compared a number of societies, both simplex and complex ones; but the question is whether she really used the comparative method or whether she was rather more like a butterfly flitting swiftly from one flower to another.

In the introduction to the new edition of her *Natural Symbols*, she insists that 'the central project of this book is to enable comparison to be less subjective and relativist by establishing something about different social environments' (Douglas 1996: xii). For Douglas, what to compare is a decision that has to be taken theoretically. Fardon seems to agree with the idea that Douglas tried to present herself as having created a 'universal, comparative social anthropology' (Fardon 1999: 110). As to the theory proposed, it follows, according to Douglas, the path of the Année sociologique; in other words, it should relate knowledge to social structure. As is obvious, the theory should tackle a complex and comprehensive comparison, including both small-scale societies and complex ones. No doubt Douglas refers to a great variety of cases from both sides of this fence. In conclusion, one might say that she is interested in the use of the comparative method and in the formulation of theories, but underlying her thinking, there is also a quest for a better human nature. What is at stake is how this affects the nature of her anthropology.

Like Douglas, Ernest Gellner (born 1925, died 1995) was well known internationally. My starting-point would be to suggest that Gellner was a scientifically oriented social scientist who oscillated between empiricism and rationalism. As he showed repeatedly in the last years of his life, he stood uncomfortably in an academic world in which postmodernism was becoming more and more pervasive (Gellner 1992). Deep down he was essentially an anti-relativist and a materialist (Gellner 1985).

His range of interests was extremely varied: from nationalism to Islam and from development to modernization, as well as the philosophy of the social sciences. Perhaps what is important to emphasize is his globality as a historical sociologist. An issue that fascinated him for a long time was the question of the origins of modernity. This was best encapsulated in his work *Plough, Sword and Book* (1988), in which he dealt with a variety of scientific problems: the nature of agrarian society, the uniqueness of the West, the transition from Agraria to Industria, etc.

Although Gellner made important contributions in a variety of areas, including his ethnographic research in North Africa (Gellner 1981), he is best known for his general, if controversial, theory of nationalism (Gellner 1983). This was no mean achievement in a discpline that is characterized by ethnographies and an absence of comparativism and proper theorization. That he can be accused of using a techno-economic determinism, or of embracing too high a level of abstraction (ideal types), is perhaps unsurprising.

Gellner often insisted that the two main influences on his thought were Malinowski and Karl Popper (see Kuper 1999a: 141ff). In this respect, positivism was a crucial element in his intellectual formation at the London School of Economics. He believed that any theory had to be based on observation, expressed in a logical

and clear way, and subjected to falsification. It is obvious that he preferred neat, crisp, abstract models as the main objective of his undertaking. Finally, Gellner was convinced that the social sciences had not yet become scientific, but that they would possess the 'sacred fire of science' (1984: 585) in the future.

Second Stage: The Settlers (Bloch, Kuper, and Strathern)

Maurice Bloch (born 1939) is well known, not only for his ethnographic studies of Madagascar over a number of years, but also for his commitment to a neo-Marxist approach during the 1970s and early 1980s, as well as, in more recent times, an attempt to introduce a psychological perspective, based on recent cognitive investigations. In his *How We Think They Think* he deals with the central issue: 'the relation between what is, on the one hand, explicit and conscious and...on the other hand, what is inexplicit and unconscious' (1998: vii). The first is easily accessible, but the second is basic.

In the second stage of his career, that is, after his fieldwork in Madagascar, Bloch was attracted by Marxism. He became, no doubt, the internationally best-known British specialist on Marxist anthropology. The two books he published on the topic were the edited volume *Marxist Analyses in Social Anthropology* (1975) and *Marxism and Anthropology* (1983), the latter representing a somewhat one-sided vision that Olympianly ignored the theoretical developments presented in the journal *Critique of Anthropology* from 1974 to 1981. *Marxism and Anthropology* was openly presented as an attempt to make accessible an area of thought that, he considered, tended to be obscure. Did he succeed in this task? Having recently perused his text, I can confirm that it is easy to follow; however, I believe it is superficial and simplistic. Retrospectively, it is difficult to work out whether Bloch's interest in Marxism implied an approach that was comparative and theoretical. As we shall see, his next move was towards the defence of a cognitive science with the objective of improving anthropology, especially with respect to elaborating fieldwork material.

In a paper given in 1990, Bloch stated that 'anthropological accounts...work from a false theory of cognition' (1992: 127). This is a rather grand and ambitious statement that refers to a rather embarrassing situation for anthropology: its practitioners fail to perceive how the natives conceptualize their society. Why does this happen? Simply because ethnographers tend 'to use the common folk view of thought current' in many societies. Bloch's insistence is that this theory fails to grasp the true nature of the psychological process. Thinking should not be envisaged as a lineal sequence consisting of linked words. In fact, what cognitive science suggests is that 'everyday thought is not language-like' (ibid.: 128), but rather multi-stranded, with a variety of threads. The implication of this idea is important:

because we are dealing with a non-lineal arrangement, language is not an adequate means for capturing everyday cognition.

The solution to the problem, according to Bloch, is found in the cognitive science that presents an alternative to the folk theory of thought. What he suggests is that anthropologists must be vigilant of 'over-linguistic and over-logic-sentential conceptualisations and prompt themselves to search for alternatives' (ibid.: 130). In the final resort, according to Bloch, 'some of the theories emerging in cognitive science are central to the concerns of anthropology...and should lead anthropologists to re-examine many of the premises of their work' (1998: 3).

There is little doubt that Adam Kuper (born 1941) is a rarity among contemporary British anthropologists in that he has shown a clear and sustained attitude towards anthropology as a science. Kuper is insistent that anthropologists should revert to the framework of the 1970s, that is, a situation in which 'ethnographies have to fit somehow into broader theoretical and comparative projects' (1999a: 55). In his early career he did fieldwork in southern Africa (the Kalahari) and the Caribbean (Jamaica). In a book published in 1994, *The Chosen Primate*, he presented a perfect balance between the social anthropological and the physical anthropological perspectives.

British social anthropology, Kuper insists, in his new edition of *Anthropology and Anthropologists* (1996), was a unified, long-term (fifty years), impressive discipline, in existence roughly from 1922 to 1972. What characterizes the past twenty-five years is the challenge, first, of the structuralism and Marxism of the 1970s and early 1980s. From the late 1980s onwards what has dominated is the phenomenon of a general divergence between post-structuralism (plus feminism, third-world-ism, etc.) and a practical and exclusivist ethnographic tendency. Mentioning exceptions to this late tendency, Kuper refers to Goody's *Production and Reproduction* (1976), Gellner's *Plough, Sword and Book* (1988), and Ingold's *Evolution and Social Life* (1986a).

Kuper emphasizes the abandonment by British social anthropology of the Radcliffe-Brownian comparative dimension. Of the older tradition, Leach is pointed out as an author who was both dubious of comparativism and of Lévi-Straussianism (the general features of the human mind). Kuper insists that Goody was perhaps the only mature anthropologist concerned with comparativism and points out that he even embraced Murdock's statistical perspective. By the 1980s Marxism and structuralism had to a great extent lost their appeal. Of the former, 'the most creative and interesting' (Kuper 1996: 183) researcher was Maurice Bloch. An important effect was that Marxism contributed tremendously to the dismantling of functionalism. In this context, he refers to the major role played by *Critique of Anthropology* in Britain, especially in London. Kuper also mentions significantly the progressive abandonment of a scientific perspective and its

substitution by phenomenological, interpretative, and humanist approaches. Here the Winchian model, as developed in his book *The Idea of a Social Science* (Winch 1958), had a serious impact on anthropology.

According to Kuper, on the whole, American anthropology had always insisted on the concept of culture, which, in the hands of Clifford Geertz, in due course became a purely hermeneutic term. American anthropology, following the Boasian perspective, has always insisted on: *relativism*, that is, each people sees the world in its own way and hence its values cannot be judged; *idealism*, that is, the object of anthropology is beliefs, values, concepts, and discourses; and *humanism*, that is, what anthropology should do is present an appreciation of human beings and not a scientific explanation of them. In this sense then, Kuper insists that current American postmodernism found its origins in the work of Franz Boas. In his book *Culture* (1999b) he insists that American anthropologists such as Geertz, David Schneider, and Marshall Sahlins are trapped by serious epistemological problems originating in a sort of cultural determinism.

In one of her most recent edited publications, *Audit Cultures*, Marilyn Strathern (born 1941) insists that the main task of the anthropologist is to describe society, social organization, and culture (Strathern 2000: 279). The way to achieve this objective is to do fieldwork and write an ethnography. What she seems to be asserting is that anthropologists are basically ethnographers, that is, people who describe a social reality as a result of empirical research. On the other hand, some of her contributions are clearly addressed to what might be called applied anthropology. In her book *Reproducing the Future* (1992a), for example, she deals with the reproductive technologies of the present.

Generally speaking, the main comparative dimension offered by Strathern is the contrast between Britain and Papua New Guinea. Whether she sympathizes with postmodernism or is interested in just superficial contact with it, that is, whether she wants a relationship or a flirtation, I cannot work out. Her book *Partial Connections* (1991) is presented as a monograph on the comparative method, but is it really that? In reading the book one can only reach the conclusion that it is unclear and ambivalent.

I have no doubt, however, that her *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) is a critique of, or rather an attack on, anthropological theories dealing with Melanesia. Following Louis Dumont, who famously contrasted the ideologies of hierarchy (India) and individualism (Europe), Strathern insists that in Melanesia social relations are prior to individuals. On the other hand, *After Nature* (1992b) is about the cultural revolution in recent English kinship. In the final resort, if we look at Strathern's most important contribution to the discipline, we know that it is about gender, but her contrasting of Western and Papua New Guinean modes of thought is not properly comparative but dualistic. This is not, of course, to deny the importance of a

contribution that emphasizes that, while concepts of dominance and subordination are appropriate when referring to Western thought, they cannot be transferred to Mount Hagen and the Melanesian world.

Third Stage: The Young Turks (Ingold, Miller, and Shore)

Tim Ingold (born 1948) was a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester for many years, though in 1995 he moved to Aberdeen. His main ethnographic research has been among the Saami and north Finnish farmers. One clearly comparative study was his *Hunters, Pastoralists and Ranchers* (1980), which dealt with pastoralism in the circumpolar north. Over the years he has dealt with different theoretical issues, and specifically, with evolutionary theory (*Evolution and Social Life*, 1986a) and human ecology (*The Appropriation of Nature*, 1986b). He was also involved in two edited volumes (with David Riches and James Woodburn) entitled *Hunters and Gatherers* (1988), and the editor of the Royal Anthropological Institute's anthropological journal (*Man*) from 1990 to 1992, as well as of the *Companion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (1994).

It is curious, if not illustrative, of his thinking that, in his introduction to a recent text, *The Perception of the Environment*, Ingold confesses that his reason for switching to studying social anthropology in Cambridge was the profound disillusionment he had felt with the natural sciences (Ingold 2000: 1). He was conscious, however, and he insists on this, of the growing gap between the arts and sciences. He felt that anthropology should connect the two different worlds, that is, humanity and nature. It is plain that for Ingold there is a radical rupture between social and physical anthropology. In our days, social anthropologists frequently come into contact with philosophers, literary critics, and historians, while physical anthropologists collaborate with biologists and psychologists. Ingold's starting-point is that there must be errors on both sides of the fence. What was worrying for him was that physical anthropologists apparently rejected the idea that there was intentionality or imagination in human affairs.

If we examine what we might call Ingold's attempt to construct such a connection between social and physical anthropology, we should begin with his *Evolution and Social Life* (1986a). Society is seen by Ingold as forming a special, exclusive dimension of human nature, our special dependence on the regulations of each given society. It is not incorrect to suggest that Ingold aimed to study humanity at a number of different levels: social, cultural, environmental, and biological. In some respects one can see that he has insisted on attempting to integrate social sciences and biology. Whether he has adopted what Thomas Eriksen and Finn Nielsen (2000) have called a 'phenomenological perspective' is arguable.

None the less, Ingold has undoubtedly been extremely critical of Edward O. Wilson's sociobiology, accusing him and his followers of recreating a sort of old-

fashioned nineteenth-century evolutionist method. What he definitely rejects is what he calls the 'aggressively imperialistic' tendency of the neo-Darwinian paradigm (Ingold 1986a: 240). What he is in favour of is a much broader conception of evolution than the Darwinian one. Behaviour, he insists, cannot be conceived as generated 'by innate, genetically coded programmes' (Ingold 1993: 470). Not surprisingly, physical anthropologists either ignore Ingold's comments because they believe they are muddled and wrong or, like Robin Dunbar (1996), insist that Ingold has no idea about evolutionary biology or, in other words, that he is tilting at windmills. It therefore appears that Ingold has not achieved his aim of connecting social and physical anthropology.

Perhaps it would be fair to refer to Daniel Miller (born 1954) as a sort of neo-Marxist. From his contribution to *Domination and Resistance* (edited by himself, Michael Rowlands, and Christopher Tilley in 1989) to his chapter in *Virtualism: A New Political Economy* (edited by himself and James Carrier in 1998), a high level of abstraction is used in particular in reference to Marx, as well as such other powerful characters as Hegel, Lukács, and Gramsci. In his early career, he was an archaeologist, but working together with a group of people who were often social anthropologists or moving in this direction. He has often been interested in the concept of ideology.

It is plain that his ambitious theoretical objectives were limited, at least to a certain extent, by his archaeological framework. No doubt in the years to follow he became progressively more interested in the study of capitalism, with a specific emphasis on consumption. His *Capitalism: An Ethnographic Approach* (1997) is clearly based on his ethnographic study of Trinidad in 1989. As he states towards the end of the book, if one wants to move from an ethnography towards a generalizing theory, one must take Marx as a model, although it is plain that 'a dialectical approach cannot be historical' (ibid.: 331); in other words, one must adapt Marx's theory to modern times. A crucial feature that he emphasizes is that pure capitalism sustains and deepens inequality and oppression (ibid.: 341).

For Miller, consumers are individuals who are separated from other social capacities. Hegel's idea of 'the notion of a citizenship that transcended the distances between massive and abstract institutions and our subjectivities—in short, a citizenship that recognized itself in forms such as government and the economy and took responsibility for these' (ibid.) is important. How to put an end to what Marx called a 'fetishism of commodities' is a fundamental concern of Miller's, who favours both a citizenship paying high taxes to fund a welfare system and what he calls 'green goods', that is, favoured commodities. In conclusion, a fair and progressive world requires not only a certain type of occasional political vote, but also daily decisions in favour of certain 'good' goods and against certain 'bad' goods.

It is obvious that, as Miller has said elsewhere, he is in 'defence of a grand narrative' (1998: 188). In this respect, he is critical of postmodernism for having rejected Hegel and Marx. He insists that if there is anything amazing it is that Hegel was prescient by suggesting that history had a direction. Today, with the existence of a global economy, this certainly seems to be the case. What are created by human beings, like forms and institutions (say, law or money), become progressively more autonomous and powerful, 'things' that become 'highly oppressive and dangerous to us' (ibid.: 189). For Miller, being influenced by Hegel and Marx represents, among other things, the ability to understand the changing social reality of today. In many respects, he insists on preaching the appeal of a future in which 'capitalist universalism should create its own potential for a new particularism, such that workers could develop societies in ways never previously envisaged' (ibid.: 190).

Finally, with reference to the discipline, Miller is well aware that ethnography is a parochial perspective, 'in that what is respected is intensive knowledge about small groups of people' (ibid.). Anthropology has, of course, seen the appearance within the discipline of theoretical approaches such as functionalism and structuralism. However, although he expresses a love of theoretical models, Miller also stresses 'a commitment to remain immersed ethnographically in the dense thickets' (ibid.).

Finally, we consider Cris Shore (born 1959). In his review of Shore's *Building Europe* (2000), Thomas Wilson (2000) highlights the fact that anthropologists like Shore 'carry us beyond our disciplinary boundaries'. However, Wilson also mentions that the book has a Euro-sceptic subtext. In fact, Shore's model is that of critical anthropology, in this case a critical anthropology of the European Union. My point here is that Shore has a clear position in favour of value judgements (see Ahmed and Shore 1995). However, I believe that the crucial Weberian distinction between value judgements and value-free description of social reality is essential. Although it is true that Peter Lassman (2000) has recently expressed doubts as to whether Weber did actually go along with this rigid division, I still find it appropriate.

Shore's political opposition to the European Union, which is perfectly acceptable in itself, is unfortunately reflected in his anthropological approach, which might be described as biased in consequence. For example, in his so-called ethnographic studies of the European Commission he has been in favour of popularizing the expression 'fortress Europe' to refer to the European Union. Shore also stresses the fact that the history of the European Union represents a 'technocratic, managerial and top-down' attempt 'to create Europe by fiat' (1998: 48), as well as the idea that the Brussels bureaucracy is in favour of creating a superstate. In my view, what Shore has created concerning the European Union is a sort of

Leviathan on to which he has projected all his fears and doubts. What one could say is that many of his statements about the European Union are unreliable and that his projected ideas about the future are impossible to accept because, as Max Weber suggested, human beings rarely achieve what they plan for and, more importantly, human actions have unintended effects. We are all entitled, of course, to hold political ideas, but if we want to call ourselves social scientists we must avoid allowing value judgements to affect our findings.

Conclusion

If we consider the rank and file of British anthropologists in the past quarter of a century, what we can firmly state is that they have remained ethnographers and that they have been suspicious of any comparisons—and even worse of any theoretical adventures. However, it should be recognized that there continues to be very strong ethnographic output from British anthropology. What the future will bring is difficult to assess, although, as is well-known, the ethnographic approach is under serious scrutiny and criticism from self-defeatist postmodernists.

What final conclusions can we reach regarding the individual anthropologists that I have chosen? As I said above, my criteria for choosing were that they are the best-known names of each of my stages of British anthropology and that they have substantial publication records. Are the best-known authors that I have mentioned really oriented towards a comparative and theoretical perspective? On the surface the answer appears to be positive, although I believe that it is not always the case.

If we start with the *young Turks*, the general impression concerning our objectives is somewhat pessimistic. I refer to them as demagogues, that is, anthropological agitators who go beyond a strictly scientific approach to the discipline. As for the people in the middle, the *settlers*, they are undoubtedly much more promising. Beginning with Strathern, it is true that it is difficult to pinpoint whether she is committed to scientism, but she definitely goes beyond a limited ethnographic perspective. As for Bloch, although he certainly emphasizes the importance of creating a close relationship between cognitive science and anthropology, he has only written a few theoretical papers. Finally, Kuper is definitely committed to a scientific anthropology; in a sense, he could be seen as anthropology's St John the Baptist.

Finally, a reference to the *pioneers*. In this context there is no doubt that both Gellner and Goody have produced texts that reflect a serious pledge to anthropology, and the social sciences in general, as a discipline that is not only comparatively and historically oriented, but that also should accept the scientific rules of the game. As for Douglas, she is certainly comparative (but is the procedure appropriate?) and theoretical (but is it not rather philosophical?). The truth, however, is not easy to ascertain, although she is an impressive thinker.

If any lessons can be learnt from this schematic presentation, it is simply that British social anthropology is in a state of disarray, a state of affairs that, as Kuper has often remarked, is disintegrating the traditional scientific approach and thus forcing its practitioners to find refuge in their fieldwork experiences. In this area, there is little doubt that the discipline is still impressive. I am certainly in no position to foresee the future, but what one can say with certainty is that in the past twenty-five years we have experienced the end of anthropology in Britain as a scientific project. Today, so-called British social anthropologists play a sophisticated game of survival, firmly anchored, as I have said, in their ethnographies; however, they also accept being part of the complex world of sophisticated politicians, cultivators of culturalism, and lovers of literature.

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