An Outlook in Anthropology

Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others. Essays on Culture and Personality. GEORGE W. STOCKING, JR., Ed. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1987. viii, 259 pp., illus. $25. History of Anthropology, vol. 4.

Anthropology and psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, though seemingly complementary, have had an uneasy relationship. In the 1930s and '40s American anthropologists tried to marry the two fields in what came to be known as "culture and personality," but, owing to exaggerated claims and poor methodology (as well as to a change in sentiment), the enterprise fell into disfavor in the '50s and has not recovered its former status despite more rigorous approaches in ethnopsychiatry and cognitive studies.

In this volume George Stocking has gathered together eight papers that look at the development of the culture-and-personality school during its formative years. For the most part, the contributors focus on individual anthropologists: Stocking on Malinowski and his encounter with Freud; Jeremy MacClancy on one of the most unconventional of anthropologists, John Layard; William Manson on Abram Kardiner and his seminar at Columbia on anthropology and psychoanalysis; Walter Jackson on Melville Herskovits and his changing attitudes toward black American culture; Richard Handler on Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict; Regna Darnell on Sapir; Virginia Yan-McLaughlin on Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and the war effort; and James Boon on a somewhat bohemian gathering of anthropologists and artists in Bali. The contributors all attempt to situate their anthropologists in larger social contexts, but—Boon is perhaps the exception—they do not make explicit their historiographic assumptions. They are not, however, hagiographers, a disposition characteristic of the early phases of the history of science.

Modern anthropology developed during the interwar years. With Malinowski's return from the Trobriand Islands, the extended field trip became the ideal of anthropological research, indeed the hallmark of the discipline. Not only were many of the discipline's categories given more rigorous definition than they had had in earlier ethnographic accounts and in the speculations of Frazer and others, but its historicism, its theories of unilineal evolution and cultural diffusion, gave way to more synchronic, empirical approaches that were shared by the other social and behavioral sciences. Freud figured significantly in the discipline's self-definition. Before turning a hostile eye to psychoanalysis, Kroeber flirted with it. Malinowski, somewhat naïvely perhaps, suggested a revision of the Oedipal complex, one that recognized the influence of such social factors as kinship and lineage organization, but he was immediately squelched by the psychoanalytic establishment. Kardiner proceeded more cautiously, always within the confines of Freudian analysis, and elaborated the adaptive mechanisms of psychic (ego) organization, while Sapir collaborated with Harry Stack Sullivan, who, like the other cultural revisionists, recognized the role of society in the development of the individual's personality. Though Mead and Bateson discussed Jung's *Psychological Types* during their Tchambuli days, Jung had in fact very little influence on academic anthropology. Layard, who was analyzed by Jung, did attempt in a confused way to employ Jungian categories in his interpretation of the Malekula people of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). Mead's attitude toward psychoanalysis seems always to have been ambivalent.

Although it is possible to interpret the interest in culture and personality as "a development of the internal discourse of the discipline," its concepts were at the time, as Stocking observes, of wider concern. It was a period in which the "spurious" nature of Western civilization was proclaimed and in which many anthropologists, and others as well, sought somewhat romantically if not to escape to, then to find other solutions in, the more exotic corners of the world. It was also a period in which the battle between racial and cultural determinists was being waged. Franz Boas's two conflicting positions—the universalist/assimilationist and the particularist/pluralist—seem to have set the parameters in which the culture-and-personality anthropologists fought the racialists. On the one hand, they denied the importance of race and predicted the eventual assimilation of diverse ethnic and racial groups; on the other hand, they emphasized the uniqueness of every culture and advocated some sort of cultural pluralism. With the exception of Sapir—anthropology's one genius—who saw clearly the dangers of reifying culture, anthropologists like Benedict, Herskovits, Kardiner, and Mead all tended to treat culture and personality as things. The cultural—basic and model—personalities they posited risked becoming rhetorical substitutes for racial stereotypes, but, as Stocking reminds us, the premises, and therefore the consequences, of such generality were different. Certainly unlike their followers in the '50s who succumbed to the myth of a purely objective (and therefore politically and morally disengaged) anthropology, the American anthropologists of the interwar years, as treated in this volume at least, were largely committed to the American liberal-democratic tradition and saw their discipline as providing not only a critique of their society but a means for improving it.

What is striking about the contributions in this volume is how little attention is given to the people with whom the anthropologists did fieldwork. We learn about their friendships—love affairs, even—academic politics, and intellectual (read Western) influences, but we learn nothing about their relationship to their informants and their informants' influence upon them. Is this absence the result of the contributors' bias—their particular understanding of their "historical" project? Or is it the result of the ethnographic relationship itself, where the informant remains precisely an informant—a giver of data to be fashioned both descriptively and theoretically by the anthropologists in categories that are valorized in his or her own society?

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Aquatic Studies

Limnology in Australia. P. DE DECKKER and W. D. WILLIAMS, Eds. Junk, Dordrecht, 1986 (U.S. distributor, Kluwer Academic, Hingham, MA). xiv, 671 pp., illus. $115. Monographiae Biologicae, vol. 61.

Limnology in Australia was written to commemorate the 25th year of the Australian Society for Limnology. The excitement of investigating previously unexplored habitats and the intrigue of limnological problems are amply demonstrated in this volume with its 40 contributions. The goal of the society was to produce a volume of essays emphasizing areas of limnology in which Australians have had the most impact that would be pertinent to the wider limnological community wanting to learn about Australian inland waters or would be of global concern. As a result, some of the essays examine flora and fauna peculiar to Australia's inland waters, others examine developments in ecological theory, some are tutori-