Book Reviews

Methodological Dilemma in Anthropology

The comparative method in anthropology is based upon the assumption that what has happened once may well, and indeed should, happen again, given the proper conditions, and the recurrence in diverse societies of similar social phenomena invites and begs the testing of this assumption. This method is the hallmark of the discipline and dates back to its early period. Anthropology had hardly entered into its natural science phase of description and taxonomy when Lewis Henry Morgan, struck by the existence of markedly similar systems of kinship terminology in geographically separated societies, published his massive comparative work *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in the Human Family* (1871). Sir Edward Tylor brought the method further in a classic paper in which he compared a number of societies that practiced mother-in-law avoidance and found the custom to be associated with postmarital residence among the kinfolk of the bride. He thus went beyond the simple statement that there was a relationship between living with or proximate to the mother-in-law and avoiding her, for this is given within the facts in any one society; rather, he established that there was a certain necessary character to this relationship, for cross-culturally mother-in-law avoidance occurred more frequently with proximate residence than with other modes of residence. Thus the pattern of avoidance is a covariant, a function, of the rule of residence. Tylor's concern with the ties that link social institutions was a functional one, and his method of establishing the strength of these ties was comparative.

In the title of his **Comparative Functionalism: An Essay in Anthropological Theory** (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966. 163 pp. $3.95) Walter Goldschmidt takes note of two hallowed traditions in anthropology, but his intent is to set the discipline upon what he announces to be a new path. He writes: "I believe that anthropology has come to an impasse, and that the impasse requires a bold new approach to the data at hand, and that the comparative functional approach is a way out of our dilemma" (p. 6). His pessimistic view of current anthropology is based upon inadequacies that he sees in certain aspects of functionalism, on the one hand, and in the modern application of the comparative method on the other.

There are several varieties of functional theory, but Goldschmidt directs his critique to the radical functionalism of Bronislaw Malinowski. One element of the approach of Malinowski, and of many of those whom he influenced, was a view of society and culture as an integrated whole, the elements of which are so intricately interwoven as to produce a unique configuration. Institutions were seen as understandable only in terms of each other, and the comparative method was suspect since the extraction of an institution from its matrix necessarily distorts it. Goldschmidt sees this relativism as leading to a purely deductive type of analysis that posits relations but cannot test them for covariation; this, to him, is the blind alley of functionalism.

The contemporary use of the comparative method is often a creature of the machine. Social institutions are reduced to a finite number of types for coding purposes, and entire cultures are described by a series of symbols; these codes are then fed onto tape or punch cards in a search for correlations. Generally, associations are sought between institutions for which there is some reason to suspect a functional relationship, but some enterprising scholars have recently tested each coded institution against all the rest. After all, if you have been allotted enough machine time, why not? Goldschmidt rightly deplores this mechanism of both theory and method—the Throw It Against the Wall and See If It Sticks School—and concurs with the functionalists he has just criticized when he observes that the coding process falsifies social reality and forces comparison between incomparables.

This is anthropology's impasse, but I suspect that the dilemma lies in part in Goldschmidt's mind, for he has presented us with two extreme positions and represented them as anthropology. There have, however, been many social scientists, anthropologists and others, who have compared societies without removing their data from context and at the same time preserved a functional approach. Among them have been Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Julian H. Steward, S. F. Nadel, and others too numerous to mention. There is a very large middle ground—the core of anthropology, in fact—that lies between Malinowski's relativism and the humming of the computers. These scholars were concerned with social institutions as their units of comparison, and institutions are the stuff of the Malinowskian functionalist and the machine comparativist alike. Goldschmidt agrees with the extreme functionalist position that institutions are too variable in form and their contexts too different to admit of productive comparison and says that we should instead compare the functions of institutions, the human needs which they satisfy and to which the institution is but a response. He finds the virtue in this approach to lie in the universality of these functions, as opposed to the diversity of institutional forms that may satisfy any one of them.

In his emphasis on function as the satisfaction of human needs, Goldschmidt takes us directly back to the Malinowski of the 1930's, for he divides his universe of functions into two categories, primary psychobiological needs and a contingent set of social needs; these correspond exactly to Malinowski's "basic needs" and "derived needs." Malinowski's attention to basic needs never caused great ferment among anthropologists, because these needs (metabolism, reproduction, and so forth) are the simple facts of life, and their use as an analytic device can lead at best to a naive utilitarianism that would be unable to explain cultural differences. On the other hand, Malinowski's treatment of the derived needs departs from concern for the organic

requirements of the species, and his actual analysis of social institutions reveals a quite different theory. This is the above-mentioned view of function as pertaining to the interrelatedness of institutions and the contribution of any part of a culture to the persistence of the whole. This kind of functionalism was pervasive in the development of both anthropology and sociology, and it was clearly enunciated by Durkheim, who long antedates Malinowski. Malinowski's meticulous functional analysis of the institutions of Trobriand society set a high standard for ethnographic reporting and synthesis, however, and his lasting contribution lies here and not in his theory of needs.

One aspect of Malinowski's theory dealt with the obvious and the other with the tried, and Goldschmidt's book suffers from the same problems. Terminological confusion is hardly swept away, nor is any underlying unity disclosed, by his grand inclusion of the stock market and primitive gift-giving under the rubric of the "sharing function." And when Goldschmidt goes on to show that the differences between "goods-sharing institutions" in different societies are functions of the imbeddedness of these institutions in other institutions, we may well ask where lies the "bold, new approach." The basic dilemma arises from the juxtaposition of two unreconciled concepts of function, and this is aggravated by a failure to provide a rigorous definition of function or even a partial inventory of functions. The reader's quandary as to "functionalism" is intensified by the fact that the "comparative" half of Goldschmidt's title is hardly brought into question. We are left in doubt not only as to what he is comparing, but how and why as well. *Comparative Functionalism* is best understood as a long programmatic statement and not the promulgation of a theory. That this is not just a critic's interpretation is attested to by the author, who writes: "Indeed, what will be presented here is not a model in the true sense, but rather a schema for a model, a general plan or program within which the detailed model —or sectors of such a model—can be constructed" (p. 33). Now that Goldschmidt has written his prolegomenon, we may look forward to the book he has promised us.

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Development of Psychiatry

Franz G. Alexander and Sheldon T. Selesnick are both psychoanalysts. They consequently divide their **The History of Psychiatry: An Evaluation of Psychiatric Thought and Practice from Prehistoric Times to the Present** (Harper and Row, New York, 1966. 487 pp., illus. $11.95) into three parts: the dark ages ante Freud (164 pp.), the Freudian age (186 pp.), and the present (135 pp.). In the same vein, so-called predecessors of Freud—St. Augustine (8 pp.), Spinoza (4 pp.), the romantic Heinroth (3 pp.)—fare much better than such essential psychiatrists as Pinel (1½ pp.), Kraepelin (2 pp.), or Griesinger (3½ pp.). Bias is not a good foundation for history writing.

It is obvious from the contents that the authors only rarely have read all the "predecessors" and nonpredecessors they discuss. They have mostly compiled from older histories of medicine and psychiatry. Unfortunately, the actual historical part of this book—about one third of it—cannot even be called a successful compilation. Sometimes the sources are bad, sometimes things have been mixed up while being copied or seem invented to fill the numerous gaps in actual knowledge. Thus we "learn," for example, that the cult of Aesculapius declined in the 7th century B.C. (p. 27), whereas actually it flourished 200 years later, in the 5th century B.C.; that Thessalus "promised a doctor's degree" in the 1st century A.D. (p. 42); that Soranus of Ephesus (2nd century A.D.) was a Roman and the teacher of Caelius Aurelianus (5th century A.D.) (p. 47); that the older Vesalius was a Belgian from "Wessale" (p. 73). Even the exile of Freud is incorrectly dated (p. 210).

The second part, The Freudian Age, which properly speaking is no longer history, is better. Here the authors are familiar with the material they handle: Freud's own evolution, the psychoanalytic pioneers (Abraham, Jones, Ferenczi), the "dissenters" (Adler, Jung, Rank), and the "contributors outside psychoanalysis" (E. Bleuler, Piaget, Binet, Rorschach, A. Meyer). Especially the two latter groups are handled with a commendable and benevolent objectivity.

The third part, Recent Developments, is the most undogmatic, readable, and informative part of the book. Seven main trends are reported and discussed: the organic approach (including among other things biochemistry, neurophysiology, and psychopharmacology), psychological developments (learning theory, psychotherapy), social psychiatry (with important chapters on addictions and law), child psychiatry, psychosomatic medicine (which has been strongly influenced by Alexander in the United States). Short chapters deal with existentialist psychiatry and the "culturalist" school. The authors leave open the question which of these channels the main stream of development will turn into.

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Environmental Carcinogenesis

Cancer of the respiratory system occupies a unique position in the field of environmental cancer in that it is the first major instance in which an etiological association of environmental agents with cancer involves more than just a unique population group or a restricted geographical area. Further, economic considerations have had an unprecedented influence on the initiation and implementation of measures to control what is essentially a problem in public health. Finally, the habit of cigarette smoking, certainly a significant factor in the increasing incidence of cancer of the respiratory tract, has broad social, physical, and legal implications. Because of these as well as other reflections of the problems of respiratory cancer, publications purporting to evaluate the problem scientifically should be rigorous and disciplined in their facts, assessments, and conclusions.

Occupational and Environmental Cancers of the Respiratory System (Springer, New York, 1966. 226 pp., illus. $8.50) by W. C. Hueper would more appropriately be titled "Occupational Cancer of the Respiratory System" because of its glaring failure to discuss and assess the role of cigarette smoking, a major environmental, respiratory, carcinogenic experience. Hueper, an acknowledged pioneer and authority in the field of occupational cancer, has written a book that, though comprehensive, is uneven in its critical approach to the several areas of the subject. It is understandable that in a relatively brief text many complex mat-