

HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY • VOLUME 6

# ROMANTIC MOTIVES

Essays on Anthropological Sensibility



Edited by George W. Stocking, Jr.

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# HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL SENSIBILITY

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Edited by  
George W. Stocking, Jr.

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Volume 6

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# Contents

ROMANTIC MOTIVES AND THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY	3
ARISTOTLE'S OTHER SELF: ON THE BOUNDLESS SUBJECT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL DISCOURSE	Gregory Schrepp 10
ANTHROPA-ETHNOLOGIENS: NOTES ON THE FRENCHMAN "ETHNOGRAPHY" OF GEORGE TRALMAGAZAN	Susan Stewart 44
SPEAKERS OF BEING: ROMANTIC REFUSION AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY	Thomas de Zengering 74
LEVI-STRAUSS, WÄGNER, ROMANTICISM, A ROPING BAREY . . .	James A. Boon 124
ZENOS AND HAZARDING: CULTURAL AMBIGUITY IN THE GILDED AGE	Cathy M. Hinsley 169
THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SENSIBILITY OF THE 1930s AND THE DUALISM OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL TRADITION	George W. Stocking, Jr. 208
INDEX	277





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## Romantic Motives



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## ROMANTIC MOTIVES AND THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

In its more general historical self-definition, anthropology has characteristically involved in its status as an "ology"—glossed not simply as discourse, but as the course which, like other proliferatingly institutionalized "ologies" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, claims to be a "science." Although its character varied somewhat in different national anthropological traditions, in general we may say that "anthropology" in the nineteenth century laid claim to being "the science of man." And despite the transformations of the ensuing century and the periodic questioning of many of its practitioners and critics, it has not since abandoned that self-description (which has of course considerably enhanced its claims for support from outside the discipline).

Legitimizing origin accounts of the discipline tend to emphasize three cultural moments of especially powerful formative significance: some focus on the decades after 1850 (Patterson 1975; Service 1985); others look a century farther back (Levens-Peckold 1956; Harris 1968); a few seek ancestral intellectual origins among the ancient Greeks (Kluckhohn 1961). It is immediately striking that each of these three formative moments was also a moment in the history of a general intellectual orientation which may be called developmental, progressive, or (loosely) evolutionary, and which construes the history of humankind as an ever-increasing knowledge of and control over the rest of the natural world through the processes of human reason (Bock 1956). From this perspective, all three moments may be regarded as part of a broader tradition that we associate with the Enlightenment. That, at least, was clearly the view of one of the discipline's major founding figures, E. B. Tylor, who decorated the title page of *Primitive Culture* (1871) with an epigraph from one of the major works of Enlightenment "conjectural history." Although the early-twentieth-century "revolution in anthropology" (JAOA 2; Jarvie 1964; Storking 1969) was in many aspects to transform the discipline, its historiography (expressing, no doubt, a very strong inclination within the disciplinary image) still reflects this identification with the Enlightenment tradition—most strikingly, perhaps, in the tendency to regard the early nine-

nineteenth century simply as an anthropological dark age dominated by racism, and in the virtual neglect, within the Anglophone sphere, of the Germanic roots of cultural anthropology.

There is, however, another side of the modern anthropological tradition which, variously manifest, has strongly influenced both the self- and public representation of the discipline. Perhaps most strikingly expressed in the image of "the anthropologist as hero" (Levi-Strauss in the Brazilian jungle (Sontag 1966), Malinowski or Mead alone among the natives on a South Sea island—was disciplinary alter ego reflects what has been called the "utilizationist" that accompanied the revolution in anthropology of the early twentieth century (Strozier 1989). Rather than being, archetypically, an activity of the armchair or the study, anthropology came out of doors into the open air; what was most critical to the definition of the discipline was not so much the comparative perspective dialectically offered on the varieties of human-kind as the detailed descriptive information that it could provide about particular groups outside the Western European tradition. This conception of anthropology might have been expected to produce a disciplinary historiography marked by quite different moments, and turned less to Western speculations about scientific progress than to Western traditions of exploration and natural history. But, in fact, the history of the discipline as an "ethnography" or descriptive discourse, if not unwritten, is certainly much more tightly focused (cf. JCSA 1; Egan 1982; Clifford 1986; Duché 1971; Geertz 1988).

The grounding of anthropological knowledge in the ethnographic text, auspicious to that, in the inductive and reflexive epistemological processes by which ethnographic texts are generated, calls our attention to other aspects of the contemporary anthropological tradition we are trying here to evoke (Geertz 1973; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Ruby 1982). Thus, on various occasions in the history of anthropology (as indeed in the history of the human sciences generally), it has been argued that there is a radical dichotomy between two forms of knowledge. What the American anthropologists may be regarded as the true classics of that dichotomy is a short essay on "The Study of Geography," which Franz Boas published a century ago. Written during the period when he was moving away from that discipline toward the one in which he was to play such an influential intellectual and institutional role (cf. Strozier 1988, 1974), the essay distinguished two modes of scientific inquiry. On the one hand, there was the approach of the physicist, whose fragmenting analytic method resolved phenomena into their elements, in order by comparison to establish or verify general laws. On the other, there was that of the cosmographer (or the historian), who sought an integrative, holistic understanding of each phenomenon, without regard "for the laws which it corroborates or which may be deduced from it" (Boas 1887:662; cf. below, pp. 30–32, 267–68). Granting that the cause of the opposition might be other-

wise stated (e.g., as "nomenclotic" and "idiographic"), and that some might deny its existence or insist on its ultimate resolvability, it seems clear that some such methodological tension has been a persisting one within the modern anthropological tradition (cf. Stocking 1985).

However, to treat the polarity simply at the level of methodology would be to take a narrower view than Boas' argument implied. For Boas, the opposition between the physical and the historical methods could also be expressed in terms of a more general opposition between objectivity and subjectivity, manifested not only in the method of inquiry, but in the constitution of its object and in the motivation of the inquirer. Whereas physicists investigated phenomena that had "an objective unity" in the external world, cosmographers studied phenomena whose elements "seem to be connected only in the mind of the observer" (Boas 1887:645)—as, one might suggest, the geography of the Black Forest, or the culture of the Eskimos. At a deeper level, however, both foci of inquiry were subjectively grounded. Motivated by the "aesthetic" disposition, physicists sought to "bring the confusion of forms and species into a system." Motivated by the "affective" impulse, or "the personal feeling of man toward the world," cosmographers were devoted to the phenomenon itself, "without regard to its place in a system," and sought "lovingly" to "penetrate into its secrets until every leaflet is plain and clear" (1887:644–45; cf. Stocking 1974). From this perspective, the polarity of method in anthropology is grounded in another opposition, which has perhaps less to do with intellect *per se* than with emotion and feeling. And although Boas himself may not have intended it, to discuss anthropological method in these terms is clearly to open the door to a wider range of culturally conditioned pre-conditioning subjectivities. Extending somewhat—but not entirely forsaking—the literary-historical meanings of the term, we might say that what is at issue is a matter of "sensibility" (Gerner 1974).

The fact that Boas chose Comte, a son of the French Enlightenment tradition, and Goethe, a father of the German Romantic tradition, to exemplify his two opposing methodological orientations brings us back toward the broader cultural-historical context in which such a tension must be viewed. And the terms of Boas' opposition are of course clearly resonant of those which have traditionally been used to characterize "romanticism," whether conceived narrowly as literary movement (cf. Weinberg 1974), or more broadly, as one of a small number of frameworks of assumption that have characterized major phases of Western European cultural history (cf. Jouis 1973)—and which, as Boas' argument would suggest, remain enduring options of intellectual sensibility within the modern anthropological tradition (cf. Hexter 1973; Shweder 1984).

Detecting "romanticism" is a problem that has vexed students of literature and of the history of ideas for over half a century (Lowrey 1924; Lucas 1936;

Rivett, 1977). This volume is not intended as a contribution to that literature. Our approach has been to exemplify rather than to define, and in pursuing this approach, we have deliberately chosen a broad construction of what in our preliminary announcements was called, rather loosely, "the romantic motif in anthropology." The essays we have gathered in response to that call deal with a broad range of topics. The first, bringing modern Western anthropology back in touch with its earliest philosophical roots, considers what might be characterized as a fundamental contradiction for which the basic tension is obviously deleted between the conditions of possibility of social coherency and the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge—an issue whose broader "romantic" resonance is only too obvious. The second, bringing anthropology in touch with contemporary literary criticism, deals with general issues of authorship and authenticity by focusing on one of the earliest of those nineteenth-century fabricators of "ethnoses" whose work was such an important stimulus to the Romantic movement as a specific cultural historical phenomenon. The two central essays both deal more directly with figures and themes customarily associated with that movement; the first, a reading forward from the Romantic era, emphasizes the regression of the original Romantic impulse in the professional anthropological descendants of two of the founding figures of Romanticism; the second, a reading backward from the present, emphasizes the persisting influence of Romanticism in the oeuvre of the leading figure of modern structuralist anthropology. Reverting to a somewhat looser conception of "the romantic motif," the last two essays each treat manifestations of the primitive's yearning for unbroken community, which, deeply rooted in the European cultural tradition (cf. Peacock 1965; Friedman 1983), has been an essential component of the modern anthropological tradition—returning, at the end, to the implications of that yearning for the possibility of anthropological knowledge. Clearly, however one defines "the romantic motif," there are many relevant themes that might have been treated which are only touched upon or quite neglected here (cf. the note on how volumes are put together, IRDA 4:16). The most that we would claim to have done is open up a topic that has been relatively underemphasized in the historiography of anthropology.

To reflect the diversity of the six contributions that are included in this volume, it has seemed appropriate for the title to adopt the plural "motives"—which also has the virtue of a somewhat broader connotational resonance. On the other hand, a certain degree of singularity seemed desirable in the volume's subtitle, in order to capture the sense of recurrence/perdurance which is an important attribute of the "sensibility" these essays are intended to evoke. Romanticism in the literary sense has been viewed not only as an historically specific movement (albeit differentiated by phase and national tradition) and as a "complex of literary phenomena associated with a change occurring in

European sensibility toward the end of the eighteenth century, and extending into the present," but also as "one of the poles between which Occidental art in all places and periods oscillates" (Weinberg 1974:717). Similarly, in regard to the romantic sensibility in anthropology: while it would seem to be most strongly expressed in particular historical moments (e.g., the 1920s), it is not peculiar to any given historical moment, but is rather a recurrent and we may expect permanent tendency within the anthropological tradition. Hence the need for a degree of singularity.

But just as the romantic sensibility is not limited to particular historical moments, neither does it entirely pervade any one of them. And while it may be strongly manifest in particular individuals (e.g., Paul Radin), it may not color all of their work; thus, the sensibility of Malinowski's *Argonauts* (1932) is quite a different thing from that of *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (1944). If this is true of individual practitioners, it must, a fortiori, be true of the discipline as a whole. While we may expect the heirs of the Romantic and the Enlightenment traditions to continue to make imperial claims, and the strength of the corresponding sensibilities to wax and wane, it seems unlikely that the dualities they reflect will ever be eliminated from anthropology. Hence, the avoidance of the definite article in our subtitle: *Essays on Anthropological Sensibility*.

Even so, it is clear that this volume is itself the product of a particular (postmodern?) moment in the history of anthropology, in which a number of tendencies expressive of a romantic sensibility ("reflexive," "hermeneutic," "interpretive," "deconstructive," etc.) are quite strongly manifest (cf. Marcus & Fischer 1986). Similarly, several of the essays included here are themselves clearly instantiations of the phenomenon the volume seeks to illuminate. From the historicist perspective animating *History of Anthropology* it seems likely (and appropriate) that anthropology will long continue to be informed by quite divergent institutional and methodological impulses. However, we do hope that by highlighting a tendency within the anthropological tradition whose history has been until now relatively neglected, *Romantic Motives* may be a contribution to discussions now going on as to the future of anthropology.

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Aside from the editor, the editorial board (including especially James Douc, James Clifford, and Del Hymes), the contributors, and the staff of the University of Wisconsin Press, several other individuals and organizations facilitated the preparation of this volume. During the academic year 1988-89, the editor's efforts were supported by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities in Santa Monica, California. The staff of the Getty Center assisted in a variety of ways. George Marcus



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# ARISTOTLE'S OTHER SELF

## *On the Boundless Subject of Anthropological Discourse*

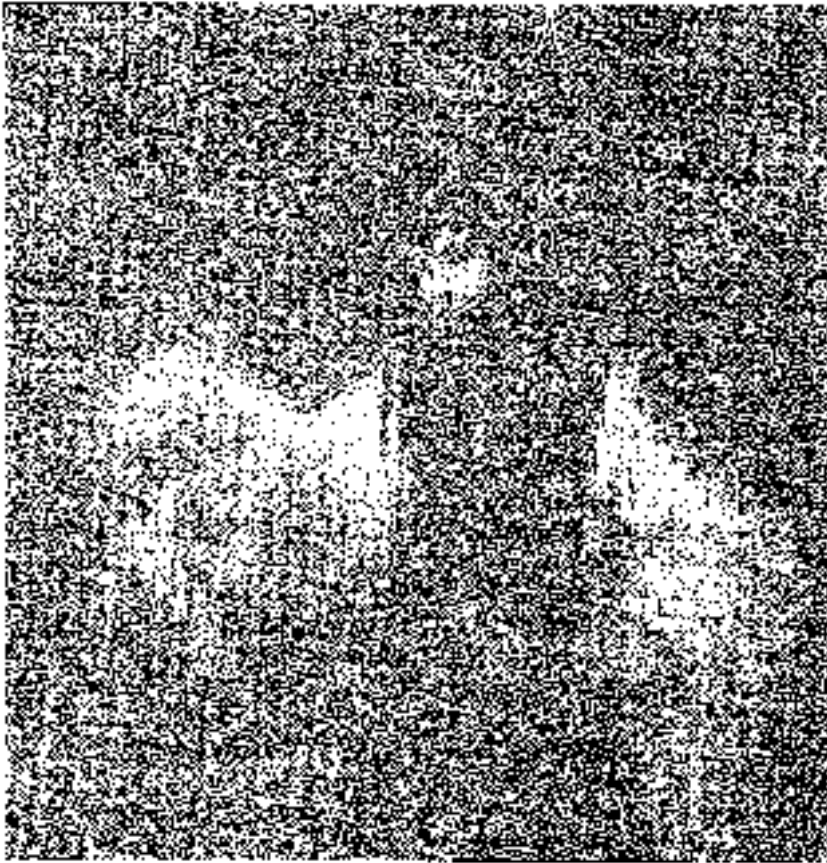
GREGORY SCHREMPF

Among the principles that have been suggested as capturing the essential character of Western thought, Aristotelian logic, or its founding principle, the law of contradiction, has proven particularly compelling. And certain other understandings—for example, “linearity” (as contrasted with “cyclical”) and even “rationality” itself—are sometimes thought to derive from the supposedly sequential and figurative character of classical syllogistic reasoning. This special significance was recognized even before Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, in his classic formulation of 1910, *Les fonctions mentales des sociétés inférieures*, made the law of contradiction a specific focus for cross-cultural comparison and contrast. The notion of contradiction was, for example, implicitly addressed in the common nineteenth-century assumption that the evolution of thought was a matter of transition from confused images to clear concepts. The idea of such a transition can be found even in the Durkheimian tradition (e.g., Durkheim and Mauss 1903:50), and is no doubt relevant to the interest that Durkheim and his descendants—followed in Lévy-Bruhl,

contradiction, and its significance in the comparative study of systems of thought, was carried toward more technical debates in the French tradition, particularly by Lévy-Bruhl and Emile Durkheim and his descendants. In a contrast that was initially sharply drawn, Lévy-Bruhl proposed that there were systems of representations that operated in terms of a law of participation rather than a law of contradiction. He presented the latter in several different formulations, most of which, however, center around supposed statements of “hypanth” identities in which “the opposition between the one and

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Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer. Painting by Reinhold van Rijn, 1653. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchased with special funds and gifts of friends of the Museum, 1901. 103.298). All rights reserved.)

the many, the same and motion, and so forth, does not impose . . . the necessity of affirming one of the terms if the other be denied, or vice versa" (910:77).

Subsequent inquiries into the possibility of alternative logics have emphasized statements of seeming identity between humans and other entities of the natural world, notably an apparent claim of the Boko that they are parrots. However, Lévy-Bruhl himself schematized "participations" as of three types: those between given individuals and their appearances (e.g., hair, nails, food, clothes, name, reflection, shadow); those between individuals and their social groups; and those between individuals and other entities

of the natural world. These various kinds of participations will be considered in the course of this discussion.

It is well known that, in the posthumously published *Notebooks of Lévy-Bruhl*, there were some significant alterations in his formulation of the participation/logic contrast. Although many of these were matters of emphasis (cf. Horrox 1973:257ff.), two are particularly important here. First, while there was still a general sense of an evolutionary transition from a preponderantly participatory to a predominantly logical mentality, there was a greater emphasis on both principles as fundamental to all humans, and so incipient interest in exploring the character and function of participation as a seemingly genetic principle of human mentality (e.g. Lévy-Bruhl 1949:99-105). Secondly, the emphasis on the affective, noncognitive, character of participations was now accompanied by an uneasiness about pairing participation with logical thought (thus treating these two principles as comparable) (1949:61, 73, 99-100, 154).

Among subsequent scholars, debates about the law of contradiction developed into a fascinating set of variations, referring in part different questions brought to this discussion within changing intellectual contexts. In the dialogue between Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl, the law of contradiction was involved in several momentous debates. Horrox (1973:268ff.) has contrasted Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim with respect to their views on the nature of the transition from traditional religious thought to scientific thought, suggesting that Lévy-Bruhl envisioned this in terms of contrast and inversion, while Durkheim saw it in terms of continuity and evolution. But the significance of participation to Durkheim was not limited to evolutionary issues. Durkheim's notion of effervescence and the arguments with which he surrounded it, such as the *pan pro toto* argument, suppose a kind of fusion that at least approaches the mystical participations that Lévy-Bruhl proposed. Though Durkheim's notion of contradiction is problematic (it will be considered below), it is important to note that ultimately Durkheim concluded that, with respect to contradiction, science and religion differ only in degree: both involve moments of contradiction and moments of noncontradiction, and necessarily so.

The polarity that Durkheim acknowledged as intrinsic to both religion and science was also played out between the perspectives adopted by some of his followers. The notion of a quasi-mystical force that is invoked by Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* can be seen as a further development of one side of Durkheim. In Lévi-Strauss, by contrast, a sense of "logic" prevails, though sometimes in a rather roundabout fashion. The logical thrust is manifested in a number of different ways, for example, in the theme of the scandalousness of contradiction as the propelling force in the development of mythologies (Lévi-Strauss 1955), or the argument that the seeming identities posed in totemic systems are essentially metaphorical and therefore really statements

of *Idemias* rather than of mystical identity (1962). It is no accident that, in his affectionate tribute to Mauss, Lévy-Brühl (1950/1958) singles out the "specificity" of *The Gift* as a major wrong turn.

The issues raised by Lévy-Brühl will continue to arise in "rationality" debates. This is in part due to E. E. Evans-Pritchard's interest in Lévy-Brühl, who was no doubt influential in leading him to place the analysis of contradictions, or apparent contradictions, at the center of analysis of the systems of thought he encountered in his own fieldwork (Evans-Pritchard 1937). And though the law of contradiction no longer forms the singular pivot of comparative analysis that it did for Lévy-Brühl, there are many contemporary analyses in which this principle seems to linger on in the immediate background. The editors of a recent volume on "rationality," for example, comment on the notion of "relativism of reason," or the idea that

what warrants belief depends on *criteria of assessing, deductive or non-deductive, that should properly be seen as social norms, relative to a culture and world. At its most ambitious, this thought reaches to deduce, or legitimize itself. (Gibbs & Lataf 1983:70)*

The law of contradiction is not specifically mentioned here. But since it is traditionally regarded as the founding principle of formal logic, the notion of the relativity of deductive logic as the most ambitious form of relativism would seem not far removed from the question of relativism posed specifically in terms of the law of contradiction.

Finally, Pierre Bourdieu has implicated Western logic, and indirectly the law of contradiction, in a reflexive critique of anthropological representation. He suggests that ritual practice may in some instances be organized according to a "fuzzy" or "fluid" *raisonner*, which permits it an economy and flexibility grounded in such appropriateness to the fact that it is a fixed logic. Represented under the totalizing synopticism of the anthropological gaze, however, schemata generated through this logic can evince contradictions that do not appear as such in their primary context, since "it is unlikely that two contradictory applications of the same schemes will be brought face to face in what we never call a universe of practice (rather than a universe of discourse)" (Bourdieu 1978:110). This lived logic appears to be essentially the law of contradiction minus the "in the same sense" clause in Bourdieu's words: the lived logic "excludes the Socratic question of the respect in which the referent is apprehended" (112). In one sense, the alignment here is the conventional one: the higher logic belongs to the Western analyst and the lower logic to the indigenous system. The contrast that emerges, however, is not between different minds, but between minds engaged in different relationships to the matter at hand: living a given scheme vs. organizing it under the "critical" academic synopticism.

Bourdieu's conclusion might be seen as a kind of maximum statement of

a principle that was given impetus by Evans-Pritchard: that analysis of systems of thought must be carried out within the context of social life and practice within which they operate. Bourdieu's work also exemplifies another tendency which stems largely from Evans-Pritchard: that is, the issues that formally posed by Lévy-Bruhl are now issues specifically taken to the field for investigation, rather than merely drawn out of standard ethnographic sources, as they had been by Lévy-Bruhl. Particularly noteworthy in this respect is Claxton's (1977) reinvestigation of theories that stem from Lévy-Bruhl's extrapolations about the *fonction*.

In addition to these intellectual issues, some very weighty moral issues are involved in debates surrounding the law of contradiction. On the one hand, the denial of the cross-cultural applicability of this law can be seen as the attempt to deny fundamental humanity to "others"—Aristotle himself likened the person who would not accept such a principle to a vegetable. On the other hand, precisely because Aristotle announced the law of contradiction as the best established of all principles and as the principle necessary for all other knowledge, willingness to consider the possibility of the invalidity of even this principle can be seen as the greatest test of humanistic pluralism. Whichever course is pursued, the moral existence that comes to focus in such debates are no doubt related to the significance of the law of contradiction within the Western quest for its own intellectual identity.

Given the many forms of interest that the law of contradiction has provoked, an overall assessment of this principle in relation to anthropology would be in order, and in fact is to some extent already underway. As part of this project there should be an assessment of the language of participations within the theoretical discourse of anthropology itself. My comments are in general in accord with the value toward which Lévy-Bruhl's later work seems to have been moving, in which participations are seen not as a phase, present merely vestigially in advanced societies, but as a general phenomenon that forms a perpetual complement to logic. The notion of a fundamental dualism of human consciousness is certainly nothing new in itself; the dualism at which Lévy-Bruhl arrived can be seen as a variation on a familiar theme of Western thought. Yet certain fundamental ways in which such a dualism has operated in the growth of a Western anthropological "self" have escaped attention, and my purpose here is to bring some of these into focus.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to inject an important clarification about the notion of "contradiction" as it will be used in the discussions that follow. The concept of contradiction has been formulated in more than one way. The strictest formulation would seem to be that of the formula to hold *p* and not-*p* at the same time and in the same sense. But any statement that does not contain the "time" and "sense" phrases is susceptible to resolution into noncontradiction through further qualifications, either of the premises,

or of the nature of the relation that is posited. From this point of view, the "contradictions" I am treating below may in fact be ultimately resolvable. The same is true of most if not all of the ethnographic "data" that are brought into these debates. But even assuming that all such statements are ultimately resolvable, there would be yet another, and not less interesting, problem. That is, apparently there are statements that are intended to seem, at least initially, contradictory, suggesting the possibility that the speaker feels that certain things can best be said in the form of an ostensible contradiction. Such statements often take the form of seeming to defy or destroy acknowledged barriers, or at least to render them problematic. In the analyses that follow, the question of whether such statements are really contradictory or merely ostensibly contradictory, while not dismissed, is subordinated to the question: what is the place of such statements in anthropological discourse?

It is of course conceivable that if there is something like the language of participations in anthropological discourse, it crept in through the ethnographic data. In the opening pages of *The Gift*, Mauss discussed the Maori term *hau*, which he took to signify a spiritual power inhering in the gift, and compelling its return. In commenting on the now illustrious law of the gift, Lévi-Strauss asked, "Are we not dealing with a mystification, an effect quite often produced in the minds of ethnographers by indigenous peoples?" (1950: 7). However, the Maori text that Mauss consulted is brief and obscure, and other interpreters have rendered it much less mysteriously; it is hardly fair to credit or blame the Maori for Mauss's mystical inclinations. Even if the Maori text may have been the proximate spur for Mauss's doctrine, it is important to realize that there is also an analogous doctrine, indigenous to the West, that formed a part of the theoretical milieu into which the Maori text fell. The mysticism of Western anthropology is a Western indigenous production; I will explore this claim by relating some central anthropological texts—from Durkheim, Mauss, and Lévi-Strauss—to a less well-known, or perhaps merely less willingly acknowledged, side of the ultimate ancestral "toyn" of Western thought. In contrast to the idea that Mauss's mystification came from the Maori, an at least equally compelling case can be made that it came from Aristotle.

### Logic and the Definition of Humanity: A Founding Polarity

While the idea that Aristotle bequeathed formal logic to the West is not wrong, pursued exclusively it eventuates in the birth of an uninteresting monster. By way of alternative, one might find the paradigmatic character of Aristotle in a certain tension—between a form of discourse that centers around the law of contradiction, and one that does as though it is seeking to subvert it.



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