

Disciplines of modernity: entanglements and ambiguities

This chapter discusses aspects of the interplay between the disciplines and modernity, as mediated by temporal-spatial imperatives. It focuses on the relationship between anthropology and history in order to discuss formations of modern knowledge as themselves forming critical subjects and crucial procedures of modernity. On the one hand, I explore the mutual interchange of time and space as at once segregating yet binding these knowledge formations, whose implications reach far beyond their purely disciplinary configurations. On the other, I consider the presence of ambivalence and ambiguity at the core of recent renovations of anthropology and history, often overlooked by presumptions of progress in explanations of disciplines and their make-overs. At stake in this discussion are the contradictions and contentions of modernity, ever shaped by configurations of time and space, from the braiding of analytical and hermeneutic orientations to the making of historical anthropology.

Anthropology and time

For a very long time now, anthropological understandings have displayed varied dispositions toward issues of temporality and history, from willing disregard and uneasy elision to formative ambivalences and constitutive contradictions. Yet time itself has never been absent from such comprehensions. Today, there is wide acknowledgment of the epistemic violence that attended the birth and growth of modern

anthropology. Here were to be found temporal sequences, based on evolutionary principles and racist presuppositions, which projected hierarchical stages of civilizations, societies, and peoples. At the same time, it is worth considering whether such hierarchically ordered evolutionary mappings of cultures and societies – turning on the “savage” form and the “primitive” figure – were excised from disciplinary formations with the emergence of fieldwork-based “scientific” anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century.

First, the apparent ruptures of functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropology with evolutionist (and diffusionist) principles on the grounds of their speculative procedures had wider consequences. They entailed a wider suspicion toward, the placing of a question mark on, history as such within the discipline.¹ Now the practice of anthropology could proceed in contradistinction to the writing of history. Second, these tendencies were conjoined with the influence of Durkheimian sociology in the shaping of structural-functionalist tenets. Such conjunctions led to pervasive presuppositions that societal arrangements were better understood in abstraction from their historical transformations. They called forth and rested on analytical oppositions between “synchrony” and “diachrony” or “statics” and “dynamics,” where in each copula the former term was privileged over the latter concerning the object of anthropology. Third, these emphases were further bound to wider anthropological predilections toward seeking out continuity and consensus, rather than change and conflict, in the societies being studied. Fourth and finally, the ambivalence toward the temporal dimensions of structure and culture within the discipline was implicitly founded on broad disjunctions between Western societies grounded in history and reason, on the one hand, and non-Western cultures held in place by myth and ritual, on the other.²

Such premises came to underlie particular protocols of salvage anthropology, also shoring up formative dispositions of the ethnographic enterprise. These procedures and orientations have been imaginatively summarized by Bernard Cohn. His words have been quoted often, yet they bear repetition. Cohn writes:

The anthropologist posits a place where the natives are authentic ... and strives to deny the central historical fact that the people he or she studies are constituted in the historically significant colonial situation, affirming instead that they are somehow out of time and history. This timelessness is reflected in the anthropologist's basic model of change, what I would term the "missionary in the row boat" model. In this model, the missionary, the trader, the labour recruiter or the government official arrives with the bible, the mumu, tobacco, steel axes or other items of Western domination on an island whose society and culture are rocking along in the never-never land of structural-functionalism [tradition], and with the onslaught of the new, the social structure, values and life-ways of the "happy" natives crumble. The anthropologist follows in the wake of the impacts caused by Western agents of change, and then tries to recover what might have been. The anthropologist searches for the elders with the richest memories of days gone by, assiduously records their ethnographic texts, and then puts together between the covers of their monographs a picture of the natives of Anthropologyland. The peoples of Anthropologyland, like all God's Children got shoes, got structure ... These structures the anthropologist finds have always been there, unbeknownst to their passive carriers, functioning to keep the natives in their timeless spaceless paradise.³

Although Cohn's statement primarily criticizes structural-functionalism, its ironic edge carries wider implications. The statement not only underscores pervasive procedures of anthropological practice that have forged a tendentious timeless "tradition" through narrative techniques and analytical projections of a lasting "ethnographic present." It also arguably points toward intrusive presumptions that have sharply separated the dynamic time of the ethnographer's society from the static temporality of anthropological objects. Together, in widespread ethnographic orientations, change and transformation usually entered native structure in exogenous ways.

All of this has critical ramifications. Johannes Fabian has pointed to the repeated ways in which anthropological inquiry has construed its object as the irremediable other through measures turning on temporality: the ethnographic object is denied the "coevalness of time"

with the instant of the anthropologist subject.⁴ In other words, the (observing) subject and the (observed) object are precisely separated through time to inhabit distinct temporalities, the historical time of the former always ahead of the mythic time of the latter. Here, the temporal divide has meant that not only anthropological objects but ethnographic practice have emerged as being out of time, albeit in ambivalent and disjunctive ways. On the one hand, the temporal dimensions of anthropological writing have appeared effaced through their elision with both the taken-for-granted time and space of the modern subject and the objective time of scientific knowledge. On the other, the temporality of anthropological others – their time/timelessness – could only emerge as being external to and lagging behind the space and time of the writing of ethnography.⁵ All of this has defined the “savage slot” and the “native niche” of anthropology that have been constitutive of the discipline.⁶

None of this is to deny that such schemes have been attended by contentions and exceptions within the discipline. These are exactly related to the formations and tensions of anthropology, incisively articulated by George Stocking, Jr.:

The greatest retrospective unity of the discourses subsumed within the rubric “anthropology” is to be found in the substantive concern with the peoples who were long stigmatized as “savages,” and who, in the nineteenth century, tended to be excluded from other human scientific disciplines by the very process of their substantive-cum-methodological definition (the economist’s concern with the money economy; the historian’s concern with written documents, etc.) ... to study the history of anthropology is to ... describe and to interpret or explain the “otherness” of populations encountered in European overseas expansion. Although thus fundamentally (and oppositionally) diversitarian in impulse, such study has usually implied a reflexivity which reencompassed the European self and alien “other” within a unitary humankind. This history of anthropology may thus be viewed as a continuing (and complex) dialectic between the universalism of “anthropos” and the diversitarianism of “ethnos” or, from the perspective of particular historical moments, between the Enlightenment and the Romantic impulse.⁷

At stake, then, are attempts to reconcile tensions between “generic human rationality” and “the biological unity of mankind,” on the one hand, with the enormous variation of cultural formations, on the other, issues to which I shall return. The immediate point is that the constitutive presuppositions and procedures concerning time-space within the ethnographic enterprise require staying with longer. They intimate the persistent influence of evolutionist understandings on contemporary anthropology.⁸ At the same time, beyond purely disciplinary considerations, they insinuate pervasive “meta-geographical” projections. Turning on time and space, such projections draw on developmental visions of history of academic bents, quotidian persuasions, and their persistent interchanges. Authoritatively, if ambiguously, temporally and spatially they carve up social worlds into enchanted terrains of tradition and disenchanted domains of modernity.

Under issue in fact is nothing less than the hierarchical ordering of time-space as part of the wide-ranging interplay between modern knowledge, anthropological understandings, historical blueprints, and their quotidian configurations. Consider the manner in which patterns of history and designs of culture have been understood in the past and the present through formidable antinomies between static enchanted communities and dynamic modern societies. This was discussed at length in the [previous chapter](#) under the rubrics of the enchantments and oppositions of modernity. Indeed, I hope to have underscored there the salience of registering the place of the spatial-temporal oppositions of modernity in the molding of social worlds.

My point now is that it is equally important to attend to the contending elaborations of the analytical, ideological, and everyday separation between enchanted or traditional cultures and disenchanted or modern societies. The contentions are present at the core of post-Enlightenment thought and non-Western scholarship, each including critiques of the West in the past and the present. Indeed, the actual elaborations of the hierarchical oppositions of modernity, turning on time and space, have imbued them with contradictory value and contrary salience. Here are to be found ambivalences, ambiguities, and excesses of meaning and authority. All of this is registered by the *particular* unraveling of

divergent traditions of understanding and explanation at the heart of modernity as ideology and history. I am writing of the opposed tendencies that have been described as those of rationalism and historicism, of the analytical and the hermeneutical, and of the progressivist and the romantic.⁹ It is critical to track the frequent combination in intellectual practice of these tendencies in order to trace the contradictions and contentions and ambivalences and excesses of modern knowledge(s), as part of processes of modernity. Together, such interleaving expressions reveal that the terms of modernity are assiduously articulated, but that they are also out of joint with themselves.

Ethnography and temporality: key protagonists

In tune with these considerations, let me turn to some of the contradictions and contentions that have characterized ethnographic orientations to time and temporality, which further carry critical connotations of space and spatiality. I shall first focus on aspects of the work of Franz Boas, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and Pierre Bourdieu, three masters of the anthropological craft who represent different historical moments, explanatory efforts, and epistemological styles from the discipline's pasts. My choice of these scholars has much to do with their particular engagements with temporality. Then, I shall bring home these deliberations by discussing an ethnographic study from India, located on the cusp of colony and nation, which intimates the acute articulations of time-space with the anthropological enterprise at large.

We have noted the racial assumptions that underlay evolutionary anthropology in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Franz Boas (1858–1942) issued the single greatest early disciplinary challenge to such schemes and presuppositions.¹⁰ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Boas defined anthropological knowledge as consisting of “the biological history of mankind in all its varieties; linguistics applied to people without written languages; the ethnology of people without historic records; and prehistoric archaeology.”¹¹ Across his career, he added to all these forms of inquiry. At the same

time, Boas's distinctive contribution to anthropology derived from his insistence on the diachronic dimensions of the discipline.¹² As George Stocking, Jr., has argued, "For Boas, the 'otherness' which is the subject matter of anthropology was to be explained as the product of change of time," an insistence that covered his unifying definition of the discipline.¹³ Here was to be found his critique of evolutionary assumption, "a neo-ethnological critique of 'the comparative method' of classical evolutionism."¹⁴

Today there is appreciation not only of how Boas constructed a domain of inquiry mostly free of biological determinism to lay the basis for the modern disciplinary conception of culture as pluralistic and relativistic, but also of how his particular turn to the diachronic, the historical, and the temporal signified a road mainly not taken by anthropology during most of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Indeed, Boas's orientation to anthropological knowledge can emerge in current commentaries as primarily building on nineteenth-century romantic and hermeneutic traditions in European science, philosophy, and history.¹⁶ Yet it would not do to simply celebrate Boas's critique of evolutionary and racist presuppositions from the vantage point of our present. Nor would it be enough to emphasize only the romantic underpinnings of his anthropology. In fact the work of Boas is best understood as straddling the dualism between progressivist and romantic traditions, at once braiding together while retaining a tension between these opposed tendencies. Here is to be found the salient entwining of contending schemes of modern knowledge, which have variously shored up anthropology and which reveal ambivalent articulations of time-space, as key components of worlds of modernity.

On the one hand, in the work of Boas, the progressivist stance was profoundly manifest in key nineteenth-century liberal beliefs, which stressed scientific knowledge and individual freedom. They expressed Boas's broader historical vision and developmental viewpoint. He believed in a cumulative rational knowledge that underlay innate human progress. Here human progress was understood not in a generalized manner but as intimating specifically the growth of what Boas called "our own" Western modern civilization.¹⁷ Indeed, this

perspective was marked by a fatalistic attitude toward technologically based historical development as not only pushing forward Western civilization but confronting and vanquishing “technologically primitive cultures.” At the same time, Boas’s universalistic rationalism also led him to assert the existence of “general values” that were “cumulatively realized” in the history of human civilization and “variously realized” in different human cultures. Thus Boas’s well-known questioning of his own Western civilization and his belief in the alternative values of other cultures went hand in hand with his lack of submission to cultural relativism and faith in a non-contingent realm of scientific truth.¹⁸

On the other hand, throughout Boas’s career, crosscutting this optimistic, rationalist, and universalistic progressivist stance was a more pessimistic, affective, and particularistic romanticist disposition. Arguably, the latter sensibility could not but inform both Boas’s dissatisfaction with Western civilization and the manner in which such “alienation” found expression in his anticipation of a pluralistic conception of culture that was itself based on recognition of “the legitimacy of alternative value systems.” At stake in this sensibility was an aesthetic undercurrent – reinforced by Boas’s life experiences, yet carrying wider resonances – that made him acutely “aware of the role of irrational factors in human life.” These tendencies were articulated positively in the variety of human forms of culture, but they were expressed negatively in the way particular customs of determinate groups could be retrospectively rationalized as universal norms, including in the case of race. Unsurprisingly, Boas’s lifelong devotion to the study of culture and race, especially the exclusivity they each defined, stressed the profoundly contingent conditioning by history of these phenomena.¹⁹

Boas’s thought derived motive force from its relentlessly restless juxtaposition of wider progressivist and romantic tendencies, its almost inevitable interleaving of universalistic and rationalist orientations with particularistic and affective dispositions. Note the contrasts. Boas “retained all his life a rather idealized and absolutistic conception of science” that was unambiguously non-contingent, but he also granted a necessary, contingent value to specific cultural groupings.

Boas singularly conjoined human progress and technologically based historical process with Western civilization, but he equally defended the “mental capacity” of “primitive man” to participate fully in “modern civilization.”²⁰ Boas exclusively envisioned rational advance in the image of Western civilization, but he crucially affirmed the values of non-European cultures and established thereby “a kind of Archimedian leverage point” for a critique of his own civilization.²¹

Thus, the anthropologist avowed dominant representations of time under modernity to construe Europe as the enshrined space of progress, rationality, and history, but he also implicitly admitted contingent, different formations of time-space as undergirding distinct cultures. Arguably, this interleaving of the progressivist and the romantic led Boas not only to passively enact but to actively produce discrete notations of the temporal and the spatial as part of his anthropological practice. According to established disciplinary lore, Boas’s career had a dramatic end. At a luncheon in New York, Boas had just begun to say, “I have a new theory of culture ...,” when he fell dead in mid-sentence. In death as in life, Franz Boas encapsulated not only the ambiguities but the ironies of anthropology – in an acute way, his own manner.

The contrary dispositions constitutive of the anthropological enterprise were no less characteristic of the work of the British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1902–73), widely known as “E. P.” In conventional anthropological wisdom, the work of E. P. has been approached as consolidating the structural-functional inquiry initiated by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. Here there is acknowledgment of E. P.’s earlier interactions with Malinowski and there is recognition that from the 1950s onward his work followed different pathways of theory and explication. The latter included E. P.’s famous endorsement of anthropology as a humanistic (and not natural-scientific) discipline as well as his assertions of the close linkages of anthropology with history.²² They extended to the questions E. P. raised concerning the inability of anthropologists to enter the minds of the people they studied; the limits of their scholarly motivations that often mirrored ethnocentric assumptions of their own cultures, and the narrowness of biological, sociological, and psychological theories of religion.²³ At the same time,

despite such avowals of the shifts in E. P.'s anthropology, the centerpiece of his contribution to the discipline is nonetheless often assumed to consist of his development of structural-functionalism, reflecting the hagiography of this paradigm.²⁴

In the face of such currents, I would like to indicate a distinct understanding of E. P.'s work, an approach that turns on critically registering how his writings were shaped by their salient interleaving of hermeneutic strands and analytical strains, which intimate ambiguous articulations, curious constructions, and particular productions of time-space. Such an orientation to E. P.'s anthropology does not deny, for example, the place of his monograph on the Nuer people as a flagship endeavor of structural-functionalist analysis.²⁵ Nor does it overlook the fact that E. P.'s work bore close connections with the formative presuppositions of both structural-functionalism and functionalism that have society as an integrated system. Rather, the disposition being outlined seeks to open up the terms of understanding of E. P.'s arguments and analyses.

In his discussion of time E. P. drew upon the work of both Durkheim and Malinowski.²⁶ In *The Nuer*, as well as in an essay on time-reckoning among this people, E. P. famously developed the notion of "oecological" time.²⁷ This notion emerged closely bound to time-reckoning concepts, conveying "social activities" or a "relation between activities to one another."²⁸ Here time's passage is perceived through a lens of cultural concepts referring to activities – that is, through time-reckoning systems – rather than through an actual immersion in activities.²⁹ Yet for E. P. time also consists of the "rhythm" of basic activity cycles linked to natural cycles: daily cattle movements and seasonal passages between villages and camps as well as the distinctive tempo of each season. In this sense, time appears as socio-spatial motion or process and not simply static units or concepts of reckoning time.³⁰ Together, two sets of emphases – turning on time-reckoning yet also concrete activity – work in tandem in E. P.'s elaboration of oecological (or everyday) time.

Conversely, when E. P. turns to long-term, structural time his gaze entirely shifts away from activities, which, recall, provide a sense of concrete movement. Rather E. P. now comes to focus exclusively on conceptual frames. This is to say that structural time is not about an

incremental movement, but rather it is fundamentally non-cumulative so that the genealogical grid of the Nuer creates only an immobile “illusion” of time.³¹ Drawing on the insights of Nancy Munn, I am suggesting that E. P.’s structural time is not qualitative and concrete, but quantitative and geometrical. It is a static version and vision of time that occludes the concrete and lived space of activities.³²

At stake here is a constitutive split, a formative discrepancy. On the one hand, in *describing* oecological time E. P. brings to bear on his discussion key spatio-temporal activities, including, for example, phased movements between village and camp. This is, broadly speaking, the hermeneutic moment in E. P.’s understanding(s) of time. On the other hand, precisely this “co-constitution” of time and space in activity is ignored and suppressed within E. P.’s formalist frames, so that structural time appears as an abstract geometry of social distance.³³ This might be broadly spoken of as the analytical moment in E. P.’s conception(s) of time.

Needless to say, the hermeneutic and analytical tendencies are profoundly entwined in E. P.’s anthropology. Indeed, it is such entwining that provides E. P.’s considerations of time-space with their motive force and their critical limitations. The Nuer people in E. P.’s hermeneutic hands have their own concrete everyday time-space. The move serves to found the temporal and the spatial in the image of social diversity and cultural heterogeneity, implicitly opening up thereby pervasive common sense and taken-for-granted terms of time and space as, respectively, a simply homogeneous measurement and a merely given backdrop, each with no qualitative distinctions. But the Nuer people according to E. P.’s analytic also do not have long-term time. The measure raises key questions regarding his analytical framework as bearing the profound impress of dominant representations and lasting projections, discussed earlier, of primitive places (the Nuer and their oecological time) and modern spaces (the West and its long-term time).

The interplay between hermeneutic dispositions and analytical tendencies – as well as the opposition of the enchanted and the modern – no less marks the influential corpus of the French sociologist-philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). Bourdieu combines phenomenological,

Weberian, and Marxian dispositions to underscore the temporal-spatial dimensions of social practices and practical actors, arguing that totalizing frameworks of fixed “rules” of action take temporality out of spatial “practice.” Yet, precisely such hermeneutic moves crucially crisscross in Bourdieu’s work with analytical orientations that bring into play implicit oppositions between the “traditional” and the “modern,” collective rhythms and individual action, and “space” and “time.” Here, in framing time through agent-oriented filters, Bourdieu spatially-temporally contrasts precapitalist traditional Algeria as marked by “foresight” only of the immediate future (already “implicit in the directly perceived present”) *with* capitalist modern societies where “forecasting” entails an indefinite future, “a field of possibilities to be explored ... by calculation.” Moreover, in his later work, the emphasis on exploring practices through a focus on both the irreversible, enduring time of socio-spatial activities and the agent’s strategic manipulation of this time disappear when Bourdieu turns his gaze toward collective (calendric) rhythms and periodization, which are explained through symbolic homologies that now readily dissolve into a generalized “logic of practice.” Finally, Bourdieu’s writings not only do not escape the analytical oppositions of time and space but they principally privilege the former over the latter.³⁴ None of this is to suggest that a focus on the entwining of hermeneutic and analytical dispositions holds the exclusive key to understanding traditions within anthropology and history, but to regard it rather as a possible means of reconsidering the past and the present of the disciplines, especially their articulations of space and time.

Indeed, staying with and thinking through the formative ambivalences of ethnography make it possible to approach anew anthropology in non-Western worlds through temporal-spatial considerations.³⁵ Here, I shall take up only one instance that brings home such considerations: the anthropologist S. C. Dube’s first monograph, *The Kamar*.³⁶ This developed from the self-trained Indian ethnographer’s PhD dissertation, the thesis and the manuscript being written and revised in the second half of the 1940s. Now, the study can be criticized as a variety of salvage anthropology in the colonial frame, denying temporality to its object – the Kamar hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators living

in the southern part of the Raipur district in the Chhattisgarh region – through the means of evolutionary assumption, which places these people as inhabiting primitive places, savage spaces. At the same time, I would like to critically open up *The Kamar* toward other readings, which stay with the tensions that have been formative of anthropology on the subcontinent (and at large). To be found is the ambiguous yet pervasive play in such scholarship of temporality and history – and of empire and nation – that at once does and undoes hierarchical social spaces. This requires further examination.

The Kamar lies on the cusp of the end of colonial rule and the arrival of Indian independence. The study was shaped by assumptions of the prior primitive, the savage slot, and the native niche within colonial/modern ethnography, presuppositions and projections that we encountered earlier. Yet the book equally referred to Kamar lifeways as embedded within wider societal processes. The work cast its subjects as caught within the larger terms of nationalist transformation. Nonetheless, it constantly returned to an essential Kamar tradition. The point is that such tension is not merely a shift of accent in the study between portions written before and after Indian independence, nor is the tension simply disabling. Rather, the tension is formative of the book, running through its chapters. *The Kamar* captures and contains the ambiguities and ambivalences of S. C. Dube's thought and writing – themselves indicative of the anxieties of his discipline – at a critical juncture, uneasily braiding anthropological demand and nationalist desire.

It should not be surprising that the formative tensions and the productive ambiguities of *The Kamar* are bound to the style, structure, and sentiment of the work. Dube considered that primitive cultures were not static but dynamic, especially since culture itself was an adaptive mechanism. Here the notion of the primitive entailed twin registers. On the one hand, it signified historical backwardness upon an evolutionist axis of time-space, a self-explanatory schema, assumed in place a priori, the dominant vision of anthropology and nation at the time. On the other, it registered cultural difference, coeval with the ethnographer, in the space-time of the nation, which invited empathetic understanding. Thus in the study the imperative to describe the Kamar way of life

before it changed crisscrossed with the impulse to record the changing way of life of the Kamar, the dual dispositions pulling apart but also coming together.³⁷

Now mine is not the suggestion that Dube's first ethnographic monograph prematurely reconciled these contrary tendencies. Rather, the point is that the text is the site where such contradictory pressures are visible, the terrain where these tensions were set in motion. This serves to further reveal and unravel the conjunctions and disjunctions between anthropological frames and nationalist formulations, the distinct construal of time and space as part of ethnographic practice. In turn, all of this raises key questions for critical considerations of social-scientific traditions, particularly of scholarship construed in the shadow of empire and nation, as productive of disjunctive spatial-temporal configurations.

History and culture

Time and temporality are usually projected as the stuff of history, quite as culture and tradition are implicitly understood as subjects of anthropology. At the same time, as was noted, just as terms of time and temporality have been differently present at the core of anthropology, so also the writing of history has variously entailed projections of culture and tradition. It is to the latter issue that I now turn. Here it is important to reiterate that, no less than anthropology, history writing has borne the profound impress of the hierarchical oppositions of modernity as well as acutely expressed the contentions of modern knowledge, each turning on space and time. This has underscored also the reciprocity of these inquiries.

First, processes of the institutionalization of the discipline in the Euro-American world in the nineteenth century – as also their significant antecedents – meant that history writing emerged as bearing the flag of the nation. Not only could the discipline be endlessly, ethnocentrically inward-looking, but it was shaped by sharp distinctions between the civilized and the backward concerning peoples and nations,

metropolis and colony. Second, it followed that in Western arenas the relatively few historical accounts that were undertaken of distant, generally colonial, territories frequently presented such pasts as footnotes and appendices to the history of Europe. Third, the histories construed in colonized countries and newly independent nations were themselves often envisioned in the image of a progressive West, albeit using for their own purposes the temporal hierarchies and spatial oppositions of an exclusive modernity.³⁸ Fourth and finally, important strands of history writing could express hermeneutic, historicist, and Counter-Enlightenment impulses, but their relationship with an exclusive, hierarchical Western modernity was double-edged. Such histories acutely articulated notions of culture, tradition, and the *volk* (folk), generally of the nation, to critically question the conceit of an aggrandizing reason that they saw as the leitmotif of the Enlightenment. Conversely, such articulations of hermeneutic, historicist, and Counter-Enlightenment tendencies themselves could not escape, as we have seen, the developmental schemes of a somewhat singular history centered on Europe.³⁹ In different ways, on offer were distinct configurations of exclusive hierarchical time and segregated hierarchized spaces.

What about more contemporary history writing? Turning to Indian examples, here also the notions of culture and tradition can find rather particular manifestations, including their being turned into empty placeholders or their being articulated in all too tendentious ways. Consider now historical accounts that are principally unreflexive about their presuppositions and/or that frame themselves in primarily analytical modes. In two important essays, Gyanendra Pandey has focused on the failure of modern history writing to adequately address the pasts of sectarian religious violence in colonial and postcolonial India, particularly the violence that constituted the Partition of the subcontinent.⁴⁰ He sees this lack as a larger problem of historiography that subordinates the everyday experience of violence and pain to histories of transition – of state, modernity, reason, and progress.

We could agree or disagree with Pandey's sweeping condemnation of history – or, following Foucault, of "historian's history" – that is rendered as "History," the dark and ominous reflection, in the resolutely

antimodernist mirror held up by these essays, of “Modernity.”⁴¹ Yet it is important to register that Pandey points toward how pervasive blueprints of modernity and progress, state and nation, and reason and civilization are built into the tune and *telos* of diverse historical narratives. These arrangements not only orchestrate the existence and the experience of everyday and extraordinary moments of violence, but they do so by at once naturalizing and excising the transformations of culture(s) and tradition(s) in which the violence is embedded. Here, violence, culture, and tradition are ghosts, specters that history writing attempts to exorcise, but phantasms whose haunting presence is constitutive of the historian’s narrative.⁴²

Pandey shows how in these numerous historical accounts the exact articulations of violence, culture, and tradition are ignored yet assimilated – as inconsequential episodes and inconvenient aberrations – into endless narratives of inevitable transitions. Thus, colonial representations of “native” unrest and nationalist writings on “communal” conflict share common ground since each offers explanations cast in terms of the criminality, backwardness, primitive passions, and ready unreason of the people. Equally, there are close connections between modern historians of different ideological persuasions in their depiction of the violence, for example, of the Partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. There is little room in these accounts – constituted, variously, by a quest for underlying structures, a privileging of impersonal forces of history, and a preoccupation with the actions of great men – for discussing the trauma or meaning of sectarian violence, including critical considerations of the terms and transformations of cultures and traditions of which they form a part. Unsurprisingly violence and pain – and their mutual entailments with culture and tradition – are relegated here to the realm of “otherness,” an otherness that formatively haunts history writing and the Indian subcontinent.⁴³ Here a singular temporality, centering on subterranean transitions of nation-states and hidden determinations of economic structures, speaks of a certain sameness of history, a regularity that is yet undergirded by split spaces of “reason” and “unreason.”

Anthropology: ambiguities and reconfigurations

In recent years the writings of anthropologists and historians have shaped incisive readings of meaning and power in the past and the present. Indeed, over the last three decades it has become a matter of critical orthodoxy that, beginning in the 1970s, a vigorous emphasis on practice, processes, and conflict has replaced the prior privileging of structure, rules, and consensus within ethnography. Similar claims can be found today concerning history's immaculate embracing of anthropology. Such understandings point toward important disciplinary transformations over the past four decades. At the same time, such overplaying of the uniqueness of ethnography and history in our own times not only underplays the difference and diversity in the pasts of these disciplines, but it is beset by two other problems.

On the one hand, by bearing the impress of the *telos* of progress, such emphases cast the disciplines as necessarily unfolding from strength to strength. On the other, exactly at the moment such wider social imaginaries are drawn upon, the disciplines are understood as entirely autonomous, framed by their exclusive internal logics, tacitly bracketed from the historical transformations in which they are embedded. At stake, of course, are implicit expressions of dominant representations of historical temporality, which then shore up quiet presumptions regarding the separate spaces and the autonomous times of the disciplines. However, consider now that from the 1940s to the 1970s transformations within ethnography were influenced by processes of counter-colonialism, decolonization, and other struggles against imperialism and racism. This context shaped emergent critiques of reigning paradigms within the discipline.⁴⁴ Here was an interchange between the autonomy and logic governing continuities and changes within disciplinary traditions *and* processes of history and politics affecting inherited understandings of the world.

Some of this is clarified by examining the vexed relationship between action and structure, especially within functionalism, structuralism, and the questioning of these theoretical traditions.⁴⁵ As is well known,

functionalism and structuralism have been prominent paradigms within the social sciences, the former till the 1960s and the latter till the 1970s.⁴⁶ The two traditions have understood “structure” differently. Yet both have accorded primacy to the object(s) of structure over the subject(s) of history, emphases that worked in tandem with their privileging of synchrony over diachrony. All of this defined the atemporal predication of human action upon underlying structure in these theoretical traditions, which overlooked the interleaving of structure and agency through time.⁴⁷ Over the past three decades, the interrogations of these traditions have resulted in vigorous emphases on practice, process, and power in anthropology, including through articulations of historical materials.⁴⁸

My point here is that the questioning of such paradigms – where social action was predicated on sociological structure – should not be approached as an inexorable disciplinary process set in motion only after the late 1960s. Consider, for example, the discrepancy between classical functionalist apprehensions of social action and the emphatic agency of non-Western subjects as witnessed in counter-colonial movements, nationalist struggles, and other practices of colonized subalterns. Arguably, this gap called forth diverse shifts existing within British anthropology since at least the 1930s. These included the efforts of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute in Africa to move the locus of ethnographic inquiry from tribes to proletarians.⁴⁹ They extended to the emergent interrogation of functionalism within British anthropology, especially its many Manchester variants, which formed part of attempts to understand anew conflict, process, and action in social orders. In this terrain, questions of structure and practice appeared in newer ways in theories of (individual) action and analyses of (collective) processes, particularly from the 1950s.⁵⁰ At stake were varied endeavors to grapple with the shifting contexts of anthropology, to respond to wider political and historical transformations affecting the discipline, and to think through the autonomy of analytical traditions.⁵¹ Such efforts could not simply shake off the long shadow cast by functionalist schemes. At the same time, they announced critical engagements with inherited visions and models of social action and anthropological practice.⁵²

Ambiguities and contradictions were equally characteristic of efforts to reconfigure the anthropological discipline after the experiences of the 1960s. Recall that this decade saw the intense articulation of antiracist and civil rights movements and of anti-imperialist and radical student actions, which found varied expressions in Western and non-Western worlds. At the very least implicitly, such events and processes pointed once more to tensions between the somewhat abstract focus on underlying structures within influential scholarship and the clearly palpable nature of human action in social worlds. At the same, the late 1960s and the 1970s also saw the immense success in sociology and anthropology of explanatory frameworks according precedence to the unfolding of structures and systems in understandings of history and society. This was the case with “world systems” and “dependency” theories that projected the irrevocable logic of world capitalism as orchestrating and overwhelming the conduct of historical actors in the metropolis and the colony.⁵³ In such schemas the exact avowal of history/power could go hand in hand with a ready privileging of structure/system and an unsteady undermining of action/practice. To reiterate, such ambiguities and contradictions must be kept in view while considering the turn within anthropology to practice, process, and power, intimating reconfigurations of the discipline.

The 1970s saw critical explorations of the linkages between structure and practice, formulations that thought through the acute enmeshments of social reproduction and cultural transformation. Such efforts could take the form of critical sociological reflection; they could also imaginatively conjoin ethnography and theory to rethink issues of structure and practice, rules and processes.⁵⁴ It followed that, by the beginning of the 1980s, ethnographic and sociological scholarship increasingly turned to practice as a key category, a concept that helped to mediate the oppositions of society and individual as well as of social structure and historical action.

The emergent emphasis on practice appeared linked with a heightened sensitivity to temporal processes and historical considerations in anthropological inquiry. Such tendencies derived impetus from world systems theory and Marxist models, including their structuralist

variants. Yet they extended to distinct dispositions of ethnographic practice, especially considerations of the temporal textures of cultural configurations, spatial formations, and societal transformations.⁵⁵ Salient anthropological writings that engaged the historical record focused on non-Western subjects of colonialism and capitalism. Here the meanings and practices of these subjects did not emerge as simple responses to colonial projects and capitalist processes. Rather such actions and apprehensions were explored as critical attributes of the contradictory elaboration of colonialism and capitalism, themselves understood as historically and culturally, temporally and spatially, layered fields, in apparently marginal arenas. Far from cut-and-dried spatial-temporal distinctions between Western and non-Western worlds, here were to be found discussions of sustained interchanges between these terrains.⁵⁶ Above all, such scholarship could involve implicit and explicit recognition that not merely social processes, but anthropological analyses were enacted through time, located in space, putting a question mark over a hierarchizing temporality and its split spaces.

Much of this diverse scholarship highlighted the presence of power and its negotiation in configurations of meaning and practice. In emergent yet critical ways, under challenge were procedures of ethnographic practice that framed their objects of inquiry as contained within, and themselves insinuating, bounded and coherent entities, especially by drawing pervasive temporal-spatial distinctions between traditional orders and modern societies. Actually, nothing better illustrates the shifts within anthropology on account of the freshly laid emphasis on relationships of power – and on terms of practice and process – than the rethinking, revaluation, and reworking of the concept of culture, a category of categories in ethnography, especially in its American avatar.⁵⁷

Three broad interconnected criticisms of earlier anthropological orientations that totalized culture assume importance here. First, such dispositions frequently presented culture not only as essentially coherent in space and time, but also as virtually autonomous from diverse modalities of power, including in characterizations of “stateless” societies. Such procedures thereby underplayed formations of dominance, contentions of authority, and terms of dissonance *within* arrangements

of culture, critical distinctions that entailed, for example, power relations of community and gender and race and office. Second, it followed that culture often appeared here as inescapably discrete and inexorably bounded. This is to say that non-Western culture was marked off from broad patterns of societal change – involving, for instance, articulations of colonialism, capitalism, nation, and modernity – and it was envisioned as sets of imaginings that chiefly looked inward, spatially and temporally turning only on themselves. Third and finally, these problems were connected to the fact that authoritative ethnographic understandings did not approach the values, beliefs, symbols, and rituals that they examined as embedded within temporal-spatial processes, themselves formed and transformed by historical subjects. Rather, the elements of culture were rendered as principally untouched by the shifts and mutations, ruptures and continuities, which have shaped the past and the present.⁵⁸

History: ambiguities and reconfigurations

I have noted that narratives describing anthropological endeavors from the 1970s onward as breaking with the past – by being increasingly oriented to practice, process, and power – can be too exclusive in focus and scope. Similar problems can underlie singular storylines of the heroic rise of social/cultural history, which function most pervasively as pedagogical frameworks, manifest in the classroom and the seminar. Here are to be found projections of such disciplinary histories as becoming more and more democratic, progressively inclusive of hitherto marginalized subjects (both research themes and human constituencies) of the past, and consequently as ever more embracing of other disciplines, especially anthropological methods. Once more implicit articulations of historical progress, which then fabricate an autonomous space-time of disciplines, are at work here.

Such narratives frequently start off with the privileged place of politics in the institutionalization of history as a discipline from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, and emphasize that in

such scholarship social and cultural history writing had a residual role, including as the practice of history with the politics left out. Next they focus on major breakthroughs in historical scholarship that progressively expanded the subject matter of history from the 1930s onward to draw in wide-ranging dynamics of society and culture, also including in their fold subaltern subjects, while initiating a dialogue with the social sciences, especially anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Discussions of “masters” and “schools” marking such breakthroughs involve mention particularly of the work of the *Annales* in France;⁵⁹ the erstwhile British Communist Group of Historians;⁶⁰ cultural historians of Europe and scholars of African-American slavery based in the US;⁶¹ and prominent historical tendencies on the Continent, especially Italian “micro-history” and German “*Alltagsgeschichte*” (history of everyday life).⁶² Finally, it is against this backdrop that such storylines sketch the problems and potentialities of social/cultural history, including the dialogue with anthropology or sociology, in diverse institutional contexts in the here and now.

Once more, the difficulties with such storylines are not that they are simply wrong, but that they are highly tendentious. Construed from the vantage point of the present and implicitly cast in teleological molds, they overlook the constitutive ambivalences and contradictions, silences and tensions, and problems and possibilities at the core of developments in the discipline of history: from the privileged place of political and diplomatic history in the past to the greater prominence of cultural and social history in the present. At stake are persistent contentions and excesses of history writing as a form of modern knowledge, including contrary articulations of temporal-spatial matrices, ever constitutive of modernity.

To begin with, prior and present political histories have carried their own varied articulations of culture and society and tradition and modernity. These can entail key conjunctions of hermeneutic and analytical tendencies and of romanticist and progressivist sensibilities. Such conjunctions have formed part of the institutionalization of the historical discipline, including the privileging of an exclusively demarcated domain of the “political,” but they have also resisted the turning

of historical knowledge into a merely subordinate ally of overwrought social-scientific schemes: I provide a single example here.

The writings of the early nineteenth-century French philosopher-historian Jules Michelet have been criticized as the work of a mere “romantic,” one that poetically idealized a popular “people” in his account of the French Revolution. Or they have been celebrated for uncovering a new object-subject of history, turning on collective mentalities and anonymous forces in the unfolding of the past. Yet such readings ignore Michelet’s actual procedures of research and writing, which arguably recast both “hermeneutic” and “scientific” methods in order to create a genuinely “modernist” historical scholarship. Michelet’s history writing, Jacques Rancière has argued, brought to the fore the salient but repressed “subject of history,” also intimating the requirements of historical research to live up to its threefold contract – “scientific, political, and literary” – with modern political democratic constituencies.⁶³ Indeed, precisely by ignoring Michelet’s “method” and assimilating his writing into prefigured schemes, modern historians were “able to continue the age-long tradition of keeping the ‘the poor’ in their place – outside of history – and of pretending to be relating nothing but facts – and ignoring their meanings.”⁶⁴ To read a historian such as Michelet (or figures such as Herder or Ranke, and many, many others) without succumbing to inherited historiographical schemas is to begin to track the pathways that have been opened up yet mainly forgotten within historical practice, disciplinary genealogies.⁶⁵ It is also to think through the unthought predilections and underenunciated assumptions of history writing, shored up by a singular temporality of a progressivist provenance, which precisely permit the disciplinary delineation of its autonomous time-space. Together, at stake are particular configurations of temporality and spatiality as part of everyday enactments of modern historiography, issues that require further deliberation.

It should also not be surprising, then, that ready projections of the triumphant rise of social and cultural history are often insufficiently critical, especially regarding their invocations of “schools” and “masters” of the historical craft. They do not adequately probe the

constitutive conceits of such traditions. Consider the Annales School of history writing in France, which has existed since at least 1929 into the present, and was important in breaking with earlier event-based narratives of political history. Drawing on wide sociological considerations and especially impressed with the formulations of Emile Durkheim, the Annales not only suggestively, vastly opened out the scope and subject of history writing, but also created influential versions of long-term “structural” history.

At the same time, it is important to ask whether the histories crafted by Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel, two of the formative figures of the Annales School, did not deprive Western “history of its human subject, its links to a generally political and specifically democratic agenda, and its characteristic mode of representing its subject’s manner of being in the world, namely, narrative.”⁶⁶ It is equally worth reflecting on how Braudel’s seminal writings have not only rendered entire regions of the Mediterranean world as islands floating outside the currents of civilization and history, but further cast as ahistorical the sphere of everyday “material culture,” especially when compared with the historical dynamism of early modern mercantilism.⁶⁷ At work here are weighty distinctions between the “backward” and the “civilized,” entailing hierarchical mappings of time and space that we encountered earlier.

Similarly, it is crucial to recognize that the work of the British socialist historian E. P. Thompson has imaginatively explored the contours of culture and consciousness of the “plebian public” in eighteenth-century England, including the transformations of time among these subjects with the advent of the measurement of time-in-labor as part of new regimes of capitalist and industrial manufacturing processes.⁶⁸ Yet, it is critical to register that Thompson’s writings tend to locate eighteenth-century plebian culture along an irrevocable axis of historical modernization that sets up too solid an opposition between the “tradition” bound moral economy of the plebian public and the market-driven economy of “modern” capitalism.⁶⁹ This axis further governs Thompson’s construal of spatially segregated non-Western orientations to time in the second half of the twentieth century, which are seen simultaneously as lagging behind the time of the West and as insinuating a haplessly

traditional space waiting to be inevitably overcome by modern history.⁷⁰ Clearly, we are faced with apparently normatively neutral, but actually profoundly ideological, temporal-spatial, hierarchical oppositions of modernity.

To be sure, none of this is to deny the profound transformations of history writing in the past few decades. Rather, it is to approach such changes by cautiously considering the unstated, uncritical assumptions and the formidable, underlying conceits of the discipline. Here the enduring extension and palpable prominence of social/cultural history in more recent times need to be understood as part of the wider expansion after World War II of the historical discipline of the patterns of academic growth that have been true of anthropology and sociology too. The expansion has included an increase in professional specialization and a significant growth of job opportunities, which have shored up the delineation and development of identifiable social and cultural fields of history writing. At the same time, such spreading out of social/cultural history has been no less the result of abiding yet manifold intellectual interests, archival engagements, cross-disciplinary concerns, and political commitments, including impulses toward the democratization of history writing.⁷¹

While tracking the reconfigurations of history, including distinct articulations of time and space, it is especially important to register endeavors that have focused on subjects hitherto marginalized from the historical record.⁷² This has been accompanied by at least two related developments: the presence of attempts to seek out distinct archival materials and to read historical sources in innovative ways – also opening up questions of the varieties, veracities, and validities of “sources” of history – especially considering the paucity and perversity of the record of the pasts of marginal subjects; and the place of necessary conversations with other disciplines, from anthropology and sociology to demography and psychology, which have also led historiography in new directions.

At the same time, it is worth considering that these new modes of history writing emerged principally, albeit in different ways, as alternative articulations of the history of the nation. The works of Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson attempted to recast authoritative understandings of

English history by bringing to the fore, respectively, patterns of popular, radical religious dissent in the seventeenth century and frameworks of meaning and practice of the plebian public in the eighteenth century, each scholar tracing the approbation and interrogation of authority among such subordinate subjects.⁷³ The writings of Eugene Genovese and Lawrence Levine sought to restore to African-American slaves their own modalities of culture and action, consciousness and agency, in order to critically rethink the history of the US nation, which in its conservative and liberal renderings had overlooked the experiential textures of slavery and cast the slave population as objects rather than subjects of (national) history.⁷⁴ The central task that the subaltern studies collective set itself was to explore “*the failure of the nation to come into its own*,” especially focusing on the place of the subaltern in the history of the Indian nation that had failed its dispossessed peoples.⁷⁵ These historiographical tendencies imaginatively extended the terms of the dominant coupling of history and nation under modernity, but they were also unable to simply break with these bonds.

Rather than being disabling, the ambiguities have been productive. Indeed, the developments in history writing discussed above have been followed over the past three decades by an even wider opening up of critical histories. As in the case of anthropology, shifting political contexts, the “linguistic” and “affective” turns in the social sciences, and key crossovers with antifoundational perspectives have influenced these transformations. The consequences have been wide-ranging: from the expansion of imperatives of “minority” histories through to new historical accounts of colony and nation, body and sexuality, and affect and imagination; and from critical reconsiderations of concepts-entities of modernity and the state through to the radical rethinking of the terms of theory and the disciplines, including history and anthropology.

At the end

The reconfigurations of history and anthropology that I have discussed have been crucial for the emergence of historical anthropology. Indeed,

several of my emphases in this chapter have themselves emerged from within such critical expressions of history, anthropology, and historical anthropology. Here, the first phase of historical anthropology was shaped by renewed emphases on practice and process, concerned with acting subjects and social domination, and sometimes influenced by Marxian political economy.⁷⁶ This was followed by newer considerations of the interplay between culture and power, especially as foregrounded in the writings of Michel Foucault. Here were also to be found crucial conversations with postcolonial perspectives, subaltern studies, and critical theory, among other orientations. Now colonial cultures, imperial evangelism, nations and nationalisms, and communities and their histories came to be critically examined as embodying authority as well as alterity, meaning as well as power.⁷⁷ The third ongoing stage builds upon these prior emphases of historical anthropology. At the same time, there is now a greater critical reflexivity regarding histories and anthropologies of the disciplines themselves as well as a simultaneous engagement with social theory and political philosophy. Under discussion are not only newer studies of empire and nation, modernity and neoliberalism, frontiers and politics, and public cultures and governmental anxieties. Rather, also at stake are understandings of how modern regimes of state, nation, and bureaucracy have shaped the disciplines as well as the recognition that, for example, ethnographies of Christianity must in some ways equally be anthropologies of the secular.⁷⁸

In other words, on offer are critical questions, posed as provocations here: Why and how are archives, fields, and disciplines organized in the ways that they are? What does this tell us about their very nature? Should not more of contemporary anthropology turn away from the endless difference, often deferred, of recursive formations – traditional or hybrid or modern – to rather become the study of subjects of modernity, which include modern subjects? Should not more history writing critically query the routine sameness of the modern subject in order to explore instead the presence of heterogeneous yet coeval temporalities in worlds of modernity and many others? What exactly do we mean by “history” and “anthropology” and why do we study them in the first

place? The spirit and substance of these questions informs my explorations of identity and modernity, acutely entailing issues of space and time, in the [next chapter](#).

Notes

- 1 I distinguish between “functionalism” (of, for example, Malinowski) and “structural-functionalism” (of, for instance, Radcliffe-Brown) as analytical procedures, but also consider together the shared orientations of these traditions to time-space in the practice of anthropology. See Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Adventures in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1922); A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1952); S. N. Eisenstadt, “Functionalist analysis in anthropology and sociology: an interpretive essay,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19 (1990): 243–4; Adam Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School, 1922–1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 92–109; Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics*, pp. 155–71; and George Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888–1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 233–441.
- 2 This discussion brings together arguments offered by varieties of critical engagements – going back at least to the 1950s – with functionalist analyses. Rather than provide numerous citations, it should suffice to say that my criticisms would be widely accepted in critical anthropology today.
- 3 Cohn, “History and anthropology,” p. 199. On the critical significance of Cohn’s statement for historical scholarship, see Hans Medick, “Missionaries in the rowboat? Ethnological ways of knowing as a challenge to social history,” in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 41–71.
- 4 For Fabian in anthropological analyses the work of time brings into play projections of space through procedures of visualization, taxonomy, and

classification. While I have learned much from Fabian's critique of naturalized "Time-Space," as should be evident in this book, my arguments also intimate somewhat different emphases, especially concerning the everyday production of time and space, heterogeneous yet overlaying temporal and spatial formations, and an unwillingness to succumb to the distinction between "real" and "representational" (or ideological) space. Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

- 5 Here I am once again engaging and extending Fabian (*ibid.*).
- 6 On the notion of the "savage slot" of anthropology, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Anthropology and the savage slot: the poetics and politics of the otherness," in Richard Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1991), pp. 17–44. On the "native niche" of the discipline, see Dube, *Stitches on Time*.
- 7 George Stocking, Jr., *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 347.
- 8 Thomas, *Out of Time*.
- 9 Each of these copulas is broadly homologous to the other. Rationalist and progressivist dispositions – privileging the capacity of reason and seeking to remake the world in its image – have emerged as often bound to the analytical model: "the analytical (*analysis* being basically a mathematical and logical term), requiring the selection and isolation of factors, political or economic ... [that are] given privileged explanatory status." In contrast, the hermeneutical model has entailed "interpretation on the analogy of reading a text in its literary and philological fullness (as distinguished from logical analysis)," treating history itself as "a matter not of seeing, as tradition and etymology would have it, but rather of reading, deciphering, and interpreting" (Kelley, *Faces of History*, pp. 247, 262). Hermeneutical protocols have been frequently linked to expressions of historicism. Here historicist procedures have variously played out: critiques of an abstract and aggrandizing reason; reassertions of the centrality of language and historical experience; the principle of individuality (while often pursuing a universal history); and acute inclinations toward hermeneutical understandings. This is to say also distinct formations and discrete intimations of what Isaiah Berlin has notably described as the "Counter-Enlightenment," "the great river of romanticism" running from the eighteenth into the

nineteenth centuries, its waters no less overflowing into the times and terrains that have come after. Berlin, *Against the Current*.

- 10 Stocking, *The Ethnographer's Magic*, pp. 94–8.
- 11 Franz Boas, “The history of anthropology,” in George Stocking, Jr. (ed.), *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911: A Franz Boas Reader* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 35.
- 12 Elsewhere, I have discussed the importance of exploring the work of Franz Boas rather than that of later Boasians (such as A. L. Kroeber or E. Sapir or P. Radin), which can be understood as more frontally expressing historical and historicist considerations. Dube, “Anthropology, history, historical anthropology,” pp. 52–3, n. 33.
- 13 Stocking, *The Ethnographer's Magic*, p. 347.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 352–3.
- 15 Stocking succinctly considers such disciplinary departure(s) from Boas's emphasis on the diachronic and the historical. Here are to be found transformations of key tendencies in Boasian anthropology as increasingly inclined from the 1920s onwards toward a synchronic study of integration of cultures and of the relation of “culture” and “personality” as well as a widening breach between British and US anthropology, albeit one where both traditions emphasized synchrony although with different emphases. *Ibid.*, pp. 353–7. See also Stocking, *After Tylor*, pp. 233–441.
- 16 For a hint of such a reading, see Marshall Sahlins, *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), pp. 20–2.
- 17 Franz Boas, *Anthropology and Modern Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1928), p. 206.
- 18 Stocking, *The Ethnographer's Magic*, pp. 110–11.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 110–12.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.
- 22 See E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Social anthropology” and “Social anthropology: Past and present,” in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), pp. 1–134, 139–57; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropology and History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961).

- 23 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).
- 24 This is far from denying that E. P.'s work has been read in other ways. See, for example, David F. Pocock, *Social Anthropology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 72–82.
- 25 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).
- 26 For a discussion of the ways in which E. P.'s articulations of time crystallized the “un-resolvable ambiguities” concerning time in the work of Durkheim (and his associates) and Malinowski see Munn, “Cultural anthropology of time,” pp. 94–8. My arguments draw on Munn's brilliant essay, extending its insights through overlapping but distinct emphases.
- 27 Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Nuer time reckoning,” *Africa*, 12 (1939): 189–216.
- 28 Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, pp. 96, 102.
- 29 Munn, “Cultural anthropology of time,” p. 96.
- 30 *Ibid.*; Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, pp. 98–103.
- 31 Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, pp. 98–103, 105–8.
- 32 Here there is something of an implicit, unthought opposition between time and space in E. P.'s formulations. Munn, “Cultural anthropology of time,” pp. 97–8.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Pierre Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 8 (first published in French in 1963); Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*; and Munn, “Cultural anthropology of time,” pp. 106–9.
- 35 A wider discussion of these questions is contained in Dube, “Anthropology, history, historical anthropology”.
- 36 S. C. Dube, *The Kamar* (Lucknow: Universal, 1951). Here my discussion draws on Saurabh Dube, “Ties that bind: tribe, village, nation, and S. C. Dube,” in Patricia Uberoi, Satish Deshpande, and Nandini Sundar (eds.), *Anthropology in the East: Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), pp. 444–95.
- 37 Consider that Dube wrote of the Kamars as “seriously talk[ing] about Gandhi Mahatma, the king of all kings ... endowed with greater magical

powers to fight the white *sahibs*.” Yet, he described the Kamars as “almost untouched” by the “great political awakening which has given a new national consciousness to India during the last sixty years.” The narrative holds together, but it also strains at the seams. Dube, *The Kamar*, p. 166.

- 38 On this issue see Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the artifice of history”; Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and connection: rethinking colonial African history,” *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994): 1519–26; and Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, pp. 30–42. See also Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as postcolonial criticism.” While registering certain exceptions, the surveys by Cooper and Sarkar both substantiate my claims.
- 39 The critical edge of my arguments notwithstanding, there is much to be learned anew from all these different tendencies of history writing. Specifically the distinct entwining of hermeneutical and analytical impulses in different modes of historical endeavor requires special attention. Equally, considering the “difference” introduced by non-Western histories, see Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth* (Chicago, IL, and London: University Of Chicago Press, 2015); and Mark Thurner, *History’s Peru: The Poetics of Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).
- 40 Pandey, “In defense of the fragment”; and Gyanendra Pandey, “The prose of otherness,” in Arnold and Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII*, pp. 188–221.
- 41 Pandey, “The prose of otherness.”
- 42 Clearly, I am sieving Pandey’s arguments and emphases through related yet distinct filters.
- 43 *Ibid.*; Pandey, “In defense of the fragment.” On recent writings on the Partition seeking to redress such excision of terms of violence and pain in historical endeavor, see, for example, Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin, 1998); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); and Pandey, *Remembering Partition*.
- 44 See, for example, Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics*, pp. 225–9, 308–14.

- 45 Dube, "Terms that bind," pp. 2–3.
- 46 Nonetheless functionalist tenets and structural analyses did not simply disappear from the academic scene after the 1970s. Rather they have continued to variously exercise their influence on anthropology, also being differently reconfigured in distinct disciplines. Eisenstadt, "Functionalist analysis," pp. 243–51; Sherry Ortner, "Theory in anthropology since the sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984): 127–32, 135–41; and Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics*, pp. 335–41.
- 47 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*, particularly pp. 4–9.
- 48 Not only functionalism and structuralism but also other important anthropological traditions of the time could variously privilege structure over action, an issue discussed in Dube, "Anthropology, history, historical anthropology," pp. 1–31.
- 49 The political nature of the setting up of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute could combine imperial administrators' deep skepticism of anthropological work. See Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology*, pp. 133–5. On the shifts in anthropological research initiated by the Institute see, Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics*, pp. 276–83; and for a more recent critical assessment of this research, see Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*.
- 50 See, for example, Edmund Leach, *Political System of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1954); Max Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London: Cohen and West, 1963); F. G. Bailey, *Caste and the Economic Frontier: A Village in Highland Orissa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957); F. G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969); Fredrik Barth, *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans* (London: Athlone Press, 1959); J. P. S. Uberoi, *The Politics of the Kula Ring: An Analysis of the Findings of Bronislaw Malinowski* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962); and Victor Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957).
- 51 It is as part of such wider rethinking of the discipline that we might consider the famous endorsement by E. P. of the intersections between anthropology and history. Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropology and History*.
- 52 Such transformations were also evident in anthropology in the US after World War II in the study of "complex civilizations," work in political

economy and on subordinate groups in a historical frame, and ethno-history, all issues discussed in Dube, "Anthropology, history, historical anthropology."

- 53 Such models and theories interrogated the capitalist and imperialist continuities of Western domination in non-Western theaters through polarities of core and periphery, development and underdevelopment. See Wolfe, "History and imperialism."
- 54 For example, Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*; Abrams, *Historical Sociology*; Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*; John Comaroff and Simon Roberts, *Rules and Processes: The Cultural Logic of Dispute in an African Context* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Ortner, "Theory in anthropology"; and Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985). See also E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).
- 55 Fabian, *Time and the Other*; Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting 1883–1974: A Study in Society and History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980); Sahlins, *Islands of History*; Cohn, *Anthropologist among the Historians*; Gerald M. Sider, *Culture and Class: A Newfoundland Illustration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 56 For instance, Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). See also Richard Price, *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). In history writing such issues found expression in complementary yet distinct registers. See, for example, Guha, *Elementary Aspects*.
- 57 Of course shifting definitions of culture have characterized the pasts of anthropology. Writings that initiated recent critical considerations of culture include Talal Asad, "Anthropological conceptions of religion: reflections on Geertz," *Man* [n.s.], 18 (1983): 237–59; Gerald M. Sider, "The ties that bind: culture and agriculture, property and propriety in the Newfoundland village fishery," *Social History*, 5 (1980): 1–39; and Herman Rebel, "Cultural hegemony and class experience: a critical reading of

recent ethnological-historical approaches (parts one and two)," *American Ethnologist*, 16 (1989): 117–36, 350–65.

- 58 These critical considerations have been taken forward in distinct ways in recent decades. I have discussed elsewhere how questionings of anthropological articulations of culture emerged linked to various processes: the rethinking of the Marxist conception of culture; the place of the "reflexive" turn in the "experimental" ethnography of 1980s that brought forth questions of "authority" in the "representation" of culture; more recent calls for writing *against* culture, where culture is seen as implicated in dominant projects – from anthropological schemes to imperial regimes to nation-state routines – that make a fetish out of cultural difference; the interweaving of critical articulations of culture in anthropology today with a growing interest in transnational processes of empire, diaspora, and modernity; and, finally, the importance of not approaching culture as merely an analytical device but as a concept-entity that has been central to the imaginings and practices of the very people the notion has sought to define and describe. Needless to say, such disciplinary reconfigurations have been closely bound to wider changes in the world at large. All these issues are elaborated in Dube, "Anthropology, history, historical anthropology."
- 59 Lucien Febvre, *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, trans. K. Folca (London: Routledge, 1973); Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954); Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II: Vols. I and II*, trans. S. Reynolds (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); and Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 60 Thompson, *Customs in Common*; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 61 Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays by Natalie Zemon Davis* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977);

Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage, 1985); William H. Sewell Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; and Levine, *Black Culture and Consciousness*.

- 62 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.) *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, trans. Eren Branch (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and Lütke, *History of Everyday Life*.
- 63 Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, trans. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). See also Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. Andrew Parker et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
- 64 Hayden White, "Foreword: Rancière's revisionism," in Rancière, *The Names of History*, p. xvii. White is commenting on Rancière's reading of Michelet here.
- 65 See, for instance, John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Thurner, *History's Peru*; and Chakrabarty, *Calling of History*.
- 66 H. White, "Foreword," p. xi; Rancière, *The Names of History*.
- 67 According to Braudel the history of mountainous regions, as worlds far removed from civilization proper, is to have no history. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, vol. 1; Medick, "'Missionaries in the rowboat?'," pp. 42–4.
- 68 E. P. Thompson, "Patrician society, plebian culture," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974): 382–405; E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth century English society: class struggle without class," *Social History*, 3 (1978): 133–65; E. P. Thompson, "Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism," *Past and Present*, 38 (1967): 56–97; E. P. Thompson, "The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century," *Past and Present*, 50 (1971): 76–136.
- 69 On such questions see Hans Medick, "Plebian culture in the transition to capitalism," in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 84–113.

- 70 Thompson, "Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism."
- 71 I explore such issues in Dube, *Stitches on Time*, especially pp. 133–7.
- 72 Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I–VI*; Chatterjee and Pandey (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VII*; Arnold and Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII*; Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (eds.), *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Gautam Bhadra et al. (eds.), *Subaltern Studies X: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 73 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*; Thompson, *Customs in Common*.
- 74 Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Levine, *Black Culture and Consciousness*.
- 75 Ranajit Guha, "On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India," in Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I*, p. 7. Emphasis in the original. For a wider discussion of such questions see Dube, *Stitches on Time*, ch. 5.
- 76 For example, Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*; David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*; Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*.
- 77 A few indicative examples include Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2; Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*; Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn*; Axel, *Nation's Tortured Body*; Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*; and Dube, *Untouchable Pasts*.
- 78 For instance, Bear, *Lines of the Nation*; Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Townsend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); and Dube, *After Conversion*. See also John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Bhabra, *Rethinking Modernity*. Needless to say, the emphases outlined above not only undergird this book, but are acutely embodied in Dube, "Formations of an evangelical modernity."

