

A history of anthropology

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2. Victorians, Germans and a Frenchman

Between the Napoleonic wars (1792—1815) and the First World War (1914—18), we see the rise of modern Europe — and of the modern world. This was, perhaps above all, the age of the Industrial Revolution. In the 1700s, profound transformations had taken place in agriculture and manufacturing, particularly in Britain. Steam power and spinning machines had become widespread, and a growing class of landless peasants and urban labourers began to make themselves heard. But the greatest changes were still ahead. In the 1830s, the first major railways were built; a decade later, steamships crossed the Atlantic on a regular basis; and in 1846, the telegraph was introduced. It was becoming possible, on a scale that the world had never seen before, to move vast quantities of information, raw materials, commodities and people across global distances. This, in turn, meant that production could be increased both in agriculture and manufacturing. Europe was able to feed more people, in part through increased production, in part through expanding imports. As a result, population grew. In 1800, Britain had 10.5 million people. By 1901, there were 37 million, 75 per cent of whom lived in cities. Peasants deserted the countryside, forced by

population pressure and the rationalisation of agriculture, and moved to urban centres like London or Paris, where they were resocialised as workers.

Conditions in the rapidly growing cities were hardly optimal: epidemics were common, and when the first British law against child labour was introduced in 1834 it affected only children under the age of nine.

In time, protests against these changes increased in frequency and scale. The most dramatic example was the French Revolution, but the Chartist revolt in Britain in the 1840s, the French, Austrian and Italian revolutions in 1848-49, the Paris Commune of 1870, also clearly indicate the potential for violence that industrialisation unleashed. And along with the protests, a new, socialist ideology grew. Its roots go back to social philosophers such as Rousseau and Henri de Saint-Simon (1760—1825), and to the German neo-Hegelians, but its decisive formulation came with Karl Marx, to whom we shall return later.

But the success of the labour movement during the nineteenth century would hardly have been possible without the train and the steamship. Millions of migrants were transported by rail and ship to the USA, Australia, Argentina, South Africa, Siberia and elsewhere, relieving population pressure in Europe, and permitting a long-term rise in standards of living for all. Meanwhile, in the colonies, administrations disseminated European culture and institutions. This grand process of diffusion had variable effects. New power relations arose — between colonial administrator and Indian merchant, between plantation owner and black slave, between Boer, Englishman and Bantu, between settler and Australian aborigine. In the wake of these new relations of dominance and dependence, new philosophies, ideologies and myths arose to defend or attack them. The campaign against slavery is an early example, and slavery was successfully abolished in the British and French dependencies in the 1830s. But racism, which first emerged as an organized ideology during the nineteenth century, was a response to the same processes. Finally, an internationalised science emerged. The global researcher becomes a popular figure — the prototype naturally being Charles Darwin (1809—1881), whose *Origin of the Species* (1859) was based on data collected during a six-year circumnavigation of the globe.

It is hardly surprising that anthropology arose as a discipline at this time. The anthropologist is a prototypical global researcher, dependent on detailed data about people all over the world. Now that these data had suddenly become available, anthropology could be established as an academic discipline. So could sociology. If anthropology grew from imperialism, sociology was a product of the changing class relations brought about by industrialisation in Europe itself — all the founding fathers of sociology discuss the meaning of "modernity", and contrast it with "pre-modern" conditions.

Biological and social evolutionism — Morgan

While most major nineteenth-century sociologists were German or French, the leading anthropologists were based either in Britain (the greatest colonial power, with plentiful access to "others") or the USA (where "the others" were close at hand). Theoretical developments in the two traditions also differed markedly. The *evolutionism* typical of nineteenth-century anthropology built on ideas of development from the eighteenth century, bolstered by the experience of colonialism, and (starting in the 1860s) by the influence of Darwin and his most famous supporter, the social philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820—1903), who founded Social Darwinism, a social philosophy extolling the virtues of individual competition. But anthropology did not develop into a racist pseudo-science. All the leading anthropologists of the time supported the principle of *the psychic unity of mankind* — humans were everywhere born with roughly the same potentials, and inherited differences were negligible. Indeed, theories of social evolution presupposed this principle. For if racial differences were held to be fundamental, the cultural comparisons on which these theories were based would be unnecessary.

Meanwhile, continental sociologists followed the lead of Kant and Hegel, and explored the socially constructed reality discovered by the two Germans. Various sociologists realised this project in various ways, but they shared the idea of society as an autonomous reality that must be studied on its own terms, not with the methods of natural science. Like the anthropologists, the sociologists

asserted the psychic unity of mankind and deferred to evolutionist theory. Unlike the anthropologists, who classified and compared the external characteristics of societies all over the globe, sociologists were concerned with the internal dynamics of Western, industrial society. The sophisticated theories that were thus developed were to have a fundamental impact on anthropology as well, starting in the early twentieth century.

Here we shall illustrate the differences between these two emerging traditions with the work of two of their most prominent pioneering figures: the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818—81) and the German sociologist Karl Marx (1818—83).

Morgan's life in many ways embodied the America of equal opportunity that the French sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville described in 1835. He grew up on a farm in New York State, was educated as a lawyer, and became a prosperous and active participant in local politics. An early champion of the political rights of Native Americans, he had been fascinated by Indians since his youth. In the 1840's, he lived with the Iroquois for some time, and was adopted into one of their clans and given the name *Tayadaowuhkuh*: "he who builds bridges".

Morgan realised that most of the complexity of Native American culture would soon be irretrievably destroyed as a result of the influx of Europeans, and considered it a crucial task to document traditional culture and social life before it was too late. This attitude, often referred to as *urgent anthropology*, was shared by the second great American anthropologist, Franz Boas (Chapter 3), and has since been widespread in research on indigenous peoples.

Morgan had close contact with the people he studied, sympathised with their problems, and published detailed accounts of their culture and social life. But he also made substantial theoretical contributions, particularly in his pioneering work on kinship. Morgan's interest in kinship dated back to his stay with the Iroquois. Later, he discovered surprising similarities and differences between their kinship system and other in North America. He then devised a large-scale comparative study of Native American kinship, eventually including other groups as well. Morgan created the first typology of kinship systems (cf. Holy 1996), and

introduced a distinction between *classificatory* and *descriptive* kinship which is still in use. To simplify greatly — descriptive systems (like our own) differentiate kinsmen of the direct ascending or descending line (linear kin) from kinsmen "to the side" (collateral kin, such as siblings, cousins and in-laws). Classificatory kinship (as with the Iroquois) does not differentiate these two categories. Here the same term might be used, for example, for all linear and collateral male kin on my father's side (father, father's brother, father's brother's son, etc.). But Morgan did more than formulate a theory; he grounded it in years of intensive study of empirical kinship systems around the world. In his influential *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871), the results of this research are presented, defined kinship, once and for all, as a primary anthropological concern.

For Morgan, kinship was primarily a point of entry to the study of social evolution. He argued that primitive societies were organised on the basis of kinship, and that terminological variations among kinship systems correlated with variations in social structure. But he also supposed that kinship terminology changed slowly, and that it therefore contained clues to an understanding of earlier stages of social evolution.

In his magnum opus *Ancient Society* (1877), Morgan attempts a grand synthesis of all this work. He distinguishes three major stages of cultural evolution: savagery, barbarism and civilization (with three sub-stages each for savagery and barbarism). His criteria for these divisions were mostly technological: His "savages" were hunters and gatherers, "barbarism" was associated with agriculture, "civilization" with state formation and urbanisation. In hindsight, it seems clear that Morgan's synthesis did not succeed. Even if his basic evolutionary scheme is accepted, the details are often hazy. At times, isolated technological features are accorded unreasonable weight — for example, pottery is *the* criterion of the transition between two stages. Where would that leave the Polynesian chiefdoms, with their complex political systems, but no trace of pottery? It is only fair to add that Morgan himself was conscious that his conclusions were often speculative, and critical of the quality of his (mostly secondary) data.

Morgan had considerable influence on later anthropology, particularly on kinship studies, but also, on American cultural materialists and other evolutionist anthropologists in the twentieth century (Chapter 5). But Morgan was read by sociologists as well. When Marx discovered Morgan towards the end of his life, he and his partner, Friedrich Engels, attempted to integrate Morgan's ideas in his own, post-Hegelian, evolutionary theory. The unfinished results of this work were published by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, in 1884, the year after Marx' death.

Marx

The scope and aims of Marx' work contrast sharply with Morgan's, despite their shared commitment to materialist explanations. Marx' writings on non-industrial societies are scattered and tentative. It was through his analysis of capitalist society in his masterwork, *Das Kapital* (vol. 1-3: 1867, 1885, 1896; *Capital*, 1906), that he made his lasting contribution to social theory. Though Marxism collapsed as a political movement late in the 1980s, it has remained an important academic influence.

Born in the same year as Morgan, into a wealthy Jewish family in an inconspicuous German town, Marx completed a university education in philosophy before embarking on a career as social theorist, pamphleteer, editor, journalist, labour organiser and agitator. He was actively involved in the revolutionary wave that left the European establishment in shock in 1848—49, and in the Paris Commune in 1870. After the Commune, he became known as one of the leading figures of the international labour movement.

Marx' influence on social theory is manifold and complex, and may be traced in many anthropological analyses to this day (though his influence on sociology, history and economics is even greater). The confluence of social theory and political activism runs deep in Marx, and gives his entire project a paradoxical and thought-provoking character (see Berman 1982). In a sense, Marx tried throughout his life to reconcile an idealist impulse from German philosophy (particularly Hegel) with a materialist world-view. It is sometimes said that he

"placed Hegel on his feet": He retained Hegel's dialectical principle, but argued that the movement of history took place on a material, not a spiritual, level. Society, according to Marx, consists of infrastructure and superstructure. The former comprises the conditions for existence — material resources and the division of labour; the latter includes all kinds of ideational systems — religion, law and ideology. In all societies, the primary contradiction runs through the infrastructure: between the relations of production (that organise labour and property) and the forces of production (e.g. technology or land). When technological advances render previous relations of production obsolete, class conflict ensues, and the relations of production are changed — e.g. from slavery to feudalism to capitalism. Marx predicted that the capitalist system would itself give way to socialism (ruled by a dictatorship of the proletariat), and finally to classless communism — a utopia, where everything is owned by all.

The theory is so ambitious, and in many respects so ambiguous, that it was bound to raise many problems when confronted with real-world complexities. An example is Marxian class analysis. Marx postulated, roughly, that property-holders and the propertyless constitute discrete classes with particular interests. The objective interest of the working class consists in overthrowing the ruling class through revolution. But the working class is only partly conscious of being exploited, since the true power relations are concealed by an *ideology* that justifies the existing order. Superstructural phenomena such as law, religion or kinship are typically infused a "false consciousness" that passifies the population.

But, asks the anthropologist, is this model applicable to non-Western contexts? How does it fit with Morgan's dictum that kinship is the primary organising principle in primitive societies? Is kinship part of infrastructure? But how can that be, if kinship is an ideology which conceals the infrastructure? Must the entire distinction between infra- and superstructure, the material and the spiritual, be abandoned? In what sense, if any, is ideology "less real" than power? Such issues have attained greater and greater prominence in anthropology, and a significant part of Marx' attraction today lies in his ability generate questions such as these.

Marx himself was not oblivious to these problems. His extensive discussion of value formation is proof enough of this. The value of an object in itself, its concrete *use value*, its correspondence to real human needs, is transformed, under capitalism, into an abstract *exchange value*, its value *as compared to* other objects. "Material" objects are transformed into "spiritual" commodities, and the further this continues, the more abstract, absurd and alienated does the world seem. In such passages, "value" becomes a deeply ambiguous concept, in which power and ideology, the material and the spiritual merge seamlessly. Nevertheless, it remains doubtful whether Marx actually solved the problem he posed for himself. We might note, for example, that his difficulties with bringing materialism and (Hegelian) idealism together are reminiscent of Morgan's problem with the materialist causes of kinship terminology. Only in the 1980s do we see a concerted effort at solving the paradox.

Bastian, Tylor and other Victorians

Morgan and Marx belonged to the first generation of social scientists, who were active in the 1850-70s. But although their contribution overshadows that of most of their contemporaries, they were far from alone:

In the 1860s, while Morgan was still at work on his great volume on kinship, a series of books were published in Europe which in part complemented Morgan, in part raised altogether different questions. In 1860, the prolific German anthropologist Adolf Bastian (1826—1905) published his three-volume *Der Mensch in der Geschichte* ("Man in History", see Koepping 1983). Bastian, originally a medical doctor, was trained as an ethnographer under the influence of the brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, the linguist and the geographer who revolutionised humanistic and social thought in Germany during the first half of the 1800's. Bastian travelled extensively, indeed it has been estimated that he spent twenty years outside of Germany (Koepping 1983: 8). In between his travels he wrote his books, was appointed Professor of Ethnology at the University of Berlin and Director of the Imperial Museum, founded the important Berliner Museum für Völkerkunde in 1868, and

contributed generously to its collections. Like the Humboldt brothers before him and Boas after him (Chapter 3), Bastian continued the German tradition of research on *Volkskultur* that had been inspired by Herder, and sharply criticised the simplistic evolutionist schemes that were on the rise in his day. As the only major nineteenth-century anthropologist, Bastian was an energetic and articulate critic of evolutionism. His view was that all cultures have a common origin, from which they have branched off in various directions — a view later developed to great sophistication by Boas and his students. He was keenly aware of the historical connections between cultures, and thus anticipated a later development in German anthropology, namely diffusionism. Bastian even anticipated structuralism and Jungian psychology, when he argued that all humans share certain elementary patterns of thought: *Elementärgedanken*. It was chiefly in German anthropology, and largely through Bastian's work, that the embryonic principle of cultural relativism, evident in Herder but absent from Enlightenment thought and nineteenth-century Anglo-American anthropology, asserted its presence in anthropology during the nineteenth century. In France, for example, the sociological school of Auguste Comte (1798—1857) was anything but relativist, operating with a rigid system of three stages of social evolution.

The year after the publication of *Der Mensch in der Geschichte*, the Scottish lawyer Henry Maine (1822—88) published *Ancient Law*. This was primarily an inquiry into cultural history based on written sources. Maine tried to demonstrate how changes in legislation reflect wider social changes, and distinguished traditional societies based on *status* from modern societies based on *contract*. In status-based societies, rights are distributed through personal relationships, kinship and inherited rank. Contract society, in contrast, is based on formal, written principles which function independently of actual persons. The distinction between status and contract is still in use today, and many scholars have followed Maine's lead in distinguishing between two "ideal types" — simple and complex societies — and have, in turn, been criticised for oversimplification.

An evolutionist idea that influenced Morgan, Engels and others, but has since been discarded, was the theory of original matriarchy. This was first launched by the Swiss lawyer Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815—87), in *Das Mutterrecht* (1861; "Mother's Right", cf. Bachofen 1968). Bachofen argued in favour of an evolutionary theory that moved from an initial stage of general promiscuity (*Hetarismus*) to the first organised form of social life — matriarchy — where women held political power. Real matriarchies, Bachofen admitted, no longer existed, but their traces were found in matrilineal kinship systems, where descent chiefly follows the mother's line. This idea, which implied that humanity progressed as female leaders were replaced by males, gained many followers, and was almost taken for granted by the next generation of anthropologists. In Britain it was promoted by another lawyer interested in social evolution, John Ferguson McLennan (1827—81). Though no ethnographic evidence exists for this idea, it has remained so resilient that it was felt, as late as among feminist anthropologists in the 1970s, that it needed to be demolished (Bamberger 1974).

Thus, Morgan did not work in an intellectual vacuum. Interest in comparative studies of culture and society was on the rise, particularly in Britain and Germany, and access to reliable empirical data was rapidly improving due to colonialism. Still, the only nineteenth-century anthropologist to rival Morgan in influence was Edward Burnett Tylor (1832—1917).

E.B. Tylor grew up as a Quaker, and was barred by his faith from a university education. But during a convalescence in Cuba, he discovered an interest in archaeology and was invited to take part in an expedition to the Toltec ruins in Mexico. In an era dominated by evolutionism, the step from prehistory to anthropology was short, and Tylor's work as an anthropologist would soon gain him (and the discipline) considerable prestige. In 1896, he was appointed the first British professor of anthropology, at the University of Oxford. In 1912, he was knighted. Tylor was still a young man when he published his first great evolutionist synthesis, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865); and his major work, *Primitive Culture* (1871), followed just a few years later. Tylor here proposed an evolutionary scheme reminiscent of Morgan's in *Ancient Society* (the two books were published in the

same year). He shared Morgan's faith in the primacy of material conditions. Like Morgan, too, his knowledge of cultural variation was vast (Darwin refers to Tylor several times in his work on human evolution from the 1870s). But Tylor did not share Morgan's interest in kinship terminology, and instead developed a theory of *cultural survivals*. Survivals were cultural traits that had lost their original functions in society, but had continued, for no particular reason, to survive. Such traits were of crucial importance to the effort to reconstruct human evolution. Tylor advocated a trait-by-trait comparative method, which allowed him to isolate survivals from the larger social system. Though influential at the time, this method was abandoned by the next generation of anthropologists. Curiously, it reappeared in the mid-1970s, when the sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson, in an intellectual venture comparable to Tylor's, attempted to reconcile cultural variation and Darwinist evolutionism (cf. Ingold 1986).

But Tylor's most significant contribution to modern anthropology is his definition of culture. The definition appears on the first page of *Primitive Culture*, and reads like this:

Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Tylor 1958 [1871]: 1)

On the one hand, culture is thus a general term that cross-cuts evolutionary stages. Where evolution differentiates societies in qualitative terms, culture unites mankind. Tylor, like Bastian, was an explicit proponent of the "psychic unity of humanity". And the similarity to Bastian goes deeper than this. Tylor was well versed in German anthropology and philosophy, and had read both Bastian himself and several of his teachers (cf. Koepping 1983). On the other hand, Tylor equates culture with civilization, a qualitative term. Culture thus, at least implicitly, becomes a matter of degree: Everyone has it, but not in equal amount. This concept of culture starkly contradicts Bastian and the entire Herderian notion of *Volk*. For Herder and his successors, humanity consisted of autonomous, bounded *cultures*. For Tylor and other Victorian evolutionists, humanity consisted of groups that were cultured to various degrees, and distributed on the rungs of a ladder of cultural evolution.

In the years between 1840 and 1880, a whole range of new problems was raised by sociologists and anthropologists. While Marx developed the first grand theory in sociology, comprising modernisation, value formation, power and ideology, and while Darwin formulated the principles of biological evolution, anthropologists were engaged in a dual project. In part they were busy devising grand evolutionary schemes — unilineal in intent and universalistic in pretensions; in part they were documenting the immense range of human socio-cultural variation — and out of the knowledge thus accumulated grew the first low-level theories, pertaining to specific ethnographic domains, such as kinship, and rooted in specific and detailed empirical descriptions.

It was still uncommon for the anthropologist himself to carry out field studies, though Morgan and Bastian were prominent exceptions. Another, less well-known exception was the Russian ethnographer Nicolai Nicolaievich Miklukho-Maklai (1846—1888), who in 1871, forty years before Malinowski, carried out a fifteen-month intensive field study on the New Guinea coast, and laid the groundwork for a rich ethnographic tradition in Russia that is virtually unknown in the West (see Plotkin and Howe 1985). But the vast majority of anthropologists gathered their data through correspondence with colonial administrators, settlers, officers, missionaries and other "whites" living in exotic places. Given the uneven quality of these data and the authors' vast theoretical ambitions, such studies were almost always full of the kind of speculation that Radcliffe-Brown (Chapter 3) would later dismiss as *conjectural history*. But in spite of these shortcomings, the learned books of the Victorians were theoretically focused and empirically grounded to an extent that had never before been seen.

The importance of kinship in this phase of the discipline's evolution, cannot be overstated. Kinship terminology was a limited empirical field. Nevertheless, mapping and understanding it was a humbling experience. The closer one looked at these strangely formal systems, the more complex they seemed. True, to the first practitioners of kinship studies, mostly lawyers by profession, the task seemed fairly simple. They looked for a "legal system" that would regulate behaviour in primitive societies, and kinship was the obvious candidate — an

empirical system of formalised, verbalised norms. At the end of the century, it was widely held that kinship was a kind of anthropologist's Rosetta Stone, that allowed primitive customs to be understood and translated into rational terms.

The Golden Bough and the Torres expedition

For a couple of decades after the prolific 1860s and '70s, little of importance was published in anthropology. In sociology too, there seems to have been a dearth — a notable exception being Ferdinand Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887; *Community and Society*, 1963), which proposed a dichotomy of the traditional and modern that was similar to McLennan's, but with a less judicial accent. In the course of these years a new generation appeared. Many of the leading figures discussed so far, including Marx, Morgan, Bachofen and Maine, were dead. In anthropology, we see the first institutionalisation of the discipline in Britain, Germany, France and the USA. Independent national traditions were starting to crystallise, and separate sets of issues were being raised in each of the four countries. The Germans followed the lead of Bastian and the comparative linguists, whose success in untangling the history of the Indo-European languages was almost as sensational, in its time, as Darwin's evolutionism. A research programme for the study of human prehistory was established that mimicked the spread and movement of languages in much the same way as evolutionism mimicked biology. This programme, *diffusionism*, studied the origin and dissemination of cultural traits. The challenge posed by these concrete historians to the abstract histories of evolutionism, made diffusionism a truly radical innovation around the turn of the century. In the USA and Britain, evolutionism remained dominant, but scholars were becoming increasingly specialised, focusing on particular subfields, such as kinship, religion, magic or law. In France, meanwhile, a unique blend of sociology and anthropology was under way. Each of these research programmes, however, was seriously hampered by a lack of accurate and detailed data. This gap had become increasingly evident throughout the nineteenth century, and there was by now a near universal consensus in the field that more and better data are needed. As early as in 1857, British anthropologists published the first edition of what was

to become *the* authoritative work on field methods for nearly a century — *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, which was re-issued in four revised, and ever more detailed, editions. But the methodological breakthrough that everyone was waiting for did not arrive before a radically new conception of anthropological fieldwork was established.

The last great Victorian evolutionist was James George Frazer (1854—1941), a student of Tylor who was celebrated far beyond anthropological circles, for his masterpiece *The Golden Bough*, which was first published as a two-volume set in 1890, and later expanded to fill twelve gigantic tomes. *The Golden Bough* is a vast, comparative investigation of the history of myth, religion and other "exotic beliefs", with examples drawn from all over the world. Like so many of the evolutionists, Frazer believed in a three-step model of cultural evolution: a "magical" stage is replaced by a "religious" stage, which gives way to a "scientific" stage. This general scheme can be traced through Comte all the way back to Vico. Though Frazer clearly considered magical rites irrational, and assumed that "primitives" based their lives on a completely mistaken understanding of nature, his main concern was to identify patterns and universal traits in mythical thought. But with a few notable exceptions (Lévi-Strauss being one of them), modern anthropologists rarely refer to Frazer as anything but an historical figure. But his influence was greatest outside of anthropology; two of his warmest admirers were the poet T. S. Eliot and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Yet Frazer's fascinating and ponderous work was never followed up by later research. It stands alone, a majestic monument to the insecure empirical basis of Victorian evolutionism.

Hindsight has fared better with another British turn-of-the-century enterprise, less noticed at the time and far less well known outside anthropology, namely the Torres Expedition, organised from the University of Cambridge in 1898 to the Torres Straits, between Australia and New Guinea. The expedition was to collect detailed data about the traditional population of the islands in the area, and included several anthropologists — though all were originally trained in other disciplines, since academic training in anthropology were still very rare. Alfred C. Haddon (1855—1940) was originally a zoologist, William H. R. Rivers

(1864—1922) a psychologist, and Charles G. Seligman (1873—1940) a medical doctor. In contrast to the individualist ideal of later British fieldwork, the Torres expedition was a collective effort where scholars from various disciplines explored different aspects of the local culture. Nevertheless, due to high quality and the impressive volume of the data they collected, many have seen these anthropologists as the first true fieldworkers. "Through their work," writes one commentator, "British social anthropology was born" (Hynes 1999).

Haddon, a colleague of Frazer's at the University of Cambridge, had planned the Torres expedition as an "ideal" field project, where the participants would cover all aspects of native life: ethnography, psychology, linguistics, physical anthropology and musicology. He himself would take care of sociology and folklore, as well as material culture. For Seligman, who in later years became a central figure at the influential anthropology department at the London School of Economics, the expedition was the beginning of a career which, after work in Melanesia and Sri Lanka, would culminate in several major field studies in the Sudan. He thus contributed decisively to moving the focus of British anthropology from the Pacific islands (where it remained until well into the 1920s) to Africa (which would soon become an ethnographic gold mine). Seligman's major work from the Sudan, co-authored with his wife Brenda Seligman (Seligman and Seligman 1932), is still regarded as a classic in its field.

Rivers was the most unusual member of the expedition. Until his early death in 1922, he was a professor at the University of Oxford, where he invested much effort in developing a psychological anthropology, a project that was too far ahead of its time to succeed. Towards the end of his life, Rivers came under the influence of Sigmund Freud's psychology, an impulse he transmitted to his student Bronislaw Malinowski. During the Torres expedition, Rivers concentrated particularly on the mental abilities of the natives, especially their use of the senses. In 1908, he published a descriptive monograph, *The Toda*, based on work among a tribe in South India; and in 1914 *The History of Melanesian Society*, a comprehensive work which outlined the immense cultural variation of Melanesia and explained it as a result of repeated waves of migration, an hypothesis which is still accepted, with due modifications, among

present-day archaeologists. With this work, Rivers stated to move away from evolutionism, towards the new school of diffusionism, which was the subject of his last works.

Diffusionism

Diffusionists studied the geographical distribution and migration of cultural traits, and posited that cultures were patchworks of traits with various origins and histories. All parts of a culture are therefore not necessarily linked into a larger wholes. In contrast, most evolutionists held that societies were coherent, functional systems. True, evolutionists also recognised the existence of isolated, non-functional cultural traits (Tylor's *survivals*), and in practice, these received a disproportionate amount of analytical attention (considering that they were atypical), since they were the key to reconstructing the social forms of the past. But when the evolutionist perspective collapsed, the idea of societies as coherent wholes was also discredited (though it remained strong in sociology, and would soon reappeared with renewed force in British social anthropology). Now *all* cultural traits were potential "survivals". Diffusionists still used them to reconstruct the past, but "the past" was no longer a unilineal movement through well-defined stages. Cultural history was a fragmented story of cultural encounters, migrations and influences, each instance of which was unique. In the early decades of the twentieth century, diffusionism was an attractive alternative to evolutionism, because of it had greater respect for the facts on the ground and more modest theoretical pretensions.

The fact that technology and ideas could travel was not a new discovery. In the eighteenth century, German philologists had shown that European and North Indian languages had shared origins. Archaeologists had discovered that pottery and other artefacts had spread from cultural centres to peripheries. Europeans were conscious of the fact that the dominant religion of their own continent had Middle Eastern origins. What was new about anthropological diffusionism was its systematic comparative effort and its emphasis on detailed empirical knowledge. Like Rivers, many diffusionists worked in limited regions, where it

was possible to demonstrate convincingly that specific cultural traits had an identifiable history.

Diffusionism was chiefly a Germanic specialisation, with centres in the great museum cities of Berlin and Vienna. Apart from Rivers, it had little direct influence on British and French anthropology (but as we shall see, it had important repercussions in the USA). Like their colleagues elsewhere, the German anthropologists of the nineteenth century tended to subscribe to some kind of evolutionist framework. But the influence from Herder, with its emphasis on the unique and local, along with the relativism we have noted in Bastian's work, counteracted this tendency, and when evolutionism was challenged at the turn of the century, this tradition again came to the fore. Scholars like Friedrich Ratzel (1844—1904), Fritz Graebner (1877—1936), Leo Frobenius (1873—1938) and Wilhelm Schmidt (1869—1954) followed the lead of Herder (and Bastian), emphasising the uniqueness of each people's cultural heritage. They argued that cultural evolution was not unilineal, and that there was no simple determinism between, say, technological complexity and complexity in other areas. A people with a simple technology, might perfectly well have a highly sophisticated religious system.

The diffusionists aimed towards a comprehensive survey of the spread of cultural traits from the earliest times until today. They developed complex (sometimes, it must be said, rather arcane) classifications of "culture circles" (*Kulturkreise*) and surveyed their possible dissemination from an original centre. In certain cases, as in Graebner's studies from Oceania, they could identify as many as seven historically discrete sediments or *Kulturkreise* in each society.

It is worth noting that diffusionism did not shed its evolutionist background overnight. Most diffusionists still believed that social change generally led to progress and increased "sophistication". What they objected to in Victorian evolutionism was its unilineal and deterministic character; the idea, found in Tylor and others, that all societies must pass through certain stages that were more or less the same all over the world. The diffusionist world-view was less tidy than this, and more sensitive to local variation.

As we shall see in the next chapter, both evolutionism and diffusionism were thoroughly thrashed by the following generations of social and cultural anthropologists. But diffusionist research was often far more sophisticated than later anthropologists were willing to admit, and in the German language area, particularly in Austria, the *Kulturkreise* programme remained in vigour until the 1950s.

Diffusionism was also important for East European anthropologists, not least for the large group of Russian anthropologists who followed the lead of Miklukho-Maklay. Three prominent names were Vladimir Ilich Jochelson (1855—1937), Vladimir Germanovich Bogoraz (1865—1936) and Lev Yacovlevich Shternberg (1861—1927), all of whom were exiled to Eastern Siberia by the Czar and used the opportunity to carry out long-term fieldwork among the indigenous peoples of the region. Around the turn of the century, they participated in a major Russo-American expedition to the indigenous peoples around the Bering Straits, organised by a German-American by the name of Franz Boas. These scholars were diffusionist in their orientation, and indeed diffusionism is even today a respectable theory in Russia, with long traditions and high analytical and methodological standards. In the West, diffusionism survives in the tradition of *imperialism studies* that ultimately stems from Marx and Lenin, but which has been resurrected under such headings as "dependency studies", "global system studies", and, most recently, "globalisation studies" (see Chapters 7 and 9). The Marxian influence here adds power to the diffusionists' Herderian brew, with a more potent and violent result.

The new sociology

The new generations of anthropologists, who will be introduced in the following chapters, had good reason to distance themselves from evolutionism and diffusionism. They were convinced that they had discovered a theoretical alternative with greater potential than any previous theory of socio-cultural variation. British (and to a lesser extent, American) anthropologists had discovered Continental sociology.

What is called "classical sociology" in textbooks and undergraduate courses, usually refers to the oeuvre of a handful of (mostly German or French) theorists, who produced most of their work between the 1850's and the First World War. The leading lights of the first wave were Marx, Comte and Spencer, though the latter two are nearly forgotten today. The second generation included Ferdinand Tönnies (1855—1936), Emile Durkheim (1858—1917), Georg Simmel (1858—1918) and Max Weber (1864—1920). Like Marx, all of these authors are still read for the intrinsic interest of their work (rather than as expressions of an historical *Zeitgeist*). Tönnies explored the simple/complex society dichotomy in sociology, adding complexity and nuance to the simple schemes that had gone before him; Simmel (who is experiencing a renaissance today) is admired for his studies of modernity, the city and money. Both Durkheim and Weber are still considered important enough to generate frequent book-length commentaries. But of all the classical sociologists, Durkheim has been most significant for anthropology, in part because he himself was concerned with many anthropological themes, in part because of his direct and immediate influence on British and French anthropology. In the USA, "classical sociology" only made itself felt many years later, and was never as strong as in Europe. The main influence here was rather from Bastian and the *Völkerkunde* school, which was brought into American anthropology by its (German) founding father, Franz Boas. The leading American anthropologists of the early twentieth century were therefore oriented towards cultural history, linguistics and even psychology rather than sociology.

Durkheim

Like Marx, Durkheim grew up in a Jewish family (in a small town near Strasbourg), and his parents wanted him to become a rabbi. He did so well in school, however, that he was admitted to the prestigious *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, which secured a later academic career. During his education he had lost his religious faith, and become part of a dynamic and critical intellectual milieu. Throughout his life, Durkheim was deeply concerned with moral issues, and he was an committed promoter of social and educational

reforms. In 1887, he was appointed lecturer in pedagogy and sociology at the University of Bordeaux, becoming the first French social scientist to hold an academic post. During this period, which lasted until his move to Paris in 1902, Durkheim wrote two of his most important works, *De la division du travail social* (1893; *The Division of Labour in Society*, 1964) and *Le suicide* (1897, *Suicide*, 1951). He also founded the influential journal *L'Année Sociologique*, which he continued to edit after moving to Paris. As professor at Sorbonne from 1906 till his death in 1917, Durkheim's influence on later French sociology and anthropology was immense. With his nephew and intellectual successor Marcel Mauss, he wrote extensively on non-European peoples; a notable work in this regard is *Classification Primitive* (1900; *Primitive Classification*, 1963), a study of the social origins of knowledge systems, which draws on ethnographic data, particularly from Australia. This book, which posits an intrinsic connection between classification and social structure, is still a point of reference for anthropological studies of classification.

Unlike both diffusionists and evolutionists, Durkheim was not particularly interested in origins. He was concerned with *synchronic* rather than *diachronic* explanations. Like the diffusionists, but unlike the evolutionists, he was deeply committed to basing his anthropology on observable, often quantifiable data. Unlike the diffusionists, however, he was convinced that societies were logical, integrated systems, in which all parts were dependent on each other and worked together to maintain the whole. In this, he approached the evolutionists, who, like him, drew analogies between the functional systems of the body and society. Indeed, Durkheim often described society as a *social organism*. Like Tönnies and Maine, but unlike Marx and Morgan, Durkheim subscribed to a dichotomous division of societal types — dropping all talk of "stages" and "evolution", he juxtaposed traditional and modern societies without postulating that the former would ever evolve into the latter. Primitive societies were neither "survivals" from a dim past nor "steps" towards progress, but social organisms that deserved to be studied on their own terms. Finally, unlike Bastian and the *Völkerkunde* school, Durkheim was concerned, not with culture, but with society, not with symbols and myths, but with organisations and institutions.

The book on the division of labour delves into the difference between simple and complex social organisations. In Durkheim's view, the former are based on *mechanical solidarity*. People support the existing social order and each other because they share the same everyday life, carry out the same tasks and perceive each other as similar. In complex societies, in contrast, *organic solidarity* prevails. Here, society and mutual commitment are maintained by peoples' perception of each other as different, with *complementary* roles. Each carries out a different task that contributes to the whole. Durkheim adds that the two forms of solidarity must be understood as general principles of social integration rather than societal types. Most societies have elements of both. Moreover, the distinction does more than posit a contrast between "ourselves" and "the other". Both Durkheim and many of his successors, right up to Louis Dumont (see Chapter 6), were intrigued by the complexities of traditional Indian society, and maintained that its caste system expressed an advanced form of organic complexity.

Durkheim's last, and perhaps greatest work, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1915; *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1995) was published just two years before his death. Here, he attempts to grasp the meaning of "solidarity" itself, of the very force that keeps society together. Solidarity, Durkheim argues, arises from *collective representations* — then as now a controversial term. These are symbolic "images" or "models" of social life that are shared by a group. Such "images" develop through interpersonal relationships, but attain a supra-individual, objective character. They make up an all-embracing, virtual, "socially constructed" reality that echoes Kant and Hegel, and which to the people who live in the society appear just as real as material world. But they are not objective images of this world. They are moral entities, with power over the emotions. Religion becomes an important object of inquiry for Durkheim, because it is here, more than anywhere else, that the emotional attachment of individuals to collective representations is established and strengthened. This attachment is primarily formed in *ritual*, in which religion is expressed through physical interaction and solidarity becomes a direct, bodily experience. Ritual hedges itself off from *profane* daily life, drawing a protective magic circle around its own, forbidden, *sacred* domain. This demarcation allows

the experience of ritual to be intensified until an almost mystical union is achieved. Bringing the memory of this experience back into everyday life, we remember how the world truly is.

Religion and ritual had long attracted the interest of anthropologists, who had documented it in a wide range of empirical forms. The problem of understanding social integration in stateless societies had been an important (though often implicit) concern in evolutionism. And bewilderment at the exotic symbols and customs of "the others" was the point of departure of all anthropological inquiry. Now Durkheim seemed to offer an analytical tool that would bring all these interests together. "The exotic" could be understood as an integrated system of collective representations, whose function was to create social solidarity. And religion, the most mystifyingly "exotic" phenomenon of all, turned out to be the rational dynamo driving this entire process.

When British anthropologists embraced Durkheim early in the twentieth century (Chapter 3), they found countless applications for his theory, in the study of religion, legal systems and — not least — kinship. Indeed, Durkheim is therefore often described as the founder of structural-functionalism, though properly this was a purely British school, developed by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. But Durkheim and the "British School" agreed that social phenomena and their attendant collective representations were objectively existing entities. In Durkheim's *Règles de la méthode sociologique* (1895; *Rules of Sociological Method*, 1976), he argues that social phenomena should be studied "as things" (*comme des choses*) — and describes individuals more as the products of society than as its producers. His contemporary, Max Weber, the last great, classical sociologist with a place in the anthropological pantheon, presents a contrast in more than one way.

Weber

Max Weber grew up in a prosperous and authoritarian Prussian family, was educated at the universities of Berlin, Heidelberg and Göttingen, and rose rapidly in the German academic world. He was appointed professor at age 31 (in 1895),

and in the course of a few years, published learned works about topics as diverse as the fall of the Roman Empire and agricultural problems in contemporary eastern Germany. From his mother, who was raised in a strict, Calvinist home, he had inherited ideals of ascetism and strict work discipline, which he put into practice in his academic life. In 1898, after only three active years, he suffered a mental breakdown, and was able to resume work only after another five years had passed. Immediately after his recovery, Weber wrote the book that many consider his finest: *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" der Kapitalismus* (1904—05; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1976). This is a work of cultural and economic history which explores the roots of European modernity. Weber argues that the Calvinists (and other puritan Christians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) formulated a view of life that corresponded closely to the image of the perfect entrepreneur. The Calvinists believed that human life was predestined, that a few were singled by God for salvation, but it was impossible for human beings to comprehend who or why this should be. The God of Calvin was cold and stern. He demanded obedience, but would not explain his reasons. According to Weber (and we sense that he may here be speaking from personal experience), this ambiguity, coupled to the merciless doctrine, created an unbearable tension in the life of Calvinists. Looking for solutions, it occurred to them that hard work coupled with a frugal lifestyle could only bring them closer to God's grace. They were enjoined to produce results, but forbidden to taste the fruits of their labour. Instead, they reinvested them in their enterprise, generating a spiral of increasing profits to the glory of God.

Weber's point is not necessarily that Calvinism was the *cause* of capitalism. There were many reasons why capitalism arose, and reinvestment was by no means an invention of Calvin's. The point was rather that Calvinism (and in a broader sense, protestantism as a whole) formulated an explicit ideology that justified and even glorified the capitalist ethic.

In Weber's Germany the humanities or, literally, "spiritual sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*), had great prestige, and hermeneutics was considered a natural component of a cultured education. And it was hermeneutics, the science

of understanding and interpreting the viewpoint of an alien culture, person or text, that inspired Weber to search for the *motivations* behind actions, for how a certain way of acting could make sense to individuals. Weber is, in this perspective, an early representative of what will later be called *methodological individualism*. It is not the system or the whole that interests him, but the fact that when individuals *do* things, they have *reasons* for doing it. Weber's sociology is therefore associated with the German word *Verstehen* (understanding). It is an "understanding" and "empathic" sociology, which seeks to "put itself in the other's shoes", by grasping her motives, the choices she confronts and the responses that would be natural for her, given the concrete circumstances of her life. *Verstehen*, in other words, implies a focus on what the world means for individuals, and what kind of meaning it has.

What Weber himself sought to understand, however, was above all, power. Power was a major theme in Marx also (in Durkheim it plays a minor role), but the two men gave the word very different meanings. Marx had described power as based on control of the means of production, and therefore associated with property. Power is contested, overthrown, and society is changed — so far Marx and Weber agreed perfectly. But according to Marx, change does not arise from individuals pursuing values and striving for goals, but from slow-moving structural conflicts in the hidden depths of the social system. Marx saw power as an anonymous force, concealing its true face behind the veil of ideology. Weber focused on the effects of individual strategies to achieve power

Like his contemporaries, the diffusionists, Weber was opposed to abstract, "experience distant" theoretical schemes. What mattered was the particular, the historical coincidence. Weber saw nothing unreasonable in supposing that power and property were often linked, but he declined to generalise further. Power, as he defines it, is the ability to get someone to do something that he would not otherwise have done. *Legitimate power* (or *authority*) is power based on a minimum of physical coercion and violence, that has been accepted as a legal, moral, natural or god-given fact of life by a populace who has been taught to believe that this is so. In his second great work, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (published posthumously in 1922; *Economy and Society*, 1968),

Weber goes on to describe three *ideal types* of legitimate power. The "ideal type" is another important Weberian neologism: It refers to simplified models that may be applied to the real world, to reveal specific aspects of its functioning — thus, the "ideal types" themselves have no empirical reality. Weber's three ideal types of legitimate power may briefly be described as follows: *Traditional authority* is power legitimised by ritual and kinship. *Bureaucratic authority* is power legitimised through formalised administration. *Charismatic authority* is the power of the prophet or the revolutionary to "sway the masses". The three types, Weber emphasises, may well coexist within a single society. Now, the first two types look suspiciously similar to the primitive/modern dichotomies proposed by Main, Tönnies or Durkheim. But the third type is an innovation. It bears witness to the fact that Weber, towards the end of his life, had read Nietzsche and Freud, two contemporary thinkers from the German language area, who argued the primacy of the individual with great force. There is a kind of power, Weber is telling us, that unpredictable and individual, that is based on the seductive abilities of the exceptional individual, rather than on property (Marx) or stable norms (Durkheim).

Thus, for Weber society was a more individual and less collective endeavour than for Marx or Durkheim. Society is not, as in Durkheim, a moral order that is given once and for all. Neither is it, as in Marx, a product of ponderous collective forces that individuals can neither understand nor influence. It is an ad hoc order, that is generated when different people with different interests and values meet, quarrel, and try (ultimately by force) to convince one another and arrive at some kind of agreement. Thus, Weber sees competition and conflict as potential sources of constructive change. Here he is in agreement with Marx, and in opposition to Durkheim, who assumed that change and disaster were practically synonymous. But in Weber, conflicts are not, as in Marx, vast and impersonal, but enacted by individuals. Thus, while Marx and Durkheim each developed a distinct brand of *methodological collectivism*, which studies society primarily as an integrated whole — Weber announced a *methodological individualism* that accepted that societies could be confusing, inconsistent, and unpredictable.

The entrance of Weber's legacy into anthropology was less direct than that of Durkheim, who himself was instrumental in founding modern French anthropology. Although he quickly became a key figure in international sociology, Weber's impact on anthropology came largely after the Second World War. It is a testimony to his great breadth as a theorist that otherwise very different anthropologists, such as hermeneutician Clifford Geertz and methodological individualist Fredrik Barth, are both deeply indebted to Weber, but for different reasons.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Continental sociologists were engaged in a lively discourse on issues of social theory, attaining levels of sophistication that anthropologists could not pretend to. In our own day, Marx, Durkheim and Weber are far more frequently cited by anthropologists than Morgan, Bastian or Tylor, who would soon be effectively discredited by the followers of Durkheim. Soon, now, the impact of Durkheim would shake anthropology deeply, while Weber and Marx still lurk in the scenes, only appearing, as major influences after the Second World War.

Still, the heritage of nineteenth-century anthropology is richer than often supposed. Evolutionism never disappeared completely, and has had several influential twentieth-century proponents. Diffusionism, is, as we have hinted above, still a force to be reckoned with. Many concepts have survived, and are still avidly used: Maine's distinction between contract and status, Tylor's definition of culture, Bastian's incipient cultural are all "survivals" (to use a native term) of Victorian anthropology. It is nevertheless only with the developments described in the next chapter that social and cultural anthropology appears on the stage, as we know it today.