

DME 946 RELIGIOUS PRESUPPOTIONS

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AMERICAN HISTORICISM - ALFRED LOUIS KROEBER

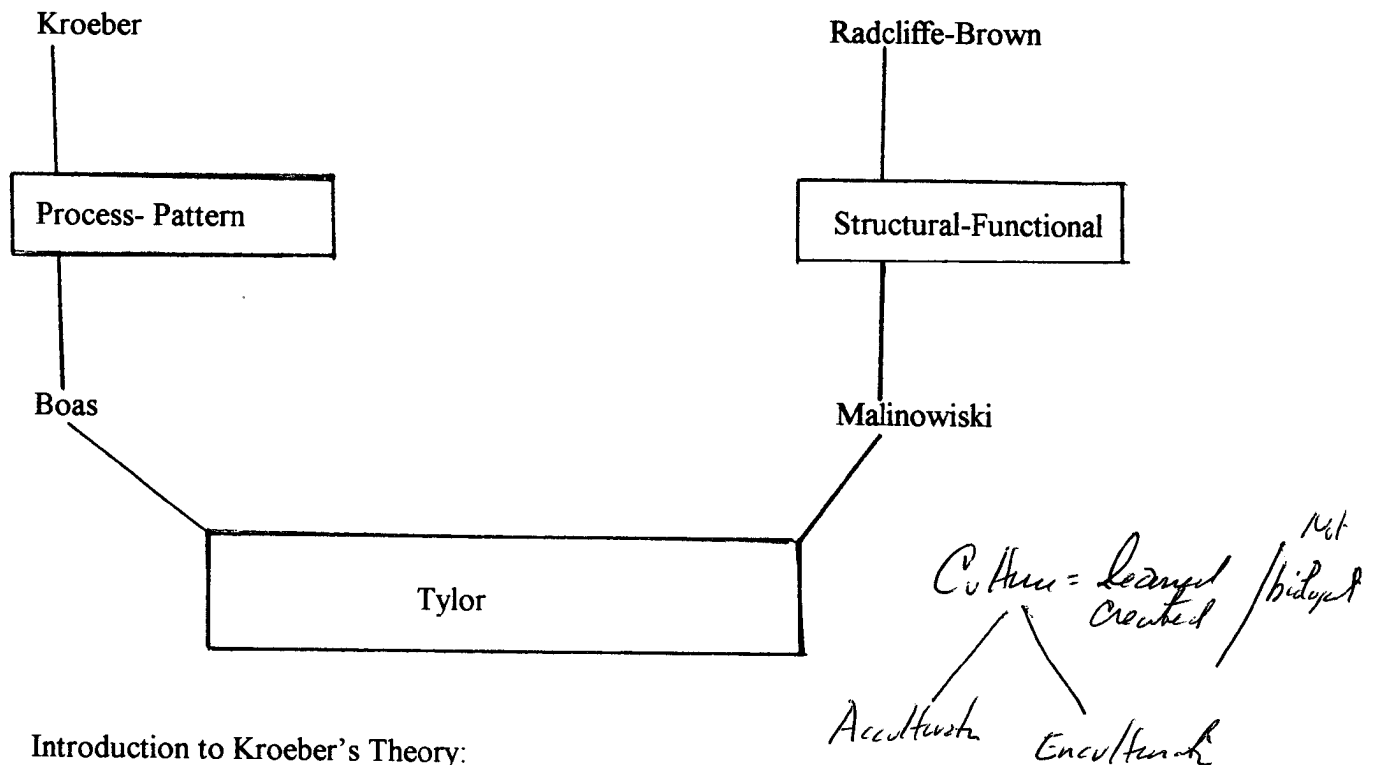
by

Mario A. da Silva

Alfred L. Kroeber: 1876 - 1960. One of Boas' student, he received in 1902 the first PH.D in Anthropology by Columbia University.

His most influential writing = Anthropology: Race, Language, Culture, Psychology and Prehistory(1923).

Anthropological Theories of Culture  
from 1900 to 1950



Introduction to Kroeber's Theory:

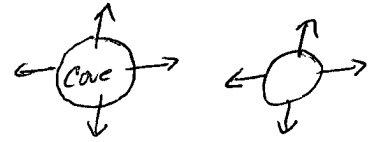
CULTURE

is that which the human species has and other social species lack. This would include speech, knowledge, beliefs, customs, arts and technologies, ideals and rules... what we learn from other man, from our elders or the past, plus what we may add to it.(p. 61)

# Battle over by words:

C. Hum: - is pattern { traits  
clusters  
patterns }

language

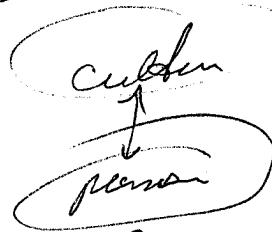


- cumulative, assimilation

Unipend - variation  
categories

- change - open.

- superorganic - life of its own.



- levels

- shared = interpersonal relations possible

- boundaries ?

## The Contributions of Sir Edward E. Evans-Pritchard

- I. EEEP called Durkheim's influence profound and beneficial; the greatest figure in modern sociology
  - A. Religion is a social, an objective, fact
    1. Transmitted from one generation to another
    2. In a closed society it is general
    3. Obligatory (1966, 54)
  - B. "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden--beliefs and practices which unite, into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim 1915)
  - C. Real significance of rites is, firstly, that they draw clansmen together, and secondly, that the collective enactment of the rites on these occasions of concentration renews in them a feeling of solidarity"
  - D. "For Freud God is the father, for Durkheim God is society" (Evans-Pritchard 1966, 63).
  - E. But, it is a just-so story.
    1. To prove it, would have to show that different conceptions of God arise in different societies
    2. Radcliffe-Brown said that since religion maintains the social order, it must vary in form with the types of social structure (Evans-Pritchard 1966, 75)
    3. These theories may be true, but they may be false (Evans-Pritchard 1966, 76)
- II. EEEP on psychological anthropology (1962b, 44ff)
  - A. Social anthropology and psychology study different kinds of phenomena--psychical and social systems.
    1. "What the one studies cannot therefore be understood in terms of conclusions reached by the other"
    2. Illustrates with a courtroom scene (45-46)
      - a. Social anthropologist concerned with the roles and relations
      - b. Psychologist with feelings and attitudes
    3. The two disciplines are of great value to each other if they stick within their own disciplines
  - B. Yet EEEP not immune from the psychological intruding on his study
- III. Two chief postulates of functionalism (1962b, 54ff)
  - A. Radcliffe-Brown, following Durkheim, defines function of a social institution as "the correspondence between the social institution and the necessary conditions of existence of the social organism" (1962b, 54)
    1. Function is "the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part. The function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the total social life as the functioning of the total social system" (Radcliffe-Brown 1935)
    2. A social system is a functional unity, an organism

Religion: a social fact, transmitted from generation to generation, is obligatory.

Rites - ~~recreate~~ society  
- collective action → solidarity

Museu  
- Longueira, Belle Travaux.

E.P.

1. Goes beyond seeing primitive relig./magic as primitive - sees their own logic. → (Not useful here)
2. ~~analyze~~ <sup>analyze</sup> history & structure.  
- psy. development  
- beliefs
3. Reject view of hum as automatons.
4. ~~analyze~~ <sup>analyze</sup> ~~psy. development~~.  
4. Culture is based on a ~~real~~ moral order. Symbolic.
5. 1

rather than an aggregate. Social life of a community is the functioning of its structure (1962b, 54).

3. These views an important aid in field research (1962b, 55)--could not just atomistically get bits and pieces from any and all reports second-hand as earlier anthropologists had done--must be studied in relation to the culture
  4. The modern anthropologist compares systems of relations, not customs (1962b, 57).
- B. Second postulate: "that social systems are natural systems which can be reduced to sociological laws, with the corollary that the history of them has no scientific relevance" (1962b, 57)
1. "Doctrinaire positivism at its worst"(1962b, 57)
  2. Nothing remotely resembling natural laws has been found, rather, vague generalizations of little use (1962b, 57)
- C. British functionalists, unlike the American historical school, say it is "not the task of social anthropologists to investigate the history of the societies they study, and furthermore that a knowledge of their history does not help us to understand the functioning of their institutions" (1962b, 59). This follows from the view that societies are natural systems to be studied.
- D. EEEP did not accept the functionalist position regarding history (1962b, 59) and knowledge of the past gives fuller understanding of the present (1962b, 60).
- E. History alone provides a satisfactory experimental situation to test hypotheses (1962b, 60)
- IV. His field methodology defines the task not in terms of natural science but in terms of "moral, or symbolic, systems and not as natural systems, that it is less interested in process than in design, and that it therefore seeks patterns not laws, demonstrates consistency and not necessary relations between social activities, and interprets rather than explains. These are conceptual and not merely verbal differences" (1962b, 62).
- V. Search for laws are like trying to make man an automaton, a search for how to plan and control. But societies should be seen as systems only "because social life must have a pattern or some kind, inasmuch as man, being a reasonable creature, has to live in a world in which his relations with those around him are ordered and intelligible" (1962b, 154).
- VI. Attitude toward religion
- A. "All the leading sociologists and anthropologists contemporaneous with, or since, Frazer were agnostics and positivists. . . . Almost all the leading anthropologists of my own generation would, I believe, hold that religious faith is total illusion, a curious

1. *Larger life*
2. *Structural level*

- phenomenon soon to become extinct and to be explained in such terms as 'compensaton' and 'projection' or by some sociologicistic interpretation on the lines of maintenance of social solidarity" (1962b, 162)
- B. The anthropologist does not have to have a religion of his own. He cannot know (emphasis his) whether the spiritual beings have existence or not. Must use a phenomenological method, not theological but most anthro writers took a negative theological position
  - C. Value of studying primitive religion is that they are independent, unlike "historical religions" thus provide more useful data (1966, 2)
    - 1. To understand revealed religion need to understand primitive "for nothing could have been revealed about anything if men had not already had an idea about that thing" (1966, 2)
    - 2. Early scholars didn't get anywhere near a primitive tribe (1966, 6) and too much emphasis on the occasional exotic rites rather than the humdrum that occupies most of life (1966, 8)
  - D. Missioly "a fascinating field of research" (1966, 14)

#### VII. Missiological implications

- A. Luzbetak offers several missiological implications:
  - 1. Functional approach to the study of culture
  - 2. Positioning workers (socially) and prediction of problems
  - 3. Explanation where common sense rules don't apply
  - 4. Pastoral and counseling problems: marriage, death
- B. Role of fieldwork
- C. Role of history
- D. Reasonableness of and phenomenology of religion
- E. Translation and contextualization
- F. Isolated social systems

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## MARXISM AND ANTHROPOLOGY

RUTH

**The Man:** Karl Marx's father converted to Lutheranism for social convenience before Karl was born. Jewish - family of rabbis. During University days, influenced by Hegel, Feurbach; met Engels; began writing; banished because of writings to England via France at around age 31. Lived most of life in England, in poverty - supported by gifts from Engels and pawning the family heirlooms.

**Background for his theories:** Against Judeo-Christian background, his theories developed out of German Ideology, French Socialism and British Economic theory. Tried to reconcile the difference between what is and what should be - rejected idealism and developed his theories around dialectical materialism.

According to Hegel, God (reason?) is revealed in history in a dialectical process. This process is a way of explaining the pattern of social change (Malefijt, 106).

"When an entity or event - the thesis - appeared, it was countered by the emergence of its opposite, the antithesis. The conflict between the two resolved itself in a synthesis which, taking some elements of both thesis and antithesis, "elevates" both, bringing about a new and higher event. In turn, synthesis becomes thesis, is negated again by its antithesis, resolving again in a new synthesis. The direction of history was determined by these movements and progress spiraled upward" (Malefijt, 106).

**Historical materialism:** Hegel saw reason (idea) and philosophy as the prime mover of history; Marx saw the dialectic process to include universe, nature, man and society; Historical materialism applies to the history of man and society - human history moves according to the dialectic process. For Marx, the changes were to be found in society itself, in concrete social and economic institutions (Malefijt, 107). Social changes could only be understood in social facts, not by philosophical speculation. What can be developed as history depends on the social conditions and material available as man encounters circumstances of his situation. Human life only understood as it is situated in a natural and historical context.

Marx developed his methods by concentrating on social activities that could be reduced to economic processes, especially material production.

Marx proposed different stages in history: **primitive communism** (gradually, surplus commodities produced which gave rise to private ownership which arose as antithesis) **feudalism**, (power centered in landlords who owned means of production - manufactories arose as antithesis) and **Capitalism** - he expected communism to be the final stage after the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie work together to bring about a revolution.

He used economics as the basis to study the dialectical process of these stages of history. Political and intellectual history of any era must be explained in terms of the modes of production and exchange, and the social organization which grows out of this. All history has

Religion = ideology.  
Science = truth.

been the history of class struggles: rulers and ruled, oppressors and oppressed; exploiters and exploited - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Dekoster, 11-13).

**The sociological analysis involves:** (1) interaction of men working together in the social task of production indirectly gives birth to certain products - concepts, ideas, values and institutions (leads to reproduction of their circumstances); (2) the development of exploitation, the same products are produced but these products are geared to operating the system of exploitation - an ideology is developed (Morris 38).

**Surplus Value:** The idea behind capitalism and exploitation - based on the theory of surplus value. Only human labor creates value; only necessary human labor creates real value; If more than is needed is produced, it creates a surplus in the marketplace - the bourgeoisie owners of the factory take the surplus value created for their profit.

Marx's analysis is critical, structural and materialistic: One has to go behind the surface phenomena to look for real meaning and the essence of what seems to be on the surface. Appearance- essence and superstructure-base are examined critically; phenomenological analysis - the essence of the phenomena relates to economic base (productive relationships); politics, law and religion - epiphenomena - end result is ideology (Morris, 39).

**Religion:** "the most basic form of alienation" and a form of ideology. It serves as moral sanction, illusion, consolation and justification for unjust conditions and to cloud reality (Morris, 42). Religion is not autonomous - cannot be understood apart from the cultural and historical situation in which it exists. A secondary phenomenon - dependent on socio-economic circumstances. If these are changed, religion will disappear - no longer needed.

**Alienation:** Hegel's concept of alienation was "Man is god in his state of self-alienation and return to himself." Feurbach saw this in reverse - man in his religious life is alienated from himself - god is man in his state of alienation. God did not make man but man made god.

Marx's concept of religion and alienation involved every realm of life. Marx distinguished men from animals on the basis of their productive activities - man's essential nature is productive life. It is in free conscious productive activities that man can control the balance between himself and nature. If this is hindered - his life will take on a sense of alienation. Religious alienation is a social product (Abraham, 146-48).

Alienation affects man three ways: Alienation from object of his production, of labor from the act of production and alienation of man from man, (Abraham, 148). When a man makes an object,

"he gives something of his skill, his mind, his very self to the task. Something of the workman is in the object he has made. When, therefore, the owner takes that object as surplus value, he robs the workman of his very self. He alienates a part of the workman's being." (Dekoster, 32)

How d



One class robs another of its very being - though not understood in this way - produces underlying bitterness and hatred - which can be used to bring about revolution.

Each aspect of alienation leads into the next. First from the object (part of his self) and because of this, alienation in the activity of work itself - no longer free self-productivity, and this reduces him to an animal - no longer different.

Religion then is "projection of human needs and desires into the realm of the fantastic. Religious alienation is thus the understandable reflection of the false consciousness inherent in this social system." Religion relieves the distress that people express in religion. The distress is real - but religion - being an illusion - prevents them from doing anything to take charge of their situation and change it. (McGuire, 216) Religion is just a reflection of the economic situation.

Marxism holds that all institutions, including the state, are shaped by economic relations. Education teaches children to obey the laws and how to interpret the system. Religion, like an opium, dulls the sense of pain of being exploited. It, like education, also teaches the exploited to obey the laws and promises future bliss in exchange for patience in keeping the status quo.

**Anthropology:** (Bottomore, 1983: 23-25) Marx and Engels became interested in anthropology in reading Morgan's Ancient Society. Engels researched Morgan's work in light of the materialist conception of history in an effort to understand pre-capitalist societies. In doing this they opposed the idea of general evolutionary progress which was the current view - and concentrated on development of labor productivity, private property and exchange, breakdown of the old society founded on kinship groups and emergence of classes, class struggles and the state.

This didn't start a system of Marxist anthropological research; when Boas, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were creating modern anthropology, there was almost no Marxist influence. In more recent years - since 1960's new issues - societies in conditions of radical change - brought about new developments in Marxist anthropology resulting in two different forms:

North America: radical dialectical anthropology - rejects primitive-civilized in terms of inferior and superior; looks for the natural human being; becomes a critic of one's own civilization. One of the main themes: criticism of historical connection between traditional anthropology and imperialism - anthropologists training colonial administrators;

French structuralists: ideas had been shaped by structuralist anthropology of Levi-Strauss and by methodological writings of Althusser. Prominent contributors: Godelier, Meillassoux and Terray. They apply the concepts of historical materialism to primitive societies to achieve a theoretical analysis of primitive modes of production - as part of general theory of modes of production. Central problem: trying to determine the place of kinship in mode of production.

Godelier distinguishes between functionalist, structuralist and Marxist methods and criticizes: (1) functionalism for its empiricism and functional interdependence which excludes problems of causality; concept of equilibrium disregards idea of contradictions (2) structuralism of Levi-

# 3 paper Arguments / Surface

Revolution		DEVELOPMENT
MARXISM		Capital
Exploitation		<u>Backward</u>
Solidarity with Poor	—	
Oppression	—	<u>Formulas</u>
Struggle	—	Education
Ruling Class = evil	—	
<del>Pragmatism</del>		
Preference for the Poor	—	<del>Paper</del> Development →
Revolution		D. Association
Alienation	—	<del>Pragmatism</del>

Ideology  
Religion  
Culture

Science  
Praxis  
Culture

Strauss because it sees history as just a succession of accidental events. Marxist structuralism then - recognizes existence of real structures beneath the surface pattern of social relations; add idea of law and order in these structures and their changes.

O'Laughlin (1975:341) sees Marxist Anthropology as a useful framework for dealing with problems of racism, gender issues, etc. - suggests that "historical materialism is not a fully articulated dogmatic grid (or structural theory) to be mechanistically imposed on any problem. Rather it is a working scientific tradition, struggling to develop theoretical understanding of specific historical problems in a world dominated by class conflict." She does not believe in a search for social universals will help in explaining historical social conflicts - the result would be general assumptions concerning racism and class issues.

**Concluding thoughts and some implications:** Strengths: Challenge to recognize all the aspects of society and their interrelatedness - political, economic, social and culture - in an effort to explain the past and present. A method for understanding social change and social problems. A search for better life for society.

Weaknesses: Why does he feel the dialectic process would stop once capitalism was overthrown? If the process will continue - why a revolution? Totally humanistic and atheistic views would make it unacceptable. Aspect of violence to bring about change. Cannot reduce everything to class struggles. In the end, his kind of analysis still doesn't go deep enough to obtain the real picture because he has rejected God and in so doing, has left the most important part of history out of the analysis.

Luzbetak (1988:141) lists 8 varieties of Marxist theory. Soviet (Leninism and Stalinism); Trotskyism (repudiation of Stalinism) Social Democracy (power can be acquired peacefully by parliamentary means) Maoism (search for Marxist dream in peasant-agrarian setting) Neo-Marxism (current Marxism in developed and developing countries) Marxist Structuralism (attempt to combine Marxism and French structuralism) American Marxism (dialectical-critical anthropology in US and Canada).

The last of the varieties is Christian Marxism - the attempt to combine and reconcile Marxism with the Gospel, as in Latin American liberation theologies - would be of interest to missiology. Luzbetak calls the attention of anthropologists and missiologists to important facts about culture and society: (1) Power - the ability to manipulate and control people. Those who own goods produced and control vital resources can abuse their power and reduce people to a form of slavery. (2) Authority - closely related to power - those with authority can be tempted to find ways to legitimize their power and convince those they manipulate that this power is their right.

We do not have to accept Marxist ideology and all of their theories to learn from them. Aside from a closer look at liberation theology and education (mainly through Paulo Freire) there is the challenge to examine the reasons behind what we do and how we do it. What do we do about social responsibility? What do our methods say about our views of human dignity and our worldview in general? What part does economics play in the way we develop strategies, in our

relationships with the national church? Do humanism and capitalism stem from the same root? The idea of reflection and praxis - probing beneath the surface to find answers is an important concept for us.

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How do we explain Civil in the world

- poverty
  - oppression
- 1) dual ty
  - 2) present
  - 3) culture/poverty Leiris

what can we do to bring about rights  
- liberation, health & freedom

Challenge:

- Univ.
- Frankfurt. is W. Schlegel & NT. Mission =

+ moral involvement: not cynicism = <sup>authentic</sup> identity

+ <sup>assured</sup> history =

- + betterment of world
- + stand with empowerment of people. B/S.
- starts with ~~human~~ materialism
- Dialectic
- wrong social critique
-

## **Purity and Danger** Mary Douglas

1. Thesis: religion is harnessed to human attempts to force one another into good citizenship (3). "Religion does not exist for the saving of souls but for the preservation and welfare of society (Durkheim)".
  - Primitive religions share a basic substructure with high religions.
  
2. Primitives do not make a distinction between sacred and unclean.
  - We see holy and impurity as opposite poles.
  - In Hinduism something is clean to that below, and impure to that above.
  - there is no sharp break between sacred and profane.
  - Sacred = separated. Gods are always in danger of losing their distinctiveness, so need to be continually hedged in with prohibitions. Sacred must be treated as contagious.
  
3. **Magic, Religion and Science:** Argument of degeneration versus progress.
  - H. B. Tylor (1832-1917): fossil customs show evolution from the old cultures and prove progress. We do many irrational things today that come from the past.
  - W. Robertson Smith saw their survival as serving present functions in maintaining society, its boundaries and its authority -- became the father of social anthropology.
  - T. H. Green and others sought to secularize religions by converting high religions primarily into ethnical systems.
    - Robertson continued faith in revelation, but saw the difference between Israel and other religions in the O.T. as the emergence of ethics. Other religions worshipped demons - marginal beings. Israel had a high god - social stability and authority.
  - Douglas: magic as automatically effective ritual, is not true of primitive religions, nor is ethnical impact absent in them.
  - Douglas rejects the distinction of high religion=rational=morality and magic=illogical beliefs=primitive religion that Durkheim and Robertson-Smith introduced.
  
4. Douglas argues that the O.T. dietary restrictions are based on maintaining an orderly worldview of creation.
  - dirt is things out of place. (35)
  - dirt presupposes a systematic ordering and classification of matter. Ill. 36. To think of them, things must be labeled.
  - systems tend to stability and endurance. Anomalies are treated as dirty or evil or dangerous.
  - the rules in Leviticus are neither irrational, nor hygiene, but the maintenance of order.
  - holiness is order, not confusion.
  
5. Douglas rejects that primitives think their rituals have external efficacy.
  - rites point to the possibility of a miracle, but there is no certain way to harness it. Nor is the primitive priest a wonder-worker.

- we must be ware of importing uncritically a dread of dead formalism into our judgment of other religions. Or reduce true religion to an inner experience alone. F~M. There can be no religion without external forms and symbols.
- Ritual focuses attention by framing, by enlivening memory, and by linking the present with the relevant past. It sets the categories with which we think, and so controls our realities.
- Ritual expresses thoughts and feelings that cannot be expressed by mere words. It also points out the whole sequence so we see our place in it [eg. life cycle rites, marriage reminds us of past and present rites].
- Rituals mark boundaries [van Gennep]. Our busy scrubblings and cleanings are not mainly to avoid disease.
- Shamanism has many parallels to psychotherapy.

#### 6. Primitive Worldviews:

- Douglas accepts a fundamental difference between primitive and modern thought: primitive is less differentiated, modern is highly segmented and specialized. This reflects the growing social differentiation in modern society.
- since Levy-Bruhl British anthropology has treated each culture as *sui generis*.
- primal religions are self-centered and human centered.
- sorcerers are powerful people reinforce the social order. Witches are marginal people attacked as dangerous because they are outside the social order. The universal order discerns the social order and intervines to uphold it. (88)
- The practical interest of the primitive is living and not an academic interest in metaphysics about what has produced his believes. It is not a self-conscious religion.
- primitives are concerned about the particularity and unique characteristics of an event, not its general characteristics.
- need to accept the word 'primitive'. To reject it is to be secretly convinced of our superiority, and not be be able to to appreciate other forms of culture other than our own. (93)

#### 7. Disorder:

- disorder is dangerous to order, but it also has power and potential to create new orders.
- healers, magicians and other religious persons often come from the margins. They have the power of formlessness and structurelessness that can transform the existing structural order.
- people out of order are also potentially dangerous, and creative. Eg. mothers in birth, weddings, etc.
- accepted behavior at a point are declared abnormal and the person is put into a marginal status = dangerous.
- spiritual powers are internal: evileye, witchcraft, prophecy.  
Or they are external: spells, blessings, curses, charms. ???
- Societies with strong social structures have a dominance of external order leaders. Societies with weak social structures have internal power leaders (witches, evil eye) because social relations are not regulated by the social order. But a person may be central in one subsocietal context, and marginal in another (a wife at her husband's home).

- Pollution is a danger when form and order are attacked. Accusations of sorcery appear in strong societies with systems of competition for power. They are leveled at established leaders who have taken too much power or have lost the race.
- Baraka and Luck and mana are powers to success. They can be transmitted by heirlooms. Witchcraft and sorcery and evil eye powers that attack and point to failure.
- A polluting person has crossed some line and this unleashes danger. He is always in the wrong.

#### 8. External Boundaries:

- All experiences can be used in rituals. The more common they are, the more powerful and acceptable they are.
- rejects any attempt to psychologize primitive religion as infantile behavior and thought.
- Margins are dangerous, so nail pairings, spit, blood, milk, hairclippings, sweat, and body orifices are dangerous.
- 1) danger of crossing external boundaries. Beleaguered view. Eg. caste system. Minority view. The higher the caste, the more a minority it is.
- 2) crossing internal lines. Pollution marshals moral disapproval when it lags, and demand active human punishment. Pollution rites and confessional rites also enable people to undo past offense. The polluter is doubly wicked. He crossed the line, and he endangers others.
- 3) crossing internal lines. Eg. sexual incest in societies with loose internal social control.
- 4) sometimes dirt, which is normally polluting, can become symbols of creativity. Formlessness is both a symbol of end and of beginning. Dirt is both decay of body and birth of new being.