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J. A. Barnes

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## MODELS AND INTERPRETATIONS

John Barnes's collection of essays, published over the last forty years, covers a variety of topics in sociology and anthropology, including lineage systems, social networks, colonialism, underlying assumptions of social science, and the significance of time in social analysis. Together they identify the author's particular view of social science: he is primarily interested in 'what really happens'. Rather than revamp articles written with a distinctive set of assumptions to bring them into line with current intellectual fashions, Professor Barnes has chosen to let them stand as they are, products of identifiable theoretical stances and modes of exposition. But introductory notes to each chapter set out the context in which the piece was originally written and draw attention to later publications and events that bear on it. A new introduction discusses in detail the author's view of social science as the construction of models rather than a search for social laws, while the final chapter presents a model of the modelling process itself.

*Models and Interpretations* will be of interest to sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers of social science.

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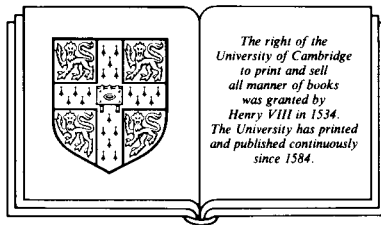
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SELECTED ESSAYS

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## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction: social science in practice	I
I MODELS OF THE REAL SOCIAL WORLD	
1 Genetrix : genitor :: nature : culture ? (1973g)	29
2 African models in the New Guinea highlands (1962a)	44
3 Agnatic taxonomies and stochastic variation (1971n)	56
4 Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish (1954a)	67
5 The righthand and lefthand kingdoms of God: a dilemma of Pietist politics (1971k)	88
6 Indigenous politics and colonial administration, with special reference to Australia (1960a)	103
7 The perception of history in a plural society: a study of an Ngoni group in Northern Rhodesia (1951c)	120
II MODELS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE	
8 Feedback and real time in social inquiry (1967b)	133
9 Time flies like an arrow (1971f)	150
10 Kinship studies: some impressions of the current state of play (1980c)	169
11 Sociology in Cambridge: an inaugural lecture (1970m)	181
12 Social science in India: colonial import, indigenous product or universal truth? (1982c)	196
III A MODEL OF MODELLING	
13 Modelling: for real or for fun? (1983b)	215
Postscript: structural amnesia (1947: 52–3)	227
<i>Bibliography</i>	229
<i>Index</i>	260

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## PREFACE

All the essays constituting the chapters of this book have previously appeared in print. If I were to start afresh on any of the topics they cover, I would make substantial changes. Nevertheless I have as far as possible left them in their original published form. Attempts to revamp articles written with a distinctive set of assumptions, to bring them into line with current intellectual fashions, are seldom successful; I prefer to let them stand as they are, products of identifiable theoretical stances and modes of exposition. I have also left unchanged my use, following the convention prevailing when the earlier essays were written, of masculine nouns and pronouns to indicate both genders; this obsolescent usage should serve to remind the reader, as it does me, that most of the essays were first drafted many years ago. It is not only fashions in theoretical concepts that change with the times. I have however placed a note at the head of each chapter, setting out the context in which the essay was written and drawing attention to later publications and events that bear on it.

Chapters 6 and 7, where colonialism is discussed, have been revised to the extent of replacing the present tense by the past, since the system they focus on has largely disappeared, despite its apparently firm prospects for the future at the time the essays were written. I have done the same with Chapter 4, for the social conditions I found in western Norway in 1952 changed radically a few years later following the collapse of herring fishing and the discovery of oil in the North Sea, changes that I touch upon in Chapter 5. Throughout the book I have updated references where appropriate, as well as adding a few new sources. In a few places I have been unable to resist the opportunity to amend glaring infelicities, and I have removed a few faded topical allusions.

It is difficult to make adequate acknowledgement to the very many people who through the years have helped me with these essays. I am much indebted to the fifteen research and university institutions in which I

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J. A. Barnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE

vii

have worked, for the support I have received from them, and to the foundations that have provided generous financial assistance. They have helped me towards achieving my aim of being a dilettante in the original sense, someone who delights in the work he or she does. I am very grateful to the Ngoni people of Zambia and Malaŵi and the residents of Bremnes, in western Norway, for allowing me the privilege of learning from them, in their very different ways. Among the students, colleagues and friends from whom I have gained so much I must mention by name L. R. Hiatt, M. J. Meggitt, D. M. Schneider, W. Ullman, W. K. Whitten and D. E. C. Yale for their help with Chapter 1; the late Ely Devons for comments on Chapter 4; A. L. Epstein for help with Chapter 5, and the late W. E. H. Stanner for comments on Chapters 5 and 9; M. Godelier also helped me in drafting Chapter 9. Jack Goody encouraged me to start on this collection of papers; Geoffrey Hawthorn and Tim Ingold made valuable suggestions on how it should be put together. To Frances Barnes I am greatly indebted not only for comments on Chapters 1 and 5 but also for constant support throughout the years. Beverley Bullpitt helped nobly with the preparation of a presentable typescript.

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