

**The savage within**  
The social history of  
British anthropology, 1885–1945

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# Chapter 1

## *Through the looking glass*

When Daniel Gookin observed the Massachusetts Algonquins in 1674, he saw “as in a mirror or looking glass, the woful, miserable, and deplorable estate that sin reduced mankind unto naturally.”<sup>1</sup> His was a conventional European view: technologically unsophisticated, preliterate peoples were living in humankind’s primeval condition, innocent of the repressions necessary to civilization. This image has persisted in the Western mind, although its lineaments have varied considerably, as historical experiences have altered assumptions about human nature. For centuries, European observers of exotic peoples have found their understanding of their own impulses both challenged and confirmed. This study will explain the sources and consequences of self-examination framed in ethnographic terms. For this purpose, it considers the anthropological thought of Britain from the late nineteenth through the middle of the twentieth centuries.

To identify technologically unsophisticated peoples as the untutored children of the human race is not necessarily to imply that their lives are deficient in any but material satisfactions – which may be seen as obstacles to spiritual perfection. Observers’ judgments have depended on their understanding of the course of human history. According to the biblical narrative Gookin believed, human beings became naturally depraved with the Fall from God’s grace; the strictures of civilized society developed from morally imperative efforts to suppress mankind’s ineradicable base drives. Almost as important in the Western tradition is the antithetical conception of human beings as creatures who are in their natural state essentially good. Consider, in contrast to Gookin’s views, those advanced by his near-contemporary John Locke, whose model of natural man relied on information about the very peoples observed by Gookin, who was first superintendent of the Indians of Massachusetts. Locke also saw the “pattern of the first ages” in Native American Indian societies. But his natural men were not Gookin’s “brutish barbarians.” They were exemplary – enjoying “comfortable, safe, and peaceable living” conditions, effected

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in James Axtell, *The European and the Indian* (New York, 1981), 308.

through voluntary cooperation. They were not oppressed by the social institutions of civilized society – which were created when populations expanded beyond the numbers easily sustained in their habitats – which defined and perpetuated inequities of wealth and power.<sup>2</sup>

The disagreement between Locke and Gookin suggests all of the essential elements of this book. Like the later figures I shall discuss, both men expected ethnographic evidence to answer basic questions about the conduct of human affairs: What is fundamental human nature? How effective may social conditioning be in molding human behavior? What social organization most effectively shapes human beings into moral creatures? And both men were able to draw the lessons they wanted from the material at their disposal. This is not to say that ethnography is merely a pretext for projective fantasy. Whatever their interpretative disagreements, observers of a given society frequently agree about its salient traits – as Gookin and Locke did. Nevertheless, their interpretations cannot be treated as superficial glosses covering material that in its unvarnished state contributes to the growing body of knowledge about cultural variation. For our purposes, interpretation must be the principal focus, since this is the feature of ethnographic accounts that gives them practical implications.

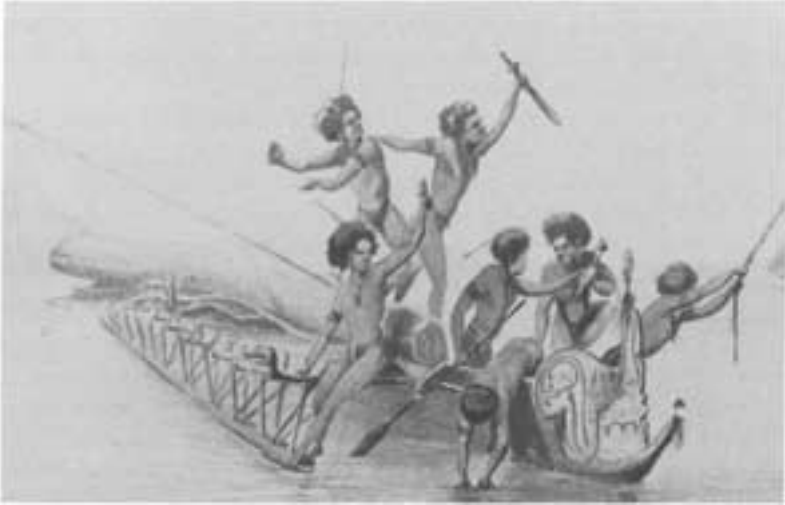
This is the heart of the matter. Data make sense only when they are interpreted with theories, and theories are always, as the philosopher's maxim has it, “*underdetermined* by facts.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, no matter how rigorous are the methods used to compile and analyze evidence, decisions about the practical implications of evidence are always problematic. The limits of the possible can be only vaguely approximated through calculations of the frequencies of the probable, and the practical actor is concerned with what might be and what ought to be, not with what currently is. This was clear in 1893 to T. H. Huxley (1825–95), a man of formidable scientific accomplishments who figures in this book because he was central to the organization of anthropology as a discipline, and it is clear today to scholars committed to combatting racism and sexism.<sup>4</sup>

The constructions Gookin and Locke placed on their ethnographic

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; and see John L. Myres, “The Influence of Anthropology on the Course of Political Science,” *University of California Publications in History* 4 (1916): 31–3; John Locke, *Of Civil Government, Second Treatise* (Chicago, 1955 [orig. 1689]), 78, 88.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Mary Hesse, “Theory and Value in the Social Sciences,” in C. Hookway and P. Petit, eds., *Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1978), 1.

<sup>4</sup> T. H. Huxley, “Evolution and Ethics,” the Romanes Lecture for 1893, in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (New York, 1902), 46–116. For one contemporary consideration of these issues see Helen Lambert, “Biology and Equality: A Perspective on Sex Differences,” in Sandra Harding and Jean O’Barr, eds., *Sex and Scientific Inquiry* (Chicago, 1987), 125–45.



Observations of a young naturalist in the South Seas: a watercolor painted by Thomas Huxley in the Louisiade Archipelago in 1849 while he was serving on the H. M. S. *Rattlesnake*.

evidence implied altogether different courses of action. Whereas Gookin expected civilized men to recognize their moral duty to impose European ways on depraved savages, Locke expected his fellow citizens to emulate the virtues of natural men, creating a polity that restored original freedoms. Their disagreement exemplifies a general pattern – that interpretative differences are often products of observers’ social circumstances. Given Gookin’s official role, it is not surprising that his position rationalized systematic erosion of Indian rights in colonial America. Given American revolutionaries’ objectives, it is not surprising that they found in arguments such as Locke’s useful justifications for their cause. American colonists could invoke whichever image of Native Americans suited their immediate purposes. Settlers eradicated Native Americans’ way of life through measures ranging from cultural modification to genocide. Yet they made the American Indian into an icon of the revolution, representing his love of liberty and fierce independence as the essential American spirit.<sup>5</sup> That

<sup>5</sup> For description of the ways in which revolutionary ideologues such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson took Native American norms and institutions as exemplary, see Bruce E. Johansen, *Forgotten Founders* (Ipswich, Mass., 1982), 71, 108. For analyses of the context-dependent variation in settler behavior toward Native Americans, see Axtell, *The European and the Indian*; and Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility* (Cambridge, 1975).

the population of early America put ethnographic evidence to various ideological uses does not mark it as exceptionally confused or dishonest; like that of any society, it was pursuing diverse goals and incorporated groups and individuals acting at cross purposes.

Early America presents a pattern of use of ethnographic information that has been repeated time and again. The problem of this book is to explicate this pattern. In it, I ask a fundamental question for historical sociologists and social historians: What relationships obtain among ideas, experiences, and action? The cast of characters who will appear are appropriately seen as the figures neither of textbook sociology nor of textbook history: neither as creatures whose conduct is so completely conditioned by upbringing and material interests that any departures they make from expected patterns are consequences of programing error; nor as virtually free-willed creatures who endure one test of character after another, negotiating sequences of irreproducible situations.<sup>6</sup> That is, they performed creatively within circumstantial limitations, making decisions that seemed sensible to them, using ethnography as an aid to understanding the constraints and possibilities of their lives.

I offer no elaborate justification for my conceptualization of social actors. I do not wish to bore the reader either with the scholarly ceremony of invoking myriad previous works that set precedents for this one, or with personal revelations of the experiences that shaped my views. I only observe that mine is the model of the person that seems plausible to intellectuals (and others) in the late twentieth century. That we think of ourselves in terms of this model – as acting within bounded possibilities, choosing among the options available to us using the standards of our culture (or subculture) – substantiates this book's thesis. Our self-image has been shaped in many ways by comparative cultural evidence and, indeed, has antecedents in the anthropology of the period I shall discuss. That is one of the reasons this book has its particular substantive focus – because the period it treats was critical for the development of contemporary, self-critical sensibility.

### The peculiarities of the British

The anthropological ideas treated in this book deserve particular attention, and not just because they left a lasting legacy. The history of anthropology

<sup>6</sup> The classic description of textbook “sociological man” is that of Dennis Wrong, “The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology,” *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961): 184–93. Allan Megill has defined textbook “historical man” in his “Disciplinary History and Other Kinds,” a paper presented to the University of Iowa conference on “Argument in Science: New Sociologies of Science/Rhetoric of Inquiry,” 9–11, October, 1987.

in Britain permits specification of the elements of culture, power, class, and institution in the development of a specialized intellectual enterprise. That is, anthropologists were specimen members of a developing intellectual class, whose positions on national issues reflected their social status at any given moment, and whose capacity to alter the events of their time was a function of intellectuals' changing role. Moreover, their enterprise was central to the national debates of the period covered by this book, for during it Britain first reached the heights of her imperial power and then determined to divest herself of her colonies – and anthropologists were as likely to condemn as to condone colonialism. Because anthropologists initially undertook to understand all of the world's peoples, not just the subjects of the Empire, they also advanced their findings in support of various policies within Britain. The practical interests of British anthropologists thus represent the full range of problems apparently illuminated by evidence about exotic peoples. And the purposes to which anthropology was put demonstrated not only the convictions of the intellectuals who developed it but also the plausibility of anthropologists' observations to a considerable audience.

Britain has been peculiar among industrialized nations in having both a flourishing intellectual culture and an underdeveloped university system. Many of her leading intellectuals have not been cloistered scholars, but men and women positioned to implement their ideas in practical terms. Among the causes they prosecuted in the late nineteenth century was the elevation of academic standards in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, requiring both structural and curricular reforms: university regulations had to change so that merit criteria alone would determine careers of students and faculty; and courses had to be broadened, particularly in the sciences – including anthropology – in order to satisfy the nation's needs for trained workers. But anthropology long remained one among several intellectual activities conducted largely outside academe. While it did, anthropological ideas were elaborately linked to social practices in a fashion without parallel since.

Anthropologists' work reflected Britain's loss of the self-confidence it once enjoyed as the first industrialized nation and economic leader of the world. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Britain became only one among a number of world powers. Its rate of economic growth had declined, and it had lost international ground in volume of industrial production and national income, most notably by contrast to Germany and the United States. The vast expansion of British colonial holdings, especially in Africa, was undertaken in pursuit of new markets in which the nation would have competitive advantages functionally equivalent to those it had lost in her old ones. Britain's cultural superiority also figured in arguments for colonialism: the process of colonial conquest was seen



as a vehicle for strengthening national character; and colonial rule was celebrated as a peacekeeping and civilizing mission – despite reports from the colonies replete with descriptions of the unfortunate consequences of colonialism for subject peoples.

Witnesses to Britain's difficulties at home and abroad, anthropologists were by no means alone in their efforts to explain them. But they were peculiarly situated observers of their society by virtue of their social backgrounds and intellectual associations. Largely drawn from the classes that had benefited from the liberalizing effects of economic growth – practitioners of old and new professional occupations, industrialists, members of dissenting religious groups (or hostile to organized religion) – they were obliged to contemplate the relationship between individual initiative and social forces. Moreover, because pre-World War I anthropologists tried to explain all varieties of societies, they were confronted with irreconcilable elements in Britain's self-image – self-doubt in many aspects of its domestic affairs and pretensions to cultural superiority in justification of its colonial ventures.

Without some level of public agreement about the value of knowledge about the nonindustrialized world, anthropology would never have emerged as a recognizable field of study. If language is an index to popular understanding, anthropology had a recognizable identity by 1805; in that year, the first published use of the word “anthropologist” to denote the occupant of a specialized role appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, a journal of the cultivated upper middle class. As an organized enterprise (impossible without enthusiasts in sufficient numbers to sustain learned societies and support publication of journals and monographs), anthropology grew throughout the nineteenth century. Not until 1884, however, was the field accorded recognition indicative of its acceptance as a pursuit for genuine scholars and men of position. In that year, the first university post in anthropology in Britain was created for E. B. (Sir Edward) Tylor (1832–1917), a readership at Oxford (later converted to a professorship for him alone); and the British Association for the Advancement of Science at last conceded that the field was entitled to a section of its own, Section H.

Throughout its formative years, anthropology was conceived as useful scholarship. Its intellectual roots drew upon classics, biblical studies, and philosophy, but it is best appreciated as a type of natural history, one species of a class of knowledge – also including geology, botany, zoology, and geography – that could be used to manage the nation's resources of people and land. Before the British Association gave the field its own section, it housed anthropology with several varieties of natural history, and many of the figures treated in this study pursued anthropology along with other interests of this species. Because anthropologists were generally

neither leisured gentlemen nor academics but men of affairs (and a very few women), they expected their scholarship to inform the decisions of their daily lives.

The expectations of the scholars and practical men who created anthropology may be gathered from their own testimony. Their hopes for the utilitarian potential of science were virtually boundless. Their optimism was best expressed by John Stuart Mill, whose *Principles of Political Economy*, first published in 1848, was throughout the latter half of the century the single most influential analysis of the relationship between social institutions and individual behavior. Scientific knowledge was advancing so rapidly, Mill wrote, "as to justify our belief that our acquaintance with nature is still in its infancy." Furthermore, as soon as scientific principles were discovered, they were put to practical use: the electromagnetic telegraph, for example, "sprang into existence but a few years after the establishment of the scientific theory which it realizes and exemplifies." The growth of knowledge was but one aspect of the general trend toward human improvement. Manufacturers could adopt "the most delicate processes of the application of science" because of the elevation of the working classes; they had "no difficulty in finding or forming, in a sufficient number of the working hands of the community, the skills requisite for" their industrial innovations.<sup>7</sup> Mill articulated a faith in progress in general and in science in particular that was to dim in the future; indeed, its diminution is central to the narrative of this book. But this faith was critical to the development of enterprises such as anthropology.

Throughout the years covered by this study, leading anthropologists frequently advertised their field's practical value. Tylor often termed anthropology the "reformer's science," the findings of which would enable the "great modern nations to understand themselves, to weigh in a just balance their own merits and defects, and even in some measure to forecast . . . the possibilities of the future."<sup>8</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), the preeminent anthropologist in Britain during the interwar period, likewise insisted that comparative cultural evidence compelled "intelligent and even drastic reform" of Western society.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, academics must

<sup>7</sup> On the influence of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, see A. W. Coats, "The Historicist Reaction in English Political Economy, 1870–1890," *Economica* [n. s.] 21 (1954): 144. Coats's argument itself rests on nineteenth-century observers, particularly Herbert Somerton Foxwell, writing in 1899. The quotations from Mill come from *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1862 [orig. 1848]), Vol. II, 259.

<sup>8</sup> E. B. Tylor, "Introduction" to Friedrich Ratzel, *The History of Mankind* (London, 1896), v.

<sup>9</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, "Parenthood – The Basis of Social Structure," in V. W. Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen, eds., *The New Generation* (New York, 1930),

cast their popular appeals in this mold. If Malinowski's sometime student E. E. (Sir Edward) Evans-Pritchard (1902–73) had not assured his radio listeners in 1950 that anthropological findings “have obvious significance for the understanding . . . of any society, including our own,” could he have expected them to stay tuned?<sup>10</sup>

Though anthropology increasingly became an activity dominated by professionals – figures who made careers of anthropology in universities and museums – even in the 1930s the professional community was so small that anthropology's audience was composed largely of amateurs. Nineteenth-century anthropologists published in specialist journals, to be sure, but they placed some of their most important contributions in general publications that were founded during their lifetimes – and the very existence of which denoted the recent growth of the educated public. They addressed the readers of such periodicals as the politically centrist *Nineteenth Century*, the utilitarian *Westminster Review*, and, perhaps most important, the *Fortnightly Review*, which was in the latter third of the century “the acknowledged mouthpiece of advanced, free-thinking radicalism.”<sup>11</sup> In the twentieth century, anthropologists have addressed a narrower audience. Nevertheless, as late as the interwar years they aired their theoretical disputes in public.<sup>12</sup> And they wrote their academic books so that they would be interesting and intelligible to general readers as well as to specialists.<sup>13</sup>

They were addressing a receptive audience, however. Few anthropologists gathered a readership as large as that of J. G. (Sir James) Frazer (1854–1941), a sometime classicist who spent virtually his entire adult life within the protected environment of Trinity College, Cambridge. But the remarkable public response to Frazer's work demonstrated that anthropology could exert a powerful hold on the popular imagination. Particularly

168. And note that he wrote in an introductory note to this essay that “although this article is written in simple language and without any display of learning . . . it is more than a mere popular exposition of established views. It is the first full statement of my theory of kinship, the result of over twenty years' work on a subject to which I have devoted most of my attention” (p. 112).

<sup>10</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Social Anthropology,” reprinted in *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York, 1962 [originally London, 1950]), 108.

<sup>11</sup> John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (New York, 1970), 66.

<sup>12</sup> One such debate that aired in public during the interwar period centered on the merits of diffusionist versus functionalist anthropology. The diffusionists, in particular, sought popular support in their efforts to win disciplinary supremacy. For one attempt to make this debate accessible to a general audience, see G. Elliot Smith, B. Malinowski, H. J. Spindler, and A. Goldenweiser, *Culture: The Diffusion Controversy* (London, 1928).

<sup>13</sup> See Raymond Firth, “An Appraisal of Modern Social Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 4 (1975): 4.



The popular appeal of J. G. Frazer and of images of supposedly irrational peoples: the cover of *The Illustrated London News* for February 4, 1911. The caption reads, "Sympathetic Magic: Killing an Unfaithful Wife in Effigy, Australia." The text below observes, "To quote Mr. J. G. Frazer's *'The Golden Bough'*: 'Perhaps the most familiar application of the principle that like produces like is the attempt which has been made by many people in many ages to injure or destroy an enemy by injuring or destroying an image of him . . .'"

in the era of World War I, disillusioned intellectuals found the objective correlatives to their feelings of despair in his eternal images of dying kings and parched fields. Hundreds of readers were moved to write to him that his work had opened their eyes and changed their lives, and the sales of his most popular book, *The Golden Bough*, were by any standards extraordinary.<sup>14</sup> By the interwar period, a fair percentage of leading anthropologists were emigrants to Britain from the Empire Dominions or other countries, who encouraged their colleagues to attend to intellectual developments outside Britain. But anthropologists had to adapt to the local

<sup>14</sup> Robert Ackerman, *J. G. Frazer: His Life and Work* (Cambridge, 1987), 3, 256–7.

intellectual ecology, not the least because they were dependent on a general audience concerned with issues of national interest.<sup>15</sup>

After World War II, however, professional anthropologists were able to write largely for themselves, and that is why this study ends at that point. Research funds grew, and, most important, were allocated on academic anthropologists' recommendations. The business of anthropologists became the training of other anthropologists to occupy professional posts and the writing of arcane analyses to impress colleagues. Anthropologists presented a collective front to the outsiders on whom they ultimately depended, but regarded with near-hostility – an attitude prefigured during the interwar years. They assured their patrons that research funds would be spent in pursuit of immediately useful knowledge, while privately determining their own research agendas. Adopting language unintelligible to laymen, professionals became preoccupied with apparently purely technical matters – such as the stylistic niceties of representing varieties of kinship structures.<sup>16</sup> Earlier, leading academic anthropologists had resisted such developments, as Malinowski did in a 1930 article tellingly entitled “Must Kinship Studies Be Dehumanised by Mock Algebra?”<sup>17</sup>

The era of professional domination of British anthropology can fairly be said to have begun in 1946 with the foundation of the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA). Unlike the previously dominant anthropological society, the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) of Great Britain and Ireland (founded in 1871 as the Anthropological Institute), which effectively welcomed all who wished to join, the ASA restricted its membership to those who had Ph.D.s in anthropology or equivalent accomplishments. At its foundation, the ASA was very small, enrolling roughly twenty people. In contrast, the RAI had at this time approximately six hundred members (still but a fraction of anthropology's general audience). Professional dominance of the field was not yet complete, but it was certain.

<sup>15</sup> There has lately been some debate over the nature of emigré influence on British scholarship, anthropological and other. It seems safe to conclude that whatever significance their ideas had in their countries of origin, the emigré scholars' schemes were welcomed in Britain because they could be reconciled with indigenous ones, not the least because the emigré scholars took some pains to adapt them to their new surroundings. See, for example, Ernest Gellner, “Malinowski Go Home,” *Anthropology Today* 1, No. 5 (October 1985): 5–7; Paul H. Koch, “No Utopia: Refugee Scholars in Britain,” *History Today* 35 (November 1985): 53–6. For the saga of a refugee scholar whose adaptive efforts proved relatively unsuccessful, see A. P. Simonds, *Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1978).

<sup>16</sup> This point is made and illustrated effectively in J. A. Barnes, *Three Styles in the Study of Kinship* (Berkeley, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> B. Malinowski, “Must Kinship Studies Be Dehumanised by Mock Algebra?” *Man* 30 (1930): 256–7.

It is worth looking briefly at the consequences of this development, since the distinguishing features of the prewar anthropological community are highlighted by comparison. After the war there remained a popular audience eager to learn from ethnography whether humankind is naturally violent or peaceable, selfish or altruistic, egalitarian or hierarchical. If persons eager to achieve eminence in academic anthropology would not address their concerns (because those who wrote for the public would lose professional status), others not so motivated were prepared to write popular works. To be sure, since World War II anthropologists have been willing to broadcast their views in the mass media, and the occasional study has engaged the attention of both academics and general readers – but for reasons peculiar to each group.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, popular anthropology has become a nearly distinctive genre. It is not merely academic work simplified and translated for a general audience. Its interpretation presents special problems posed by any form of popular culture; its readers are not joined in deliberate effort to reach collective agreement, so they respond to it in idiosyncratic fashion.<sup>19</sup> To be sure, the motives of its audience often seem self-evident. Works dealing with inherent sex differences, say, surely appeal to persons concerned with problematic gender roles. And the readers' ability to find meanings in a text not intended by the author is hardly unique to our time: Frazer did not intend to convey the feelings of despair his readers derived from his work, although it seems unlikely that he would have captured their attention had they not once shared the faith he sustained – the expectation that human society could be perfected through the exercise of reason. What has changed is the shape of the population of popular anthropology's writers and readers. Its writers today are not a cohesive group whose ethos we can see emergent from collective experience, and its readers do not express in publicly accountable ways the lessons they learn from it.

I do not wish to suggest that academic anthropologists were removed to a high intellectual plane, on which the concerns of the world around them did not intrude. No academic professionals are so removed, even those whose work is largely speculative. Smith does not persuade Jones through

<sup>18</sup> The best illustration of the disjunction between popular and professional interpretations of anthropological analysis is found in the debates over Margaret Mead's analysis of Samoan culture provoked by Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983). See Ivan Brady, ed., "Speaking in the Name of the Real: Freeman and Mead on Samoa," *American Anthropologist* [n.s.] 85 (1983): 908–47. The debates among anthropologists in this instance cross national boundaries – indicating another significant feature of contemporary anthropology.

<sup>19</sup> For an analysis of popular culture that makes this point see Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984).

the rigor of her logic and the wealth of her documentation alone, but must frame her argument in terms that Jones has learned to trust on the basis of his everyday experience. Anthropologists are no different from other academics; they hold notions of common sense that are functions of the general habits of their culture, the historical memories of their generation, and the experiences peculiar to their social milieu. Post-World War II British anthropologists have shared with other members of their society assumptions of the very diffuse sort that permeate any culture, assumptions recognizable in both scholarship and behavior. But if we want to specify the relationships between anthropology and practical action, we have to look to the pre-World War II period.

The decline of anthropology's popular relevance dates from its fragmentation into discrete subfields. During the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists became convinced that human racial and cultural variation were entirely independent of each other, and that therefore members of existing simple societies were not living physical and behavioral fossils of the earliest humans. Their conclusions entailed a strict division of labor among social anthropologists, physical anthropologists, and archaeologists. Earlier anthropologists had usually concentrated on one of the discipline's areas (and each subfield was informed by somewhat different premises), but whatever their focus anthropologists had assumed that their findings contributed to an understanding of the human species in all of its aspects. Physical and social anthropology were practically distinct before World War I, but after the war anthropologists became more insistent that race did not determine culture – not the least because they became aware of the political abuses that could be rationalized on the grounds of scientific racism.<sup>20</sup>

When the lines of filiation joining all varieties of humankind seemed clear, general readers could understand anthropology as an enterprise that elucidated their innate impulses and traced the origins of their society. Indeed, the public responded enthusiastically to the last anthropological effort to integrate archeological, physical, and cultural research: the work of the diffusionists, who were in their heyday roughly from 1910 to 1930.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> For one discussion of the highly elaborated division of intellectual labor that obtained in anthropology by the 1930s, see John L. Myres, "Anthropology, Pure and Applied," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 61 (1931): xxvi–xxviii.

<sup>21</sup> The space given to reports of the diffusionists' claims in *The Times*, for example, was considerable. Dangerous though it is to infer public interest from media coverage, we are probably justified in doing so here. See, for one illustration, the relatively long article published by G. Elliot Smith, "Asiatic Influence in Mayan Art: A New Discovery," *The Times*, 14 January, 1927, pp. 13–14, 16. And see the similarly extensive space allotted to the same story in a more popular periodical: G. Elliot

During the 1930s, however, most anthropologists agreed that the diffusionists' synthesis did not hold. To be sure, some specialized anthropological work still fascinated general readers – especially paleontological findings about the origins of the human species and archaeological investigations of ancient settlements. And social anthropology still offered the British public entertainment and enlightenment: illustrations of alternative ways of life possible for humanity; cautionary tales about the pleasures and pitfalls of societies organized in various fashions; messages of tolerance for diversity; and analyses of the impact of colonialism on subject peoples – a matter of considerable concern in an era in which the vast majority of British subjects were the peoples of the Empire.<sup>22</sup>

But nonspecialist readers of ethnography did not depend on scholars. If they wished to be entertained as well as to be reassured of the merits of their own way of life, they might prefer to turn to travelers' accounts. These offered thrilling reports of explorers' physical heroism in the wilds of the Empire – and represented a form of pornography that could be openly admitted to polite households, describing behavior forbidden in Western society “with a particularity of detail.”<sup>23</sup> In the nineteenth century, such accounts had provided material for “armchair” anthropologists – theorists who did not collect evidence themselves. When anthropologists took to the field at the turn of the century, they stressed scientific regularities far more than exotic curiosities, so the change in their research methodology also contributed to the differentiation of their work from that directed toward a popular audience.

There remained, however, a practical sphere in which anthropologists maintained that they could offer explicit guidance: the colonial Empire. Like their predecessors, anthropologists of the interwar period pressed colonial officials to acknowledge the need for their advice. Ironically, anthropologists withdrew from public affairs just when state demand for their services was most intense. Britain was particularly eager to employ anthropologists in the post-World War II period, when officials hoped that

Smith, “The ‘Elephant Controversy’ Settled by a Decisive Discovery,” *The Illustrated London News*, 15 January, 1927, pp. 85–7, 108.

<sup>22</sup> See, for examples, the interpretations given scholarly books in the popular press. E. H. G., “Red Paint, Scarification, and Human Bones: ‘Medicine’ in the Andamans,” a review of A. R. Brown (later Radcliffe-Brown), *The Andaman Islanders*, in *The Illustrated London News*, 21 September, 1922, p. 161; “The Evil Eye: Attack, Defense – and Cures!” a review of Edward Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, in *The Illustrated London News*, 22 January, 1927, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> The quotation is from “Civilisation the Destroyer,” a review of Tom Harrisson, *Savage Civilisation*, in *The Illustrated London News*, 23 January, 1937, pp. 144–5. The breathless tone of this review is typical.



anthropologists would help develop viable strategies for turning colonies into independent nations. But leading anthropologists then protested that true scientists do not do commissioned research. Officials such as Lord Hailey, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service who was the first head of the Colonial Research Council, were exasperated. Anthropological expertise was so vital to colonial development, said Hailey in 1946, that if the anthropologist would not supply colonial regimes with necessary assistance, “we must find someone calling himself by a different name who will do so.”<sup>24</sup>

The cleavage between post-World War II professional anthropologists and practical men had a social structural manifestation: the disappearance of routine personal contacts between them. As contemporary data indicate, if social scientists and policymakers are joined in working relationships – perhaps because they meet together regularly for some shared purpose, or perhaps because standard career patterns involve regular circulation of personnel from one group to another – their worldviews can become nearly indistinguishable.<sup>25</sup> Relationships of this sort had been encouraged when the important organizational loci of anthropological work had been ecumenical groups such as the RAI and Section H, rather than exclusively professional groups such as the ASA. They had been deliberately fostered through the efforts of an anthropological entrepreneur such as Malinowski, who during the interwar period held seminars at the London School of Economics that were famous because they involved people from as many of the social groups found in the colonies as Malinowski could attract. Most important, such relationships were products of the prewar occupational environment.

To appreciate how different was the anthropologists’ social milieu in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, consider again the extraordinary career of J. G. Frazer. His social network reveals the range of associations anthropologists of his day could form in the course of their scholarly activities. Indeed, the diversity of Frazer’s friends is especially remarkable because he was the quintessential armchair scholar, rarely venturing from his study. He himself had little taste for practical action (including academic politics). But because he associated with men of affairs, he assumed as they did that all worthwhile scholarship had some

<sup>24</sup> Lord Hailey to E. W. Smith, 22 April, 1946. Hailey Papers, in OUODP.

<sup>25</sup> For examples of such a situation, see Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke, “Social Science in Government: The Case of the Home Office Research and Planning Unit,” in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Social Science Research and Government* (Cambridge, 1987), 166–96; and Stuart S. Blume, “Social Science in Whitehall: Two Analytic Perspectives,” in Bulmer, ed., 77–93.