A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE
Anthropology, Free Trade, and Britain's Empire

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ABSTRACT

Diffusionist and evolutionist models of cultural change indicate a telling correspondence with historical trends in Britain's foreign policy and liberal philosophy in the nineteenth-century. Anthropological theory provided a convenient cultural rationale for the effects of mid-century free trade and, later, the new empire-building of liberal imperialism on subject peoples. The ideological compact of liberalism, imperialism and anthropology made liberal social and political norms a standard for colonial societies. Bourgeois self-projection gave energy to this liberal imputation; moreover, this imputation also served as a covert criticism of organicist claims by conservatives and socialists. Contemporary neo-conservatism and the rhetoric of globalization exhibit a similar content and project.

RÉSUMÉ

Les modèles de changements culturels diffusionistes et évolutionistes correspondent aux développements historiques en politique internationale et en philosophie libérale en Angleterre au dix-neuvième siècle. Les théories anthropologiques fournissent une rationalisation culturelle des effets des échanges libres au milieu du siècle, et, plus tard, du développement de l'impérialisme libéral à l'étranger. Le compacte idéologique du liberalisme, de l'impérialisme et de l'anthropologie à normalisé le libéralisme social et politique dans les societés colonialisées. Cette imputation libérale servit à critiquer les idées organicistes des conservateurs et des socialistes. Le néo-conservatisme contemporain et la rhétorique de la globalisation ont un contenus et des buts similaires.

INTRODUCTION

> Yes, -- I was their preacher and prophet just now ... I thought of nothing less when I landed, than giving such a discourse; but it warmed my heart and filled my head to see how these children of nature were clearly destined to be carried on some way towards

becoming men and Christians by my bringing commerce to their shores.

> The "Captain", avatar of British free trade imperialism, and protagonist of Harriet Martineau's *Dawn Island* [commissioned by the Anti-Corn Law Leagues in 1845] reflects on his duty while sailing from the island.

The line between theory and ideology is only as thick, at times, as the interests which theory serves are able to retain their monopoly of the ink trade. In this light, I argue that anthropological models are not only ideal types of what the imagined Other is supposed to be, but artifacts revealing of the ideological and material conditions of the period in which the models are orthodoxy. Certainly, nineteenth-century anthropology served the needs of the Captain, and others like him, in the Victorian period (1837-1901), who required ready rationales for buying labour from, and selling ink and other wares to, unlettered children of nature everywhere.

Diffusionism and evolutionism scrupulously theorized inter-cultural contact in such a way as to avoid issues of what is known a century later as "the cultural environment of international business."[1] This feat of ideological spin-control was achieved by means of (1) in the case of diffusionism, reducing an understanding of inter-cultural contact to an analysis of the exchange of particular fetishized artifacts; and (2) in the case of evolutionism, reversing the focus by understanding elements of culture to be functions of a trans-historical process, a process dictated by causes independent of actual cultural and material contradiction (e.g., the Captain's trade goods might well mean the natives being drawn into a wage relationship as plantation workers or colonial soldiers, their own culture and economy made residual). Whether their analytical lens was set on diffusionist 'zoom' or evolutionist 'wide angle,' anthropologists of either school could neglect comprehending a people at midpoint in the representational spectrum: that is, as a complex, interdependent whole in historical 'real' time.

LIBERALISM AT LARGE

This theoretical blind spot, common both to ethnological diffusion of the mid-Victorian free trade period, and to socio-cultural evolutionism dominant in the era of late Victorian liberal imperialism, may be traced

to the century's ideological key note: liberalism. As synthesized by its early modern (Hobbes, Locke) and nineteenth-century pundits (James and John Stuart Mill), liberalism was more than political economy or social theory. Rather, it was a world view with particular assumptions concerning self, society, governance, economy and world order.

Liberalism borrowed from the Enlightenment vindication of reason to argue that the rational self-maximizing actor should be taken as the basic unit of socio-economic analysis. Taking the moral primacy of the individual (relative to social claims by church, state and society on her/him) as its necessary condition, classical liberalism was packed with other features. These were (1) egalitarianism, though of a kind which defined individuals as moral equals, while denying that legal or political definition affected how they might be ethically evaluated (i.e., neither paupers nor princes should be vulnerable to criticism on the grounds of their position and power in the society they share); (2) universalism, which affirmed the moral unity of the species (which made liberalism an agent for abolition); and (3) meliorism, which argued that society was gradually improvable (Gray 1986:x).

Classical liberalism of the early to mid-nineteenth century was no glass bead game, however. As a vehicle for policy formulation, liberalism made the move from eighteenth-century mercantilism (a system whereby state-sponsored cartels (e.g., the East India Company, the Hudson's Bay Company) purchased raw materials from colonies, and sold finished goods both at home and to these truly 'captive' international markets) to an era of *laissez-faire* economics, lean government, and an anti-nationalist global order. In liberalism's name, England's protectionist Corn Laws were repealed, franchise extended, and Catholics returned their political rights.

The late-century 'New Liberals,' corresponding to the evolutionist model, and increasing imperial competition between Britain and other powers, announced their novelty by proposing more state action. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian philosophy, which offered human happiness as a substitute for the classical liberal ideal of individual freedom, had successfully argued by this time that poverty inhibited freedom (Arblaster 1984:350-52). The state, thus, for the interventionist Liberals was the guarantor of basic social assistance. Given its attraction to those creating an industrial society in which the feudal social contract could no longer be valid, liberal ideology has historically informed the grater part of English thinking about society and culture (Williams 1983:49). Liberal norms in the nineteenth century were

> taken for granted as presuppositions of political activity, often associated with religious dissent and non-conformity, but spreading across the religious and political spectrum to encompass nearly the entire political class (Gray 1986:27).

Nineteenth-century liberalism (as does the contemporary version) made for the strangest ideological bedfellows: universal human equality (including the nineteenth-century variant, psychic unity) and an uncritical endorsement of 'free' labour; belief in the progressive development of civilization and reason, and an uncaring Social Darwinist interpretation of seemingly unprogressive peoples; and, last, an impulse to collective action on social reform coupled with a resistance to welfare measures, especially as these involve state intervention in the economy. Liberalism, of course, is also the ideological centrepiece of capitalism: as such, liberalism's lack of consistency translates into a highly flexible rationale supremely capable of eliding historical contradiction.

Victorian anthropology may be taken as the repackaging of a good part of this English thinking about society and culture as a synthetic, particular application of liberalism to peoples the British Empire had colonized, or with whom they had business. As such, anthropology served to support liberalism's practical manifestation in colonization, indirect rule, and free trade, much more than it criticized British imperialism on humanitarian grounds. This complicity is a convention of anthropology's self-criticism.

Less studied, however, are the terms of Victorian anthropology's ideological collusion, not on the polemic or rhetorical level, but in the deeper structure of the discipline's basic assumptions, especially as regards ideas about culture (largely in the nineteenth-century sense of 'cultivation', or a general state of intellectual and moral development), nature, and social organization. A product of the globe-trotting free trade phase of British imperialism, anthropology's theoretical development and early crisis in the first several decades of the twentieth century were co-extensive with the crisis suffered by both Britain and the ideology upon which British power had been predicated. It is in the triangulation of anthropology, liberalism and Empire in the Victorian period that their common crisis may be understood.

FREE TRADE AND BOURGEOIS PROJECTION

Mid-Victorian Britain had begun to profit mightily from its Industrial Revolution investment of capital and working-class lives in the

eighteenth century. The diffusion of British goods in the post-mercantilist free trade climate had made Britain the 'Workshop of the World', and its manufacturing bourgeoisie that world's master craftsmen.[2] By the early nineteenth century, the new science of political economy had emerged as the theory of the capitalist centre. Into historian Bernard Semmel's characterization of the view from the centre, then, can be insinuated a role for a diffusionist explanation of the necessity and Promethean benefits of imperial contact. Semmel (1970:204) writes:

> The new industrialism of the late eighteenth century created conditions which increased, substantially, the economic intercourse between regions of widely differing levels of social and economic development. The founders of the new economic science -- constructed to describe the new industrial society --quite naturally directed themselves to an analysis of this new intercourse, which loomed large in the consciousness of the time, and which was closely associated in the minds of the first generation of political economists with the success of the new system.

This "intercourse" was constituted as free trade. As an economic practice, free trade was believed the realization of Say's Law, which argued that the new industrialism was "a harmonious, virtually automatic economic mechanism" (Semmel 1970:208) that could create its own innumerable, infinitely plastic markets. A direct refutation of the conservative philosopher Malthus' prediction that population growth would outstrip available production and lead to starvation and anarchy, Say's Law proposed effortless production and, via free trade, unproblematic distribution and consumption of that wealth.

Moreover, the 'free trade empire', established in the wake of Britain's loss of its mercantilist North American colonies, and by dint of the bourgeoisie's effective control of world trade, also became the site of that class's self-making. England offered the aristocracy its estates and titles as means to self-definition; but for the bourgeoisie, there was less room in class-conscious Avalon for identity. Colonies and, by definition, markets, were realized as fields for bourgeois self-construction, in which envious creole and comprador classes, bourgeois tastes and norms, and that most characteristic of bourgeois institutions -- a colonial bureaucracy -- could be invented.[3]

This export of cultural commodities taken from bourgeois experience followed the extension of this class by means of exploration, missionization, travel, settlement and manufactured goods to the rest of

the non-European world, and may be expected of a group of people who had, frankly, commoditized everything else. Hobsbawm remarks:

> The early Victorians felt they could expand naturally, with trade goods and Bibles as easily as with guns. They could sail to the far corners of the world as explorers, missionaries, abolitionists, traders, and immigrants, opening new fields for the expansive wonders of their industrial revolution, their special forms of religious, political, and economic grace, and their bourgeois-heroic values of self-help and mobility ... At the same time free trade theory, central to both liberal and radical thought, was itself linked to the need for colonization to open new markets and to make "nonproductive" areas of the globe productive. (1987:32).

It is important to appreciate the psycho-social dimension of bourgeois interest in the colonies, because this craving for an identity has a cost: the negative construction of the Other. The sexual component of the Victorian projection onto 'savagery' is well-known; Victorian advertisements and literature (of which the ancient, decadent and uncannily beautiful eponymous character in Rider Haggard's *She* is an obvious example) lavish upon non-western peoples purple prose and pornographic imagery Victorian authors dared not use in reference to bourgeois Victorians. But projection encompasses more than frustrated desire and its vicarious appreciation as embodied by some feminine, sensuous, penetrable Other. A particular Other, or Others, is chosen as the purported source of alienation that a person or group of people experience, though the oppressor is someone or something else. These Other are

> people who cannot possible be responsible for our situation, and yet by Imaginary projection, we make them so. We project onto them our unrecognized desires, our unrecognized alienation, and our unrecognized behaviour. This kind of projection is an act of violence against other human beings; and in consequence, it has an almost automatic complement: the fear of retaliation (Wilden 1980:67).

On to the peoples the bourgeoisie contacted in either phase of imperialism, I believe, is projected a critique of the group this class felt

most alienated from and by, and with whom they were escalating a successful struggle for economic and political dominance throughout the nineteenth century: the British upper class. 'Savage' custom, and particularly, those anachronistic features of custom or 'survivals' that appeared irrelevant to middle class rationality (one could argue heraldry or aristocratic pastimes were as much survivals as were Iroquois kinship categories), became the subject of a criticism deflected from its real target.

In order to establish self-credibility, and empower the bourgeois critique of the elite, the assumption was made that a society's material development was synonymous with its cultivation. *Ergo*, the bourgeoisie, because it owned and was identified with a radically new and extremely powerful means of production, could claim a *sui generis* and superior cultural identity. In a version of this equation with a different but no less important resonance for anthropological ideology, the bourgeois self-making also required the corollary rejection of an organic or interdependent idea of society, and one associated with its ideological foes. Organicity checked a class buoyed by a theory of an atomized society, and represented an ironic commentary on the middle class' identification with self-reliance, earned wealth, and heroic individualism.

In place of the organic concept -- one advanced by both conservatives (e.g., Samuel T. Coleridge), who favoured a model of social interdependence cross-cut with hierarchy, and socialists (e.g., William Morris), who proposed a classless, cooperative organicity -- liberalism posited a society of rational, self-interested actors. Society was instantiated -- as if by sleight of Adam Smith's invisible hand -- by a near-Hobbesian self-preservation ethic transformed into economic competition and social good.

In liberal theory, then, the 'mechanical' was opposed to the 'organic' or 'natural,' and the interdependence nature required of social animals construed as something contrary to genuine cultivation.[4] Instead, nature was understood to be completely under the control of culture (understood as ideational cultivation), whether such nature was (1) raw material infinitely available to mass production; (2) non-western peoples categorized as natural beings and processed by colonization; (3) biological validation of the Anglo-Saxon 'Race's' economic success and ascendance to Civilization or; (4) human nature.

The free trade interregnum has been erroneously treated by some historians as anti-imperial, and as the triumph of a class born free of old prejudices (Semmel 1970). Cobden, Bright, and other free trade liberals of early Victorian Britain, advocated a humanitarianism which is

nonetheless evident -- and impressive -- in Victorian ethnologist James Cowles Prichard's *The Natural History of Man.* This principled attitude toward colonial subjects was more than rhetoric: for example, *laissez-faire* was used to justify abolition in Britain and its colonies in 1834.

Abolition-minded organizations such as the Aborigines Protection Society argued that slaves turned free labourers would serve not only benevolent ideals, but British manufacturers wanting reliable primary producers and consumers. The Society's advocacy of capitalist development in the colonies hinged on the benefits to the Empire gained in having aborigines abandon traditional economic practices for specialized production. Markets would be opened, new wants inculcated and, thereby, the supposed improvement of 'savage' peoples achieved (Bjork 1988:4).

It was canonical in the eighteenth century to believe that migration to and trade with 'higher' cultures could assist pre-capitalist societies to advance their cultivation (Winch 1965:165). This was also true of our Captain, and those free-trading fellow travellers who might identify with him and *Dawn Island's* arguments. However, though trade occurred with white settler colonies in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in the early 1800s, illiberal imperial expansion proceeded apace in the century between Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and the 1870s-80s depression. The Gold Coast, Hong Kong, parts of Australia, South Africa, the West Indies, and more, were annexed or colonized in the early to mid-Victorian period (Brantlinger 1988:20).

Indeed, free trade can be appreciated as the imperialism of a power so dominant -- as Britain was in 1860, when half of all exports from Asia, Africa and Latin America were sent to Britain, and as the U.S. was following World War II, through the contentious Global Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) -- that the power is without effective competitors. Such hegemonic powers profit more by minimal tariff protection among colonial producers of raw materials, as well as the sale of finished goods to the largest possible markets at prices dictated by the same power.

DIFFUSIONIST ETHNOLOGY

Britain, anthropology and liberalism would all experience transformation as Belgium, Germany, France and the United States awoke from the imperial doldrums to join in late nineteenth-century competition for territory. But, in 1855, Prichard could confidently survey the sundry

members of humankind, and explain that human difference had been instigated through the diffusion (or free trade, if you will) of culture between societies by means of language. The connection between diffusion and free trade may not be a casual one. Both elide differences of power and persuasion between the trading partners by making the relationship a symmetrical one, compressing the many layers of contact into a one-dimensional plane that passes for 'history'.

Though the truth of acculturation as an historical agent is unimpeachable (and proved intellectually convenient to evolutionists stuck trying to prove independent, parallel causation), Prichard made a critical and characteristically Victorian liberal connection between economic, social and cultural development. Reverting to Christian chronology, he returns the reader to the postdiluvian dispersion of Noah's children:

> The separated communities would retain more or less of their original civil polity, as they remained together in larger or smaller masses: the extreme case of separation of single families producing mere savages, -- people unable to effect anything requiring cooperation, and subsisting on the spontaneous productions of the earth, or on such animals as they could catch in the chase; while larger bodies might retain some domestic animals, and live as pastoral tribes. The original stock, remaining together, would thereby preserve their original social condition, as an agricultural people, living in settled communities (1855:xv).

The suggestion here is that the further from the centre -- from Mount Ararat, presumably -- a 'family' migrated, the less a people was capable of social organization and economic development, and the more retrograde was their humanity. Later in the text, the degree of "conquest over the physical agencies of the elements," or nature, is offered as the index of moral and cultural development, and provides the mapping principle behind Prichard's Christian cultural geography (Prichard 1855:3). Though he concludes his text as a good liberal might with the felicitous words "all human races are of one species and one family", his analysis uses economic criteria to demarcate who are the human family's parents and who the dependent children. As well, a natural history perspective is conducive to liberalism's confounding of a people's biological circumstances and socio-cultural life, given that physical type is the primary index in such a genre, reducing all non-biological elements to itself.

The equation of simple economic development with social and cultural inferiority indicates the ease with which Victorians applied economic ideology to non-economic activities. This permeability to the economic is, again, attributable to how central was economic change to bourgeois identity. Intellectualist doctrine, too, disdained serious consideration of the material lives of primitive peoples, making brief mention of mundane economic matters on its way to speculation about the 'savage mind.' Moreover, political economy was the only kind of economic analysis available in the period, and its analysis was reserved for capitalist economies.[5] Thus, economic analysis is almost completely absent from both Prichard and the evolutionists who followed.

Intellectualist scholarship (i.e., that of Taylor, Frazer, Lang) thrived on the idealisation of non-western peoples. Where diffusionism merely equated simple means of production with degeneration, intellectualists using evolutionist models added explicit moral commentary. If the latter attended at all to the economic lives of colonial peoples, it was to deplore the devil-may-care passivity of Tylor's "wild man of the forest" (1881:407), tar the 'savage' with the brush of primitive communism (Morgan 1877), or, after eulogising pre-capitalist peoples for their peaceful cooperation and equitable division of labour and capital, argue that such activity was proper only to animals (Lubbock 1895:401).

Materiality meant contradiction to both models, and contradiction was embarrassing to humanitarian ideals; moreover, the tragic effects of colonialism were coherent to liberalism only in terms of the mysterious workings of natural law. Moreover, the projection of British bourgeois experience of its own creation onto non-western peoples required that the latter's economic lives had to be under-represented, so as to warrant capitalist restructuring of the colonial economy. To British liberals the natives' tragic flaw was that, sadly, they were not also liberals yet.

LIBERAL IMPERIALISM

The late Victorian and Edwardian *belle époque* -- roughly between 1880 and 1914 -- was a time of contradiction, as much for the actual stresses occasioned therein as for the antithetical modernism it engendered. This period knew peace, but made possible the "War to end all Wars" [sic]; it created wealth and social stability, and saw the massive organization of the working classes" (Hobsbawm 1987:10). Moreover, the triumph of the bourgeoisie and the spread of bourgeois liberalism would culminate in the self-same class's identity crisis, one helped along by guilt

over colonial misadventure, overconsumption, and the bourgeoisie's estrangement from the non-conformist religious values which had smoothed its success. Hobsbawm reflects on just how delicate was the liberal personality:

> What is peculiar about the long nineteenth century is that the titanic and revolutionary forces of this period which changed the world out of recognition were transported on a specific, and historically peculiar and fragile vehicle. Just as the transformation of the world economy was, for a crucial but necessarily brief period, identified with the fortunes of a single medium-sized state -- Great Britain -- so the development of the world was temporarily identified with that of nineteenth-century liberal bourgeois society. The very extent to which the ideas, values, assumptions and justifications associated with it appeared to triumph in the Age of Capital indicates the historically transient nature of that triumph. (1987:11).

The second British empire, cobbled out of significant parts of Africa (Rhodesia, Sudan, South Africa) and Asia, was formed in the competition for markets that began as Britain's free trade dominance ended. A power that would wear the shining armor of humanitarian and free trade ideals for much of the century entered into economic warfare with other nation-states (e.g., France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal) less impressed by liberalism. If the ideological charter for mid-century free trade had been the liberal humanitarianism of Cobden and its ethnological espousal in Prichard, *fin-de-siècle* liberal imperialism was the second empire's *raison d'être*, and the socio-cultural evolutionism of Tylor, Lubbock and Morgan its social scientific apology.

Liberal imperialism, as the near oxymoron suggests, may be added to the catalogue of Victorian contradictions. Classical liberalism could not without significant shame countenance anything so collective and coercive as empire. But hybrid liberal imperialism's characteristic project was nothing but coercive: the settlement of British paupers (including many Irish poor) in newly annexed territories.

An example: active in the 1830s and 40s, but influential upon imperial policy in the latter half of the century. Edward G. Wakefield's Colonial Reform Movement applied utilitarian principles to Britain's socio-economic problems. In a revision of Say's Law, Colonial Reform sought to create markets and production sites with imperial power, while

exporting a part of the population identitied as surplus, subversive and diseased. So-called 'social imperialism,' or the state enlistment of domestic working-class support for imperial adventure by promising workers and their families a share of the loot in the form of pensions and other public compensation, was another such curious by-product of liberal imperialism.

As international competition increased in the latter half of the century, Colonial Reform and massive emigration to Canada, Australia, and other settler colonies would condition the Social Darwinism of Kidd and Pearson. In a partial concession to Malthus, markets were no longer believed to be effortless creations dictated by production and executed by free trade; rather, markets had to be consciously constructed by force and diplomacy, competed for within an arena of other aggressive nations, and populated in order to provide consumers and labourers. Nonetheless, the prevailing ideology remained recognizably liberal -- albeit a liberalism worried by its unlikely relation to the nation-state, an entitity thought anathema to cosmopolitan free-trading universalism.

Liberal imperialism, true to its adjectival qualifier, possessed a social vision. Britain's colonies were to be liberal clones of the mother society, and as committed as she to free trade, responsible government, religious freedom, and universal male suffrage. Freedom, good government and suffrage, however, were **not** customarily extended to indigenous populations. The new exigencies of European rivalry required that free trade occur largely within neo-mercantilist bounds (i.e., between Britain and its colonies). However, liberal imperialism was empowered to realize what free trade imperialism ideologically assumed, but could not deliver -- free trade between partners hypothetically both free and equal in their ability to trade.

Liberal imperialism "set out to create a new type of society and to show that an empire could be built which would be a fulfilment of liberal values, rather than an aberration from them" (Winch 1965:144). These societies were also studiously constructed to **not** resemble those that had been discovered, for implicity in liberal colonization was a repugnance for social systems not organized around capital accumulation. Such societies as were "composed chiefly of widely-dispersed subsistence units, with few markets and little division of labour could not fail to be culturally retarded". The "mere act of providing for basic needs," it was held, "would dominate life" in non-capitalist societies (Winch 1965:145). Such communities were to be "free from the political and religious constraints of English life" that had so frustrated bourgeois progress, i.e., class conflict and organicist claims upon liberalism (ibid:150).

These mass-produced colonies were the project of a class which had pioneered the method in what poet William Blake so aptly called "Satanic Mills"; it was a bourgeois desire to create ideal replicas abroad of a society free from the organicity conservative and socialist opponents demanded at home. In order to do so, liberal imperialism drew upon socio-cultural evolutionism as an ideology interpreting and rationalizing imperial contact with subject peoples. This meant more than providing a handy rationale to colonial officials, travellers and missionaries nonplussed by subject peoples unhappy with their lot.

Rather, evolutionist anthropology offered to imperialism an extension of itself which both embodied liberal values (psychic unity, progress, natural law), and applied useful concepts such as totemism, which proposed that in the colonial outback existed peoples so subject to nature as to lack any rational social organization or degree of cultivation. So construed, these peoples were understood as the object of "the naturally expansive, progressive, order-bringing energies of the British ... " (Brantlinger 1988:82).

EVOLUTIONIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Figuring evolutionism as an ideological mass production mechanism is not a fanciful construction. Evolutionism begs metaphors not only derived from the bourgeoisie's mode of production, but reflective of the power the leisure class exerted over nature and the construction of history. Liberal theorists, for example, misread Darwin and fused Darwinian evolution's biological certitude to the eighteenth-century notion of teleological Progress. Anthropological thinkers such as Maine interpolated liberal control within history, postulating the content of Progress as movement from "status" to "contract" onto a culminating "phase of the social order in which all these relations arise from the free agreement of individuals" (Stocking 1983:122).

Socio-cultural evolution, summarily, brought the liberal manipulation of nature and history together. History was but a machine, a monolithic and continuous process whereby non-western societies were interpreted as raw, 'natural' material; this material was then made waste in the form of either assimilated adjuncts of bourgeois settler society or (for the stubborn) subhumans fit for genocide. The product, nonetheless, was a bourgeoisie whose hegemony was inscribed into the world with which it surrounded itself.

Writ into socio-cultural evolutionism was the Lamarckian notion that non-biological traits, including culture, could be inherited. This kind of assumption permitted Morgan to theorize that the evolution of social

institutions was impelled not by material changes, but by the independent evolution of "primary germs of thought"; it also made unproblematic the relation between base and superstructure, trade and cultural contact. As Morgan put it, the origination of property required that the germ of the **idea** first develop, and "prepare the human brain for the acceptance of its controlling passion. Its dominance as a passion over all the acceptance of its controlling passion marks the commencement of civilization" (1877:13).

Culture and society thus moved in parallel tracks, and each could be used as a gloss on the development of the other, much in the same way as Prichard had judged the humanity of non-western peoples by their degree of economic development. It was this mutual accommodation, nonetheless, which would be severely challenged by the events of the late nineteenth century, and which endangered the compact made by imperialism, liberalism, and evolutionist anthropology.

The crack in the compact began with totemism. The doctrine of survivals, and the survival that most interested evolutionist anthropology -- totemism -- together constituted the primary means by which non-western peoples were shown to be incapable of bourgeois liberal society. A survival was a practice, belief or institution which confounded a utilitarian estimate of its utility. Evident in the reasoning of Tylor's 'reforming science' was the judgment that the absence of liberal social relations, and the presence of something resembling organic interdependence, impugned a people's humanity. Totemism could stand as a damning indictment of a people's illiberal, atavistic, and (worse still) organistic ways.

This scepticism of social organization not built upon liberal logic brings some perspective to the public and professional fascination with 'primitive' peoples: communal organization of any kind smacked of a social proximity uncomfortable to the Victorian sensibility. Where literal promiscuity was not inferred, a titillating social promiscuity was implied. This followed if one preferred, of course, McLennan (primordial orgy) to Morgan (primitive patriarchy) on social evolution.

Totemism, and the Victorian ambition to rid aboriginal peoples of their irrational customs, can be understood in the light of this ambivalence at social promiscuity. Social organization, on the basis of an indigenous identification of society with nature, was antithetical to Victorian *civitas*; people so economically beholden to nature for their subsistence were obviously enslaved by it, and their humanity (notwithstanding liberal nostrums about the human family) made tenuous. Instead of fetishizing goods, savages had fetishized non-commodities, revealing their poverty of

possessive individualism. Communal ownership could not be anything but non-progressive, and therefore justified the intervention of a class convinced of its own self-made status.

Just as "all that is solid melts into air", so did contradictions come to be felt by Victorian society and the anthropological community in the liberal imperialist period. Liberalism itself had always been in tension, given its extreme Spencerian individualism and its humanitarian collectivist impulses (Collini 1979). Under pressure from a polarizing British nationalism which brooked no pretensions to free trade or international community, liberals obedient to one tendency or the other followed the ideological fractures to join the Conservative Party or, as New liberals, enter the reformist ranks of the fledgling Labour Party (Collini 1979:38). At the same time, socio-cultural evolutionism came under attack from within and without by the likes of Westermarck, R.R. Marett, and the apostate gadfly Andrew Lang.

These third generation skeptics differed in the degree of affiliation each had to the evolutionary model, and each scholar's criticism derived from his respective anti-intellectualist principles: Westermarck, a biological anthropologist, criticized evolutionism for the model's inattention to natural selection, and for its consideration of survivals out of context; Marett, a social anthropologist, for evolutionism's arbitrary hierarchy of civilization and disdain for social structure; and Lang, as a mercurial 'anti-anything', for the reason that classificatory kinship had genuine structural relevance for the peoples employing it, and was not evidence merely of a throwback to the greatest orgy ever told (Stocking 1989:iv, 45-87). Though varied in intensity and content, their criticisms shared a similar theme: all three decried the intellectualist, evolutionist neglect of social structure in non-western societies.

As well, a holistic conception of culture, defined in the contemporary sense as a whole way of life, was making itself known on the continent. Though early isolated among exponents of the Romantic movement -- most notably Herder -- culture defined as a whole, lived experience began to challenge culture as mere 'cultivation' for anthropology's conceptual centre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Williams 1976:79). I argue that this contemporary definition could not become the standard until the liberal critique of organicity had been itself critiqued, and the inclusion of material life in the culture concept confirmed. It was only on this basis that atomism could be rejected, and cultural pluralism and holism appreciated.

Simultaneously, data from the field (ironically, synonymous with and equally indebted to the colonial markets that had been the site of bourgeois self-creation) was making untenable either a purely diffusionist

or evolutionist analysis of peoples: both were 'out of focus.' The reader may recall Gillen's remark, made after observing that the Australian Arunta had decided to adopt the marriage class schema used by their tribal neighbours: " ... the fact of these niggers [sic] changing their system". Indigenous peoples who rationally altered their social structure confounded an anthropology convinced that the 'native' could not conceive of 'society,' much less choose to apply a little reforming science of her or his own. Indeed, the experience of fieldwork itself -- and the physical encounter with complex, profound and different ways of being human -- made intellectualist reduction problematic. Hobsbawm acknowledges anthropology's new perspective:

> the primitive and barbarous tribes which imperialism now allowed, and sometimes required, anthropologists to study at close quarters were now not seen primarily as exhibits of past evolutionary stages, but as effectively functioning social systems (1987:274).

The shock of Gillen's revelation (and myriad other acknowledgements of the Other's whole humanity) would take time to travel along the colonial nerve endings, and register in the anthropological brain trust resident in Oxbridge's comfortable rooms. But this message, in combination with the strain of empire, the destruction of liberalism in light of British nationalism and WWI, and the continental Romantic affirmation of plural, holistic 'culture,' meant that evolutionary anthropology was near exhaustion. Stocking (1989:iv, 36) notes that even the most faithful of Tylor loyalists, J.G. Frazer, dissented from the master's emphasis on psychic unity. Such a sunny optimist and free trader as Tylor, who had written in his 1881 text *Anthropology* that

> There is no agent of civilization more beneficial than the free trader, who gives the inhabitants of every region the advantages of all other regions, and whose business is to work out the law [reversing Adam Smith's emphasis] that what serves the general profit of mankind also serves the private profit of individual men (286).

lamented in 1889's *Primitive Culture* the advent of an age of reaction reminiscent of his depictions of custom-crippled savages:

> It may be that the increasing power and range of the scientific method ... may start the world on a more steady and continuous course of progress than it has moved on heretofore. But if history is to repeat itself according to precedent, we must look forward to stiffer, duller ages of traditionalists and commentators, when the great thinkers of our time will be appealed to as authorities by men who slavishly accept their tenets (452).

The slavish acceptance of socio-cultural evolutionary tenets by the century's close was becoming ridiculous, the most glaring example being Lubbock's argument in his 1895 *Origin of Civilization* that "the gradual extension of the human race has not ... been effected by force acting on any given race from without, but by internal necessity and the pressure of population" (507). In the wake of war in the Rhodesian colony, the 1885 founding of the Indian National Congress, and the excesses of Social Darwinism, "gradual extension" was hypocritical.

Nonetheless, the hypocrisy is psychologically explicable. Anthropologists found in the free trade era a vestige of non-coercive contact with the Other, not to mention a basis for the discipline's own founding principles, and so duly romanticized *laissez-faire*. The principal economic premise of liberalism, free trade paid for the ships on which anthropologists travelled, ideologically supported the discipline's own feckless ranging among world cultures, and seemed a like elaboration of a progressive impulse emanating from the European centre and Western history. But the fact remains that by the 1880s, free trade was free only insofar as Britain did not protect itself from commerce with its colonies. Anthropology thus could only reflect the cultural logic of a liberal empire involved in illiberal practices.

CONCLUSION

Trade was much more important as a metaphor, and a materialization of the ideology of noncontradictory contact, than it was an economic reality for the colonies. Most commercial activity in the Victorian period involved the export of colonial commodities (tea, fruit, leather, cotton thread) to the metropoles, or trade between developed nations. But by the *fin de siècle*, the contradictions had begun to work their dialectical magic on liberalism and socio-cultural evolutionism to the extent that the complex reality of the 'savage' came to overwhelm them both.

Anthropology would later embrace models which assumed rational function and structure (instead of irrational survival and confused structurelessness) as their basic premises, while Victorian society convulsed with class conflict, violent imperialism, and self-doubt. Having long projected the violence done to and by them onto other peoples, middle class insecurity and guilt surfaced in mediums as diverse as jingoistic children's literature, 'decadent' aesthetics, and a national obsession with competitive fitness.

Once thought as heroic as the Captain, traders came to be depicted as dollar-chasing businessmen, the adventure made mere adventurism. British citizen, anthropologist, and colonial subject alike achieved an ironical ethnological brotherhood, as a nature so long repressed left all seemingly knee-deep in the savagery once reserved for Zulu, Chinese and Cherokee. Heroic pro-free trade literature like *Dawn Island* and traders like the Captain gave way to cool technocrats such as Chamberlain, social imperialism, and a self-awareness of the 'savage' lurking within each Briton.

Evolutionism failed at a moral, even spiritual, level also. Though it might make evident Britain's rise and India's fall, it could not satisfy the question: why India? why not Britain? Recourse to the natural superiority of English blood, breeding, or commerce depended on Britain's economic goals being met without challenge. When the inevitable contradictions came, and the facile calculus of nature, culture, and economy that favoured the English and denied Indians and Others their whole humanity was invalidated, evolution was silent on the latitudinal matter of **why us**? An incapacity to explain failure and discontinuity in the way religion or nationalism does was an integral part of evolutionism's undoing (Anderson 1983:18).

NOTES

The author would like to thank George Stocking, of the University of Chicago, for helping to incubate this paper in a class in nineteenth-century British anthropology, and for his unsurpassed analysis of this period. Andrew Lyons, of Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, Ontario), was instrumental in encouraging my earlier undergraduate study of the 19th century anthropological tribe, a collectivity at least as bizarre as the peoples they attempted to describe.

This paper is dedicated to the Ph.D. Anthropology entering class of 1988 at the University of Chicago for their *communitas*, exemplary

scholarship, and sensitivity to a many-splendored world dominated, tragically, by too few.

1. From the title of a book concerning intercultural sensitivity for corporate managers employing people of colour, non-majority religious practices, etc. Book written by Vern Terpstra, and published in Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing Co., 1978.

2. One should be careful not to over-generalize about who comprises the middle-class, regardless of the century. Defining 'Who's Who?' was enough of a problem in the late nineteenth century -- given greater access to education, wealth, and non-manual employment -- that the famous social registers of the same name were first published. Hobsbawm suggests that, though the segment he considers solidly middle-class was very small, the category was an omnibus one by virtue of including both an upper stratum of non-noble plutocrats, upper-middle class merchants, professionals and managers, as well as a vast lower stratum of the new office workers.

> For the sake of my argument, the 'bourgeoisie' will refer to those non-nobles whose status and wealth nonetheless dictated what was desirable for the aspirant bulk of the class to aspire to and envy. Here is Veblen's 'leisure class,' the Victorian beautiful people. This class had brought the liberal and industrial revolution to England, and challenged the aristocratic hegemony both economically and politically. In the event that I use middle-class, I mean to refer to those not nearly so powerful, but no longer clearly working class (1987:183).

3. I follow Benedict Anderson in his use of "creole", meaning someone of European parentage born in a colony, and thereby "consigned ... to subordination, even though in terms of language, religion, ancestry, or manners ..." s/he is European (Anderson 1983:18). "Comprador" refers to a native elite established by the imperial elite to broker for the empire, serve in the imperial bureaucracy, etc.

4. Williams (1983:140) suggests that those opposing *laissez-faire* society argued that such a notion meant that human beings were

"Divided into mere segments of men -- broken into small fragments and crumbs of life". An abhorrence of Bentham's radical utilitarianism is evident here. The reader may note that the formulation noted in the text of the article reverses the poles of Durkheim's mechanical/organic dichotomy.

5. Personal communication, George Stocking, autumn of 1989.

6. Page numbers for Fukuyama essay are lacking, as I cannot locate a copy of the journal at the University of Western Ontario library.

APPENDIX

Like Victorian liberals before evolutionism's disrepute, some observers today invoke evolution in declaring these times of profound change the 'end of history.' Francis Fukuyama's widely cited essay of the same name argues that bourgeois liberalism has proven itself superior to ideologies to its left and right, and that the deconstruction of eastern Europe means that capitalist production capacity and GATT-inspired freer trade have realized "the end point of mankind's [sic] ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government". Like his nineteenth-century counterparts, Fukuyama points to the "exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism", the world-wide circulation of Western consumer goods, and the extension of liberal ideals so that "the various provinces of human civilization were brought up to the level of its most advanced outposts".[6]

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