

07th November 2024

What we will do today?

Introduction to some theories in the history of anthropology or just one story of anthropology (socio-cultural)

What is a theory?

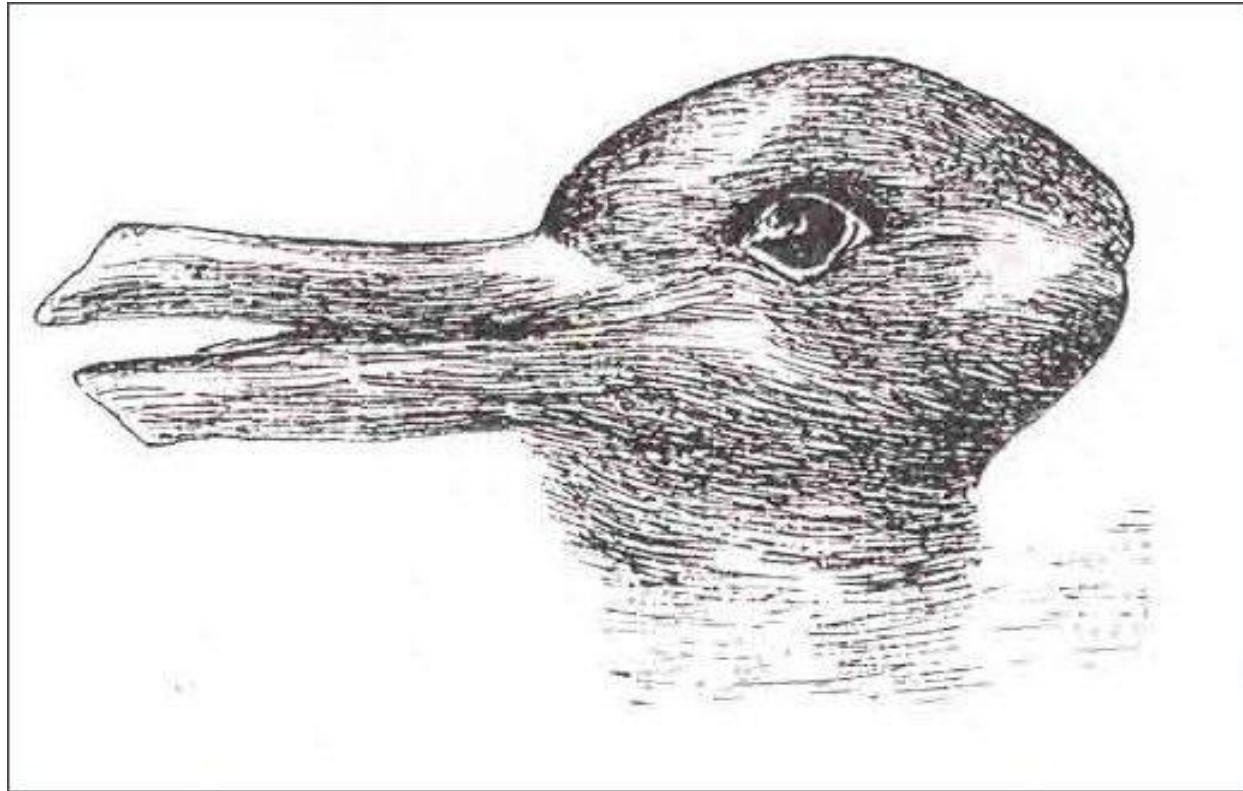


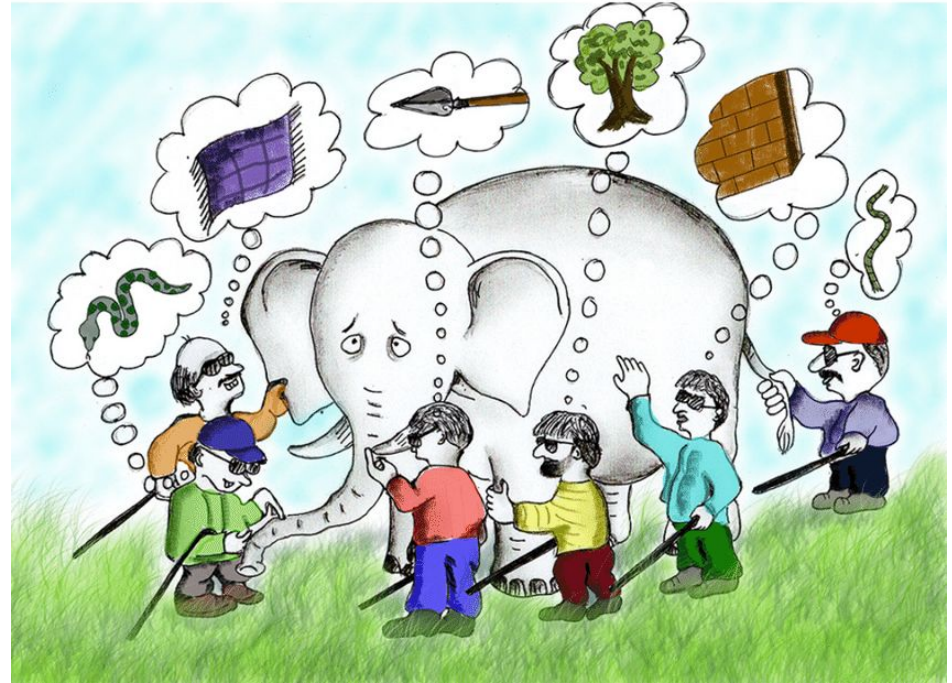
Image: duck-rabbit (source: <https://mathworld.wolfram.com/Rabbit-DuckIllusion.html>)

What is a theory?

A set of paradigms* that gives meaning to the experience:

- basic concepts
- logic connections
- forms of explanation
- privileged point of view
- shared values
- a community of people

*“and so this men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong!”*



*Kuhn, T. S. 1970. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



Anthropology as the study of cultures and societies (differences in which experiences these two concepts define)

An example:

The Durkheim-Tarde debate!*

- social (and cultural) as shaping individuals
- social (and cultural) as shaped by individuals

Importance of studying theories!

Image: Durkheim and Tarde (Source: <http://psicologiasocialcue.bigpress.net/texto-diario/mostrar/581785/roja-negra-nueva-equipacion-seleccion>)

*Vargas, E. V., Latour, B., Karsenti, B., Aït-Touati, F., Salmon, L., Damle, A., and Candeia, M. 2008. The Debate between Tarde and Durkheim. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26(5): 761–777. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d2606td>

Creating an “history” or a “story” of anthropology?

Kronos, κρόνος, the quantitative flow of time

Kairos, καιρός, the qualitative divinization of time

Aion, αἰών, the eternal time

Is the time of anthropology cyclical?

We always return to the core topics, while in a changing and dynamic World!



Image: Maya calendar (source: <https://openendedsocialstudies.org/2017/11/28/the-ancient-maya-in-time-and-space/>)



Image: Mycelium Rhizome, by Richard Giblet, 2009 (source: [https://www.galeriedusseldorf.com.au/GDArtists/Giblett/RG2006_09/RGiblettRecentWk2006_09/source/22.rhizome_\(detail1\).html](https://www.galeriedusseldorf.com.au/GDArtists/Giblett/RG2006_09/RGiblettRecentWk2006_09/source/22.rhizome_(detail1).html))

Selecting a starting point

Common anthropological canon: from middle 1800 with the academic emergence of the discipline

But... everybody is an anthropologist

But... alternative authors to be inspired on

But... tracking back the origins

But... expanding to interdisciplinary influences

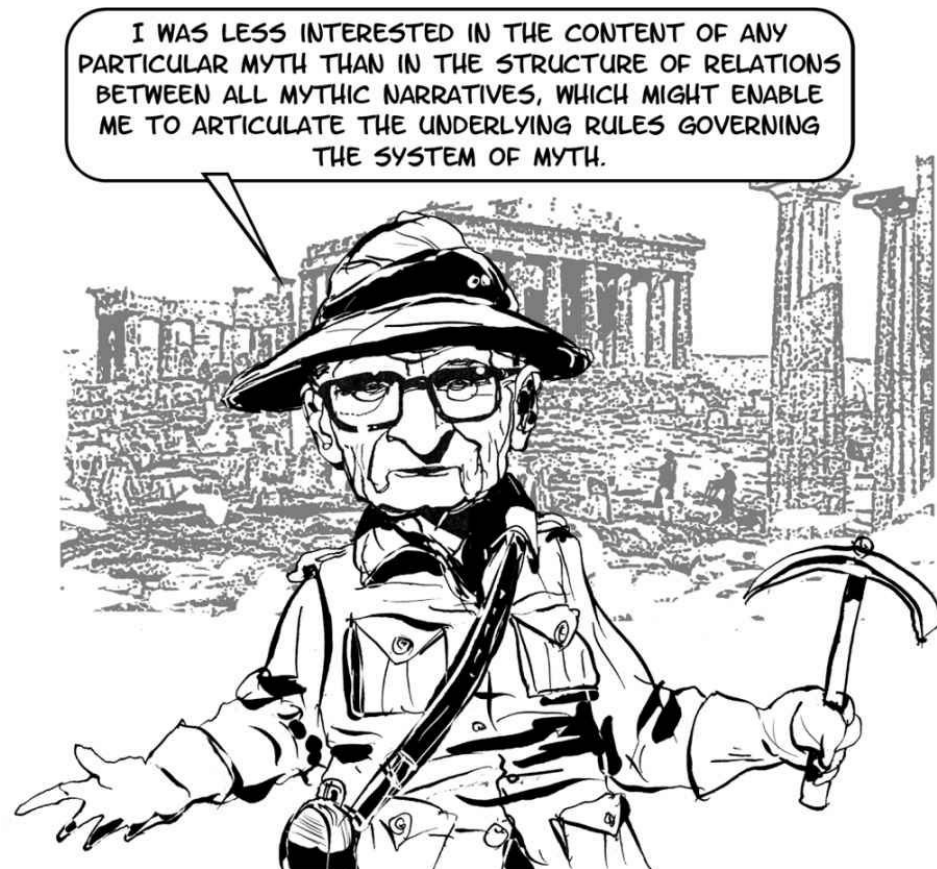
Anyhow... we need to start from somewhere!

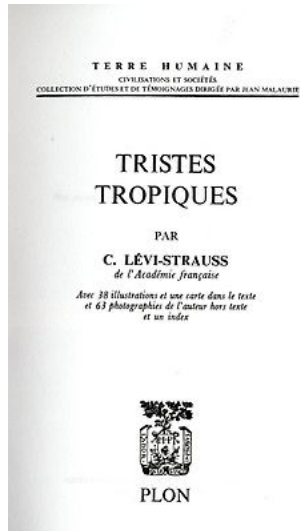
The myth “of” anthropology and the myth “in” anthropology

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. The Structural Study of Myth. *The Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270): 428-444. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/536768>

“Myth” as an ontological and epistemological ambiguous phenomenon

Myth are seen in “*conflicting ways: collective dreams, the outcome of a kind of esthetic play, the foundation of ritual.... Mythological figures are considered as personified abstractions, divinized heroes or decayed gods*” (:428)





PřF: Bi7851 Anthropology of Ethnicity I

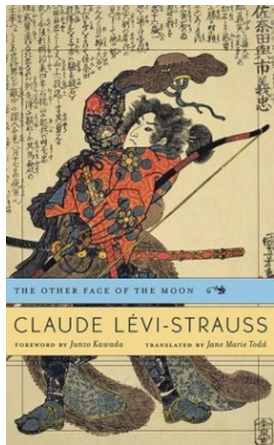
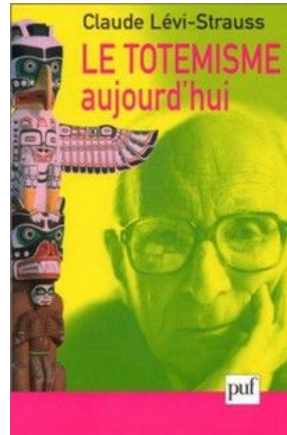
Claude Lévi Strauss (1908-2009)

Structural anthropology (which relations underline the concrete socio-cultural phenomenons)

Cultural relativism (each society is different and its socio-culture is related with its specificities)

Anti-anthropocentrism: *“The world began without man [sic], and it will complete itself without him”**

*Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). *Tristes tropiques*. Paris: Plon.



“On the one hand, it would seem that in the course of a myth anything is likely to happen... But on the other hand, this apparent arbitrariness is belied by the astounding similarity between myths collected in widely different regions” (: 429)

Similarity with linguistics studies (same sounds different meanings): from intrinsic meanings to relations between sounds and meanings

“Langue”: linguistic rules, vs. *“parole”*: concrete uses of language*

“myth is language: to be known, myth has to be told; it is a part of human speech” (: 430)

*Ferdinand de Saussure (éd. de Charles Bally et Albert Sechehaye). 1916. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot.

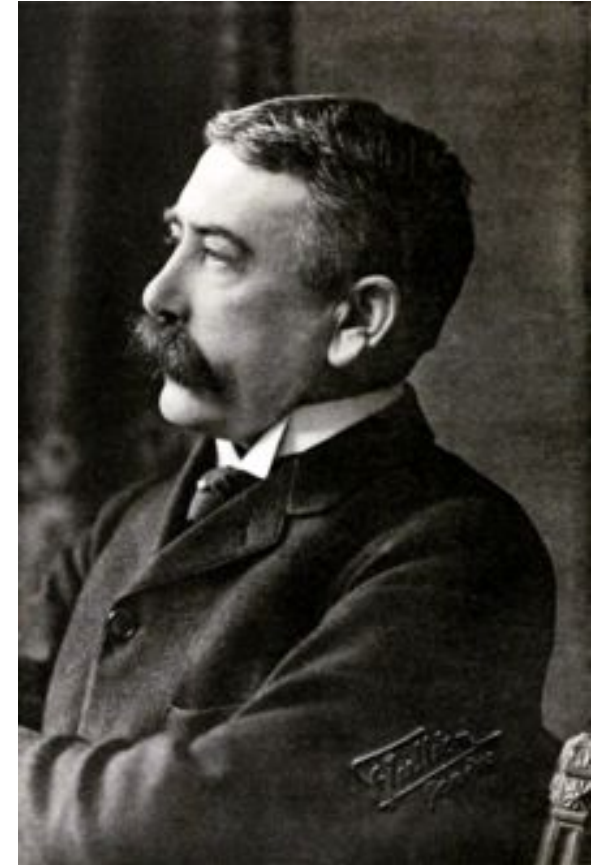


Image: Ferdinand de Saussure (source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_de_Saussure)



Images: Dragon Brno Rugby Clube (source: <https://www.dragonbrno.cz>), and the dragon tram (source: <https://www.facebook.com/brnodaily/photos/a.297209917402312/911482082641756/?type=3>)

1. Myths' meanings are the result of the combination of their elements and have not intrinsic ones
2. Myth as a language with specific universal properties
3. Properties are situated "above" the linguistic expression

Strategies of analysis (scientific method?):

1. economy of explanation
2. unity of solution
3. to reconstruct the whole from a fragment
4. further stages from previous ones

Myths as composed of “*gross constituent units*”
“*the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning (: 431)*”

Es. archaeologist of the future (writing books and orchestra scores)

Es. observer of cards players (players as people and games rules)



Image: Maurice Ravel's Bolero, analysed by Lévi-Strauss at the end of *L'Homme nu* (source: <https://sheetdownload.com/Maurice-Ravel/Bolero/8119>)

From structuralist back in time...

(from the myth “in” anthropology back to the myth “of” anthropology)

From middle 1800: emerging of evolutionism

Charles Darwin and The Origin of Species*

Christian Jürgensen Thomsen and the three
“ages” (stone, bronze, iron)**

*Darwin, Charles. 1859. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray.

**Thomsen, Christian J. 1936. *Ledetraad til Nordisk Oldkundskab*. Copenhagen: Møllers bogtr.

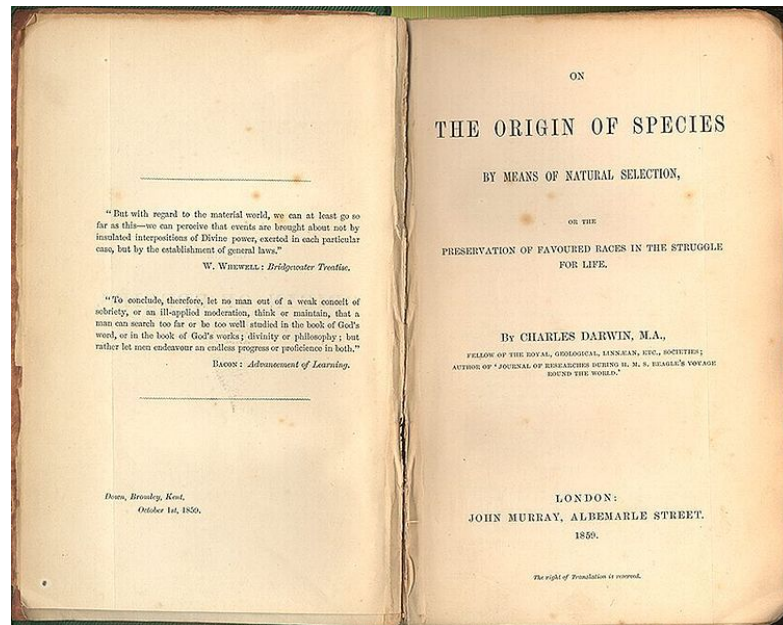


Image: Darwin's The origin of the Species (source: https://cs.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soubor:Origin_of_Species.jpg)



Evolutionism

Cultures develop in a linear way

Each culture passes through the same stages of development

i.e. savagery-barbarism-civilization*

Each stage is characterized by the presence of social and cultural ensembles affecting technology, family and property**

Recognition of a common humanity

Image: Evolution (source: <https://www.alamy.com/go-back-we-screwed-up-image178001988.html>)

*Taylor, Edward B. 2012 [1871]. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. London: Routledge.

**Morgan, Lewis. 1877. *Ancient Society*. London: MacMillan.

Historicism and Cultural relativism

Each society has its own historical trajectory*

Focus on collecting data rather than on general theories

Cultural relativism: each society produces its own meanings

Culture as a solution to the problem of existence*

From Culture to cultures

*Boas, Franz. 1896. The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology. *Science* 4(103): 901-908.

**Herskovits, Melville J. 1948. *Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Knopf.



Image: Kwakiutl people

(source: [https://cs.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soubor:Edward_S._Cutis,_Kwakiutl_bridal_group,_British_Columbia,_1914_\(published_version\).jpg](https://cs.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soubor:Edward_S._Cutis,_Kwakiutl_bridal_group,_British_Columbia,_1914_(published_version).jpg))

Functionalism

The element of a culture work for maintaining the cultural system

Cultural traits serve to satisfy the needs of individuals in society at bio-psychological levels*

Social structure as the network of social relations and institutions work for the maintenance of this system**

Holistic approach to the study of the societies (influence of the French sociology school: social facts as influence on individuals***)



Image: Radcliffe-Brown

(source: <https://accuratepicturesofanthropologists.tumblr.com/post/653348577340473344/embed>)

*Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

**Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. Free Press.

***Durkheim, Emile. 1894. *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*. Paris:



Image: Margaret Mead (source: <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2574>)

Psychological and personality anthropology

Relation between society (culture) and individual (psychology)

Comparative approach: culture as a “*consistent pattern of thought and action*”*

Differences internal to the societies: gender is cultural and not biological**

Nurture more important than nature in the socialization of individuals

*Benedict, Ruth. 1934. *Patterns of Culture*. London: Routledge.

**Mead, Margaret. 1928. *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: William Morrow.

Structuralism

Cultures as the epiphenomenon of mental structure

Binary oppositions enable the mind to connect with the World*

Mental structures shape social and cultural life (kinship, myth, history, etc.)

Different societies can produce different structural classifications (i.e. ritual purity)**

*Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books

**Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.



Image: Mary Douglas
(source: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/news/2014/oct/mary-douglas-memorial-lecture-2014>)

Post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-...

Emphasis on “emic” categories

Deconstruction of analytical categories

Rejection of “objective reality”*

Culture as a web of significance/meanings**

Anthropology as “discourse”***

Attention to the power relations in anthropology

*Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.

**Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of culture*. Basic Books.

***Clifford, James and Marcus, George. 1986. *Writing Cultures: The politics and poetics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



Image: Poststructuralist deconstruction (source: <https://literariness.org/2016/03/21/philosophical-influences-on-poststructuralism/>)

Moving further

Selected approaches: evolutionism, historicism, functionalism, psychological anthropology, structuralism, post-modernism...

Tensions between subject-society and subjective-objective description

These are just a sample of a wide variety of approaches...

In the contemporary panorama, plural suggestions and proposals...



Image: Anthropologies (source: <https://www.fsf.vu.lt/naujienos/fakulteto-ivykiai/4550-discussion-conversations-on-anthropology-past-present-future>)

Exercise: “what about the goose?”

1. describe your “subject” experience of eating goose in November

2. describe the “collective” experience of eating goose in November

3. reflect on how you are influenced by and how you influence the collective in the experience of eating goose in November



Image: Roasted Goose with Cabbage and Dumplings - Czech Cuisine

PřF: Bi1251 Introduction to Anthropology I

For the next week

We will receive as guest lecturers Kelly Sambucci and Bara Cervena from the Masaryk University (Czech Republic), who will present their research with local people, Gorillas and parasites in Uganda.

Recommended reading:

Ampumuza, Christine, 2022. Living with Gorillas? Lessons from Batwa-Gorillas' Convivial Relations at Bwindi Forest, Uganda. *Conservation and Society* 20(2): 69-78. DOI: http://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs_30_21

For any doubt and to send your exercise:

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Enjoy the rest of the week!