History and anthropology. A historical appraisal of the current contact between the disciplines

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History and anthropology. A historical appraisal of the current contact between the disciplines

Anthropology and history have traditionally been contrasted with each other. Thus their present-day convergence in the twofold form of a historicizing of anthropology as well as an anthropologizing of history must at first glance be somewhat confusing. In fact, the concept of historical anthropology, already widely used in some circles, may appear to be altogether paradoxical. Even considering that the various sciences today are generally characterized by interdisciplinary contact, the merging of disciplines and the swapping of sub-disciplines, one still might view the convergence of history and anthropology as a noteworthy development. Such is the case even if we use anthropology's most comprehensive definition as sciences humaines. In this essay we must take into consideration at least the philosophical, biological (physical) and ethnological variants of anthropology; those specifically national traditions that do not correspond to this branching into anthropological subdisciplines and that to some extent cut across them must be treated separately, namely British social anthropology, French ethnologie and ethnographie, American cultural anthropology and German philosophische Anthropologie. Whereas in the context of this essay I can undertake little more than a description and tentative appraisal of the contact between history and anthropology, I would hope that in the future the specifics of this process of rehistoricizing could be analyzed. As an example we could well imagine case studies in the sociology of science that would compare the perhaps very different institutional consequences stemming, on the one hand, from the convergence of French ethnology and historiography under the auspices of the Annales with, on the other hand, the rehistoricizing of American cultural anthropology in the wake of its exposure to the Kuhnian conception of the history of science.

In the following I would like to point out a few aspects of the history of the problem areas emerging from the contact between the disciplines of anthropology and history and then continue with some comments on the history of anthropology that relate specifically to German philosophical anthropology and American ethnology. Thirdly, I shall attempt to portray various modes
of an *historical anthropology* of which the rudiments of historical demography seem to me to be especially important.

The convergence of anthropology and history may tempt us to conjure up anthropological or historical explanations, or even both kinds, for such an occurrence. Hegel assigned the anthropologizing of sciences to an era in which sensuality swayed reason; Arnold Gehlen recognized in it the reaction of man, who, trapped in the wholesale nature of his existence, turned to distorting nature itself. It is true that the anthropologizing of history and the re-historicizing of anthropology have indeed lent themselves to contrived interpretations of this sort. I prefer, however, not to undertake such a task.

Rather I will restrict my comments here to a set of peculiar circumstances that has characterized the contact between anthropology and history. In this regard developments within anthropology have been as decisive as the influence of a particular conception of the history of science. For many different reasons even the most varied forms of anthropology have all undergone a crisis since the Second World War, the extent of which can be seen in anthropology’s subsequent redefinition as the crisis-science\(^2\). An awareness of this crisis has certainly led to the ready adoption of that same theory which has likewise placed the concept of crisis squarely in the center of the history of science, namely Thomas Kuhn’s *The structure of scientific revolutions*\(^3\). Kuhn’s book appeared in 1962; in the same year the Social Science Research Council sponsored the “Conference on the History of Anthropology”\(^4\), marking the beginning of a new historicizing of anthropology. All fortuitousness aside, this chronological coincidence does reveal one significant fact: beginning in the 1960’s the awareness of crisis in anthropology was exacerbated by its exposure to Kuhn’s theory and because of this the rehistoricizing of anthropology has been accelerated. That Kuhn’s theory was derived from the natural sciences and according to its own premises was not to be applied to “preparadigm” disciplines like anthropology has not stopped anthropologists, and especially historians of anthropology, from adopting Kuhn’s theory. Rather, it has encouraged them. The reasons for this will be discussed in the last part of this essay.

**The history of problem areas**

The traditional contrasting of anthropology and history has been especially pronounced in the German tradition where the science of man acquired an identity of its own by breaking away from the philosophy of history. The latter has in turn viewed — at least according to Odo Marquard’s exemplary interpretation of the Kantian tradition — anthropology as merely the “second and less worthy claimant to the field of practical philosophy”\(^5\). Whether or not this reconstruction of the schism between anthropology and philosophy of history can be verified in detail remains open to debate. It is nevertheless
certain that the vehemence of the antipathy between anthropology and history can in part be traced back to this interpretation of the Enlightenment. This antipathy was further intensified by attempts to minimize the potency of one of the most consequential, both theoretically as well as practically, theories of history, namely the Marxian. Not only was this theory of history exposed to alleged refutations from the "outside", but also in striving to rupture the unity of this theory and neutralize its practical effectiveness, critics read into the works of Marx himself an incongruity between anthropology and history, or between his humanism and his political economy.

Today interpreters of Marx representing the most diverse perspectives forego the bifurcation of the Marxian œuvre into history and anthropology. The belated discovery of Marx the "ethnologist" has contributed significantly to the disappearance of this contrast and has subsequently led ad absurdum many efforts to attach the labels "anthropology" and "political economy" to the productive periods of Marx's life and to play one period off against the other. Anthropology can no longer be separated from history in Marx's writings. Indeed the chapter on Feuerbach in The German ideology, in which Marx cited "the production of new needs" by man himself as the first historical act provides a model for an anthropologically oriented theory of history.

Today, looking back on Kant's anthropology as impartially as possible, we can clearly detect its affinity to an historical manner of thinking. His anthropology should by no means be interpreted as a turning away from philosophy of history, as Marquard especially has suggested. The programmatic division of knowledge about man into 1) a physiology that goes about researching "what nature makes out of man", and 2) a pragmatism that examines what "he (namely, man himself, author's note) makes out of himself, or rather can and should make", lends itself, it seems to me, to the philosophical manner of questioning typical of the philosophy of history. Moreover, one cannot arrive at the conclusion based on Kant's shorter writings on the philosophy of history that anthropology plays only second fiddle to the philosophy of history. It is in fact precisely in his essay Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (1784) that the emergence of society as well as the history of the human species is established anthropologically, that is to say, on the basis of an antagonism described as an innate state.

We find not only in the writings of Lichtenberg but also in those of Blumenbach and Georg Forster, anthropological and historical questions mutually "contaminating" each other. That these writers remain so unfamiliar to us today is a result of the screening out of a specific strain in the history of our anthropology. It remains yet to be answered why the dominant history of anthropology has chosen to banish and dismiss as mere "prehistoric" precisely these examples of a doctrina humanae naturae that did emphasize the close relationship between anthropology and history. At any rate, begin-
ning with Hegel, Marquard finds, anthropology was once again forced to move closer to philosophy of history. The precarious relationship between anthropology and history remained intact up until Dilthey, for whom the essence of man could only be disclosed from history, but which in turn taught that the nature of man was indeed a constant. Furthermore, we can discover the hidden affinity between anthropology and history not only in the history of anthropology, but also by looking at the tradition of universal history. There we see that the tone of Schlozer's skirmish with Herder, who had so sharply criticized his Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie (1773), was dictated by the anthropological premises of the two opponents. In order to counter Herder, Schlozer introduced into the argument his presupposition that history in general was at one and the same time "ennobling and deteriorating", and that history implied the becoming of man just as much as its cause lay outside of man; man himself was by nature nothing, but could become everything through "conjectures", as Schlozer labelled his concept: "Man's indefiniteness constitutes the second aspect of his essence".

The historicizing of anthropological phenomena is inherent in the modern era, and sets in with a "vengeance" in the transition into the nineteenth century. In 1799 the Parisian "Société des Observateurs de l'Homme" was founded; its program anticipated essential aspects of current cultural and social anthropology. If one agrees with Thomas Nipperdey in claiming that the historicizing of anthropological structures succeeded fully only with the termination of historicism, that is, since the end of the nineteenth century, then one will also tend to overlook the historical anthropology of the late-Enlightenment and even of earlier writers like Raynal and Robertson (History of America, 1777), to cite but two examples. The writings of Jauffret, Dégérande, Demeunier and Volney are no mere preludes to the historicizing process that finally "succeeds" with the termination of historicism. This type of interpretation would posit a misleading continuity from the early Enlightenment up until historicism, characterized by the gradually increasing historicizing of anthropological phenomena. Such an interpretation does not yield an adequate history of the sciences of man nor does it facilitate the working-out of an historical anthropology — not to mention the fact that with this perspective of continuity one could hardly explain "relapses" into ethnocentrism, as for instance in Victorian anthropology. For when trying to trace the emergence of historical anthropology, an internal reconstruction in the form of a disciplinary history — be it of anthropology or of history — simply does not suffice. Rather the relationship of Enlightenment anthropology to historicism must be described through the perspective of discontinuity and the "derailing" of alternatives, if we wish to take into consideration the influence that colonialism and imperialism have exercised on the development of theory in the sciences of man.

By equating "regionalization" and "historicization", the Enlightenment captured a positive moment in the relation between history and anthropology.
This is reflected above all in the identification of ethnology with prehistory: "The philosophical traveler who journeys to the ends of the earth traverses the succession of generations; he travels into the past; each step takes him a century back in time; his destination, the unknown islands, are for him the cradle of human society." No doubt we find here in Joseph-Marie Degérande's proposal a very different relation between anthropology and history than we do in the colonial ethnology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when cultural differences were interpreted as the various steps in a uniform development and likewise viewed as a legitimization for colonial practices.

Within the sciences of man — and this applies to French ethnology as well as American cultural anthropology — a growing concern with the anthropology of the Enlightenment can be observed. This does not signify a sentimental avowal of allegiance to a time when the discipline was still "pure" but signifies rather a critical and thoughtful attempt to bring to light long-since forgotten alternatives from a precolonial and pre-imperialistic era that might serve to reorient the human sciences both theoretically and practically. Thus with regard to our overall task, a reflection on the relation between anthropology and history would necessarily also embrace the Enlightenment.

The history of anthropology

The present-day convergence of anthropology and history is taking place in the twofold form of an historicizing of anthropology as well as an anthropologizing of history. I would now like to classify this new interest in a history of the human sciences as the historicizing of anthropology and the attempts to work out an historical anthropology as the anthropologizing of history. The consequences involved in using the above categories and their derivative functions will be discussed in the last section of this essay.

The history of philosophical anthropology

In his remarks "Concerning the state of philosophical anthropology" Günter Dux sought to rid Plessner's philosophical anthropology of the suspicion of ahistoricity. This suspicion, Dux pointed out, is quite natural because the mere use of the label "anthropology" indeed misleads one "into looking for the 'philosophical' quite apart from its historical locus". Elisabeth Ströker similarly characterized the frame of reference of the sciences of man as "fundamentally historical". Though Dux subtitled his comments "The historicity of the subject matter" he defended Plessner's anthropology against the charge of ahistoricity by emphasizing his concern with the history of anthropology: "The intellectual historical analyses that Plessner dedicated to Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel — not as bearers
of eternal truth but in an avowedly evolutionary and constitutive manner — are only to be understood in this context as self-reflections and expressions of an historical perspective."

But, on the other hand, Dux did term Gehlen’s anthropology a horrible example of that kind of "historical problem area which permits history itself to be eclipsed by a subject matter deemed constant and unchanging, because the problem area places these epochs of history on a par with each other and thereby levels them out on a tableau of simultaneousness". In support of his thesis Dux cited Gehlen: "Philosophical anthropology has not taken a single step forward since Herder. And it remains in essence the same conception that I intend to expand upon using the means of modern science. In fact it does not even need to take a step forward for it is truth."

I view this juxtapositioning of Plessner and Gehlen as false, but that Dux should do so is nevertheless very instructive when viewed from the perspective of the history or sociology of science. From the perspective that Dux utilized, on the other hand, Gehlen’s anthropology is not a bit more ahistorical than Plessner’s. Gehlen examined the same writers (and others, too) that Plessner did — Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel — but he by no means utilized that pre-emptive perspective, inherent in disciplinary histories, that decisively puts the constancy of problem areas into the forefront. Quite apart from the question of its objective validity, Dux’s juxtapositioning has a systematic relevance; it makes more clear than ever that the disciplinary histories of the sciences of man cannot for a moment dispense with an awareness of the historicity of their subject matter. To this end various combinations are possible. The history of a given discipline may serve to legitimize a constant and unchanging area of problems, just as attempts to historicize a subject matter may understandably turn to a disciplinary history for further legitimation. How and if this relation between an historicizing of a subject matter and a disciplinary history is valid for the history of science in general remains of course an open question. But I believe that this relation can at least be shown to be asymmetrical for the history of science in the modern era. Whereas the historicizing of a subject matter is often compatible with its disciplinary history such that the latter is often used as an additional legitimatory crutch, the reverse is not possible. In other words, one needs more for the historicizing of a subject matter than merely a disciplinary history. As proof of this we may mention the widely used practice within the natural sciences — advocated by natural scientists and historians alike — of dividing the prehistory from the "true" and continuing success story of a discipline. It was Thomas Kuhn’s conception of the history of science that first brought about a change in this practice. Though Kuhn himself sought to preserve the special status of the natural sciences by introducing his distinction between paradigmatic and preparadigmatic disciplines, the effect of his emphasis on discontinuities has actually tended to abolish the distinction between natural and human sciences.
The history of ethology

An interest in the history of a given discipline does not necessitate the historicizing of its subject matter, but nevertheless does encourage it. I would like to illustrate the optimism implied in this fact with an example taken from ethology. The dialogue between ethology and historically oriented social science has become stuck in a rut. The reciprocal forbidding of certain taboo questions has brought some potentially promising discussions to a halt, and the proscribing of divergent opinions — which has its own institutional consequences — has already become a common occurrence. There is little hope that misunderstandings and insinuations can be overcome through discussions in which the old and worn-out antipathy between anthropological constants and historical variables are once again rehashed.

In such an impasse a retrospective view of the history of ethology as an historical social science may prove to be quite helpful, especially since the ethologists themselves show little interest in undertaking this task. It must be noted that the treatment of disciplinary "traditions", though mostly serving to legitimize, can also serve to criticize the present state of the discipline. John Stuart Mill named ethology "the exact science of human nature". By that he understood primarily an analysis of the laws of character development. Such a science was based, according to Mill, not on "laws of human nature". Rather it was to prove useful in explaining and confirming the various character traits of each individual by relying on specific circumstantial factors, with the remainder, if there was any, subsumed under the rubric "innate factors".

Even a glance at the history of ethology clearly shows that the historicizing of its subject matter is not a demand forced on it from the outside, in the sense of an historically oriented social science, but rather is part and parcel of the inner history of ethology. Of course this internal perspective is conveyed to ethology from the outside. Interdisciplinary studies can, and in this case should, entail getting to know the history of another's discipline for the benefit of one's own discipline and, when necessary, learning from the experience.

The history of ethnology

As I speak here of ethnology, assuming that no further qualification is necessary, I refer to the American use of the term "anthropology" which is not restricted solely to cultural anthropology. The rehistoricizing of this discipline goes back to the sixties — the decisive year was 1962 — when the above mentioned "Conference on the History of Anthropology" took place. In 1973, when several American ethnologists, including Dell Hymes and George Stocking, founded the Newsletter: History of anthropology, they made reference to this Conference and to the growing interest in the history of ethnology throughout the 1960's, especially in the wake of the "Planning Conference
in the History of the Behavioral Sciences" held in Washington in 1966. George Stocking has outlined a chronology of this newly awakened interest, but which I cannot hope to recapitulate here.

I would however like once again to restate my thesis that the historicizing of ethnology was related to a growing awareness of crisis and was in turn intensified by its association with the theory that brought the concept of crisis to the forefront of debate in the history of science. The more ethnologists became aware of the entanglement of their discipline in American foreign policy, above all in the Vietnam War, the more the crisis in ethnology grew. Two strategies involving the rehistoricizing of ethnology were proposed to offset the source of this corruption. The first one saw it inextricably bound up with the very origins of ethnology itself, the other one claimed that ethnology had been corrupted somewhere along the way and thus deflected from its "true" and pristine course. In other words, the question revolved around whether one viewed ethnology as the "daughter" of the Enlightenment or of the Age of Imperialism? Fortunately we are not compelled to choose between the two strategies, for both explanations unduly simplify the history of the discipline. Be that as it may, our major concern here is to stress once again that it was this politically motivated sense of crisis that finally led to a rehistoricizing of ethnology. As an indication of this I only need to mention the book bearing the title Reinventing anthropology or the plea for an "Ethnology of ethnological traditions".11.

The attempt to propose alternatives to the modern corrupted form of the discipline led ethnologists, as was to be expected, directly to the Enlightenment. In the process the renown of Herder as an ethnologist grew immensely; one can already foresee a similar revival shaping up for the "Observateurs de l'homme" as soon as American ethnologists become more familiar with them. This turning to history in a time of crisis was further prompted by another trend in the history of science, namely the Darwinization of disciplinary history. Current history of science has actually become the evolutionary history of science, and thus "mutations" and alternatives play a much greater role today than they did fifty years ago. This trend has brought with it the added advantage of allowing us to discount the unproductive dichotomy between presentism and historicism in the historiography of the human sciences — in other words, the study of the past either purely for its own sake, or only for its relevance to the present. The search for historical alternatives to current ethnology has indeed become the order of the day; to redress what are perceived as prevailing abuses and malpractices is of course the ulterior motive. But the success of this change of course depends on the reconstruction of alternatives, that is to say, the realization of their present potential through exact historical scholarship.

This assertion does not of course solve the problems involved in the reconstruction of alternatives that could potentially reorient the discipline, but at least the search for alternatives no longer needs further justification.
Historical anthropology

The changeability and historical determinateness of anthropological structures is the concern of historical anthropology. At first glance it may seem that this simply implies the relativizing in the historical dimension of the anthropological notions of constancy. Yet, I believe it is better for the moment to speak rather of an anthropologizing of history. I will outline more detailed reasons for this at the end of this section.

The history of mental structures ("mentalités")

The attempt to write a history of mental structures lies at the heart of historical anthropology and has always been undertaken with a heavy reliance on neighboring human sciences. The editors of the three volume work Faire de l'histoire, which surveys present-day historiography in France, emphasize the great extent to which the "histoire lente" of the ethnologists has influenced Braudel's conception of "longue durée". Though efforts to deal with the history of mental structures have not been limited solely to the Annales, their influence has been decisive for some time, and thus any attempt whatever to bring anthropology and history closer together must begin by coming to terms with the Annales school of thought. Though it has had but a very brief history, the history of mental structures has become fashionable so rapidly that it already seems to us somewhat obsolete.

At the present I can only sketch those aspects of the history of mental structures that are pertinent to the relation between history and anthropology. The prehistory of the field reaches back as far as the Enlightenment. No doubt most important in this regard is the attempt, beginning with Voltaire, to offer a conception of cultural history as an alternative to the conventional writing of history. Far-reaching insights into the historical variability of anthropological structures were not uncommon. In his Observations sur l'histoire de France we find the Abbé Malby pointing out already in 1788 that relations between the sexes were by no means bound by innate factors of emotional disposition running along sex lines. And if we place d'Holbach’s comment found in his Système social (1773), "La civilisation [...] n'est pas encore terminée" (the same motto that Norbert Elias has chosen for his Prozess der Zivilisation) alongside that of Robinet, "La nature est encore à l'ouvrage" (De la nature, 1765), we begin to appreciate just how far these attempts to combine natural history with theories of civilization actually went during the French Enlightenment. Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss of course follow in this tradition.

From the start the history of mental structures has been accompanied by Lucien Febvre’s critique of history’s most glaring anachronism, namely,
the way in which it utilizes psychology. While professing to analyze mental collectivities, the history of mental structures does not, however, rely on some notion of "social psyche" as in the conception of Karl Lamprecht at the end of the nineteenth century, but rather leans very heavily on a close working relationship with ethnology. That Lamprecht's version of "Kulturgeschichte" failed to seriously challenge the traditional manner of writing German political history was a direct result of his failure to tie his ideas into a genuinely German tradition of ethnology.

But on no account does this imply that the history of mental structures excludes the "individual" from its scope, and if at all, then only in the form of the "unique". Neither does the "histoire des mentalités" separate quantitative from qualitative analyses. Though in France it is certainly not Fevre and Bloch who have gone overboard in stressing the importance of the "histoire numérique", quantitative history has certainly played a role in the Annales school of thought since Ernest Labrousse received a chair in the VIe Section of the Ecole Pratique. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has traced this blending of the "qualitative" and the "quantitative" in French historiography, of which his own writings are prime examples.

The perspective opened up by a history of mental structures has finally made it possible to qualify history's traditional definition as the science of the past ("science du passé") and shift the emphasis to include the "histoire contemporaine". It is apparent that the attempts to portray the historicity of anthropological structures will necessarily lead directly to the history of the present, which is the actual subject matter of anthropology. Therefore it is not too far-fetched to predict that as a consequence of history's new twofold definition as "science du passé" and "science contemporaine" a disciplinary hybridization may be unfolding similar to the one already long underway in Britain between sociology and social anthropology.

**Historical demography**

In my summary of the history of mental structures I was less concerned with exemplifying the various schools of historiography than I was with elucidating the basic problems arising from the contact between anthropology and history; the same holds true for the following summary of historical demography. I will restrict my comments to the work of Philippe Ariès and various studies dealing with the development of the French population before and after the Revolution.

The most salient demographic occurrence in France around the time of the French Revolution was the decline in the birth rate, especially when compared to the situation in England. Numerous scholars have been pursuing the possibility of linking this "demographic" revolution to the political Revolution. The shift in population growth has been assigned to the year 1790,
after which the fertility rate noticeably declined. An abundance of data supports the conjecture that the sinking birth rate can be attributed to the increased use of birth control methods. The "mouvement contraceptif populaire" began in 1770 but really caught on in the decade after 1790. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries an increasing number of couples practiced some form of birth control, especially coitus interruptus, which in the Ancien Régime ("contraception de l'âge classique") had been prevalent only among a negligible minority. The result had been of course an actual revolution of fertility.

Generally speaking, scholars see Christian sexual morality on the one hand and the anti-Christian influences of the French Revolution on the other as responsible for this pattern; but these factors by no means exhaust the field of possible explanations. Ariès believes that during the course of the eighteenth century contraceptive practices became tabooed to such an extent that the "problem" actually disappeared from speech — the taboo topic could not even be mentioned and thus it remained secret — making the use of contraception possible once again. Perhaps the following "glissement sémantique", occurring at the same time that Malthusian practices were increasingly being used, does lend weight to this conjecture: "onanie" no longer meant coitus interruptus, as in the Biblical tradition, but rather now masturbation.

A variation on this argument can be used to interpret the demographic revolution of the late eighteenth century as a result of the transfer of illegitimate (i.e. non-marital) behavioral patterns into the marriage. Before 1700 the Catholic Church certainly condoned coitus interruptus in non-marital relationships; as long as the Church had to provide poverty relief, there were compelling economic reasons for it as well as for propagating a moderate degree of sexual life within the marriage. In addition to that we should not forget the impact of the seventeenth-century "regain religieux" brought on by the Jansenists. By demanding a tighter control over sexual instincts, asceticism in time came to mean the conscious harnessing of all lustful pleasures. A new private morality for the layman was the result — a morality which no longer needed the Church to serve as a moral authority. Sexuality "withdrew" to within the confines of the family. The increased use of contraception was not so much a result of alleged anti-Christian trends as it was the transformation of a type of religiosity originally rooted in asceticism.

Contraception made possible the differentiation between sexuality and reproduction; how else does one explain the behavior of all those good Christian couples who since the eighteenth century have been transgressing in this respect? By 1778, Moreau complained, the "deadly secrets" ("funestes secrets") of contraception had already penetrated the lowlands where even in the villages man had learned to deceive nature. Four years later Père Féline wrote in his widely read *Catéchisme des gens mariés* that most married couples
were of the opinion that in their sexual life they were free to do as they pleased. They did not even think of confessing such things, denying their Father Confessor even the right to lay down rules and restrictions in these matters ("matières"). The refined sensibilities and "délicatesse" of the husbands now spared their wives the series of pregnancies, which previously had occurred on the average at intervals of thirty months, without relinquishing what they viewed as the legitimate right to their own satisfaction. Finally, we read in a letter dated 1840 from the Bishop J.B. Bouvier to the Vatican that the Catholics in the diocese of Mans "flee the masses and sacraments" in order to avoid the restrictions of their confessors who tried to forbid their using contraception.

Based on the demographic revolutions in the period from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, Philippe Ariès put together an extensive "étude des moeurs et des sensibilités" and showed how structures, previously held to be biological and thus unchanging, have indeed changed. From his historical demography Ariès first developed a spectrum of differing family types and then related the formation of these to changes in the mental structures of sexual and reproductive behavior. The decisive changes took place during the second half of the eighteenth century. It was then that the "discovery" of something called childhood — concurrent with the rise of the bourgeoisie — led to a sharp distinction between families "with" and families "without" children. Only since the late eighteenth century has the child become the center of the family; while turning away from the society at large and withdrawing into an ever increasing zone of "privacy", the family has become more intimate in structure and character. One sees this process at work in the increased use of diminutives in family letters. The meanings of "chambre" and "salle", previously regarded as synonyms, diverged at the end of the eighteenth century. In everyday life time acquired a new significance; plans for the future ("projets d’avenir") became relevant; family planning was introduced, with offspring calculated on the basis of projections of the family into the future. "The great demographic revolution of the nineteenth century seems to be related to a change in the state of consciousness, namely the idea that one belongs to the family and of the child within the family."

Steps toward an historical anthropology

Studies in historical demography that build on or depart from the work of Philippe Ariès allow us further to define the relation between historical demography and historical anthropology. Whereas the former is primarily engaged in describing demographic developments, to the latter falls the task of explaining these developments. It is helpful to distinguish three distinct types of explanations which, though they stake out a legitimate field of study for his-
historical anthropology, nevertheless still do not provide us with a real historicizing of anthropological phenomena.

The first type uses anthropological statistics, especially data on physical anthropology, to explain cultural differences. Typical in this regard are the studies of Le Roy Ladurie, for example his *Anthropologie du conscrit français* written together with Paul Dumont in 1972. These writers use physical anthropological data found in military archives (body size, malformations, etc.) for the years from 1819 to 1826 and compare them to cultural statistics like levels of education, delinquency and suicide — an attempt which, by the way, had already been undertaken by Quetelet. But for our purposes Le Roy Ladurie's concept of historical anthropology is somewhat too narrowly defined, namely the use of statistics merely to verify the historical and geographic variability of anthropological facts. Statistical studies of this type are undoubtedly very important for the historical anthropologist, even if the explanatory potential tends to get lost in the attempt to strive for precision in the presentation of data or at best appears as a formal declaration of goals. In 1969 Le Roy Ladurie brought out a new edition of Alphonse d'Angeville's *Essai sur la statistique de la population française* (1836) which he praised as the "constitution d'une anthropologie historique du peuple français". Yet, only in a very restricted and even simplistic sense does this type of analysis conform to our present-day conceptions of historical anthropology; we come away with little more than the banal assertion: "D'Angeville cherche les hommes."

In the effort to justify historical anthropology by terming certain phenomena "anthropological", the second type of explanation runs the risk of forcing phenomena that have already been subjected to historical and cultural analysis into ill-suited anthropological categories. This applies in part to Thomas Nipperdey's attempt to encourage historians to study the "anthropological dimension" of their discipline. I seriously doubt, for example, that "glory" is actually an anthropological category reducible to an "innate drive for power". When historical anthropologists using scientistic methods deal with categories like these, then they must not fail to point out that La Rochefoucauld, Rivarol, Chamfort and Joubert — to name only a few — have already long since dealt with these issues in their quite legitimate field of political morality. I find Nipperdey's effort to explain why Marxism has been so influential among the German workers by resorting to an analysis of the anthropological causes of this influence less a serious attempt to come to terms with historical anthropology than an outright dismissal of history in the name of anthropology.

The third type of explanation runs the risk of analyzing only those anthropological and biological phenomena that remain virtually inscrutable to cultural and historical analysis. For such an "historical" anthropology, the time span from the Neolithic Age to *Posthistoire* is but a single epoch. For example in its contribution to historical anthropology geographic hema-
ology examines shifts in serological characteristics spanning periods of four to five thousand years. For this reason alone all endeavors to work out the rudiments of an historical biology have been unsatisfactory, and this applies equally to the *Annales* special volume "Histoire biologique et société" (vol. 24, no 6, 1969). The optimistic overestimation of the value of the articles contained in that volume for historical anthropology stems in large part from the hope that historical biology could also function to expose and refute ideologies. Thus when it is proved that there is no such thing as a Jewish hemotype, the entire notion of the Jewish race, and with it the basis for anti-Semitism, becomes untenable. But this is the extent to which historical biology can refute ideological claims; it cannot provide us with insight into the anthropological elements in historical change.

It is clear, then, that the prospects for a truly historical anthropology diminish the more the borders are broken down between time periods in which anthropological characteristics are believed to undergo modification. Likewise, if elements of historicity are simply referred back to anthropological constants, the hope of focussing on a specific process of transformation unfortunately dissipates into a futile and arbitrary exercise. Processes of transformation are then described according to patterns of ontogenetic or phylogenetic development, but their historical specificity is no longer relevant or even understood.

The task of historical anthropology lies not in the historicizing of any and all phenomena lumped together under the heading anthropology. Instead we need to agree on a set of priorities. I believe that in evaluating these we should observe the following: phenomena receiving our closest attention must be securely anchored in anthropology, that is, they must be convincingly proved to be more than merely arbitrary or unique occurrences, and yet at the same time they must be phenomena whose complete unfolding clearly requires either cultural intervention or historical mediation. In this regard we should begin to speak of anthropological competencies and their historical realization or limitation and forget about the old twosome, anthropological constants and historical variables. One set of problems high on the list of priorities would be taken from the areas of sexuality, reproduction, threats to life and biographical constants. It is no accident that the most convincing examples of historical anthropology to date have been taken from these very areas, namely studies on the family, childhood, birth, diet, illness and death.

But I still wish to reaffirm my original contention, especially with regard to these privileged sets of problems, that historical anthropology is above all concerned with the anthropologizing of history. By that I mean the instrumental use of anthropology for historical research, and primarily for the basic problem of determining the size and duration of epochs. Ariès for example does not really examine changes in the experiences of children directly but instead uses changing attitudes toward children to arrive at a concep-
tion of the "stages" found in different attitudes toward family and child. This fact led one American reviewer of Ariès' book to remark that it was really more a book on adults than one on children\textsuperscript{21}.

The matter of illness provides another excellent example. Our goal here should not be to elaborate on the changing perception of illness but rather to aim at a better system of classification in the history of medicine using an analysis of morbidity. This is in addition to the potential value of such an analysis for demography, political economy, political systems, administration and religion — illness has always been "an important matter, yet its meaning and significance has always been sought elsewhere". Unlike other writers who have merely pointed out this fact, I would hope to go a step further and see what positive insight it might contain. This perspective outlining the instrumental use of anthropological phenomena perhaps more adequately depicts what we are driving at by the term competencies in the working-out of an historical anthropology than the dubious attempt to relativize and historicize anthropological constants.

A further problem, though of fundamental importance to the development of an historical anthropology, can be only touched upon here. It is related to the verbal determinacy and meaning-propensity (the propensity to assign meanings to) of human activities. This fact saddles historical anthropology with a double handicap from the start: like intellectual history, historical anthropology is almost entirely dependent upon sources that view the world through verbal symbols and thereby necessarily restricts its subject matter to the manifestations of those social classes who possess the means and skill required for this verbal understanding of the self and the world. (This handicap does not apply to historical demography, but then it of course has its own enormous difficulties when trying to agree on any given interpretation of statistical data.) Secondly, the historicizing of anthropological phenomena runs up against a sort of linguistic resistance that refuses to allow changes in the anthropological "basis" to accompany respective changes in the linguistic "superstructure". Jacques Revel and Jean-Pierre Peter have pointed out that historical accounts of illnesses, which at first glance may appear familiar, not only actually prove on closer analysis to be completely unknown and strange, but also that we lack the ability to perceive any equivalency between the two "codes". For example, when examining the large-scale socio-medical investigations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries we find to our dismay that no dictionary aids us in translating the strange terminologies, but instead we must turn to the laborious chore of rearranging archival material in line with a totally alien code. Yet, in his studies on medical history Michel Foucault has convincingly succeeded in utilizing the shift in a terminology — the changing style in the description of symptoms — to demonstrate the historicity of alleged constants, in this case a certain type of illness. As inappropriate as our concepts may prove to be to Foucault's own manner of theorizing, our desire to forge ahead...
toward an historical anthropology will be in the future even more dependent upon his exploration of discontinuities in the emergence of anthropology and language. Reinhart Koselleck has justifiably recommended that the still nascent field of historical anthropology orient itself around the works of Foucault and van den Berg. If this occurs, we can expect to see the contact between historical anthropology and historical semantics assuming an ever increasing role.

**History and anthropology: Some thoughts**

The contact between history and anthropology will certainly only profit from a "history of science" of anthropology. With regard to such a history, which is largely still to be written, I would like to conclude this essay by listing the following thoughts which, though not meant as a summary of the above, do draw a few conclusions from it that are pertinent to our understanding of the sociology and history of science.

1. The convergence of history and anthropology in the twofold form of an historicizing of anthropology and the anthropologizing of history is just one part of a broader interdisciplinary movement characterizing present-day science. More important than the emergence of new disciplines is the exchange of subdisciplines back and forth between established fields. This process reveals one aspect of the so-called finalization of science.

2. This interdisciplinary trend should not be viewed merely as providing cross-fertilization; rather it should be seen with a good deal of scepticism. Because it is taking place during a period in which science is increasingly being asked to legitimize and justify its existence, this merging of disciplines all too often serves as a guise to avoid shouldering this responsibility.

3. As a palliative to the demand for an unrestrained interdisciplinary structure we would like to stress the need for strong and autonomous disciplines. "An interdisciplinary structure encourages institutionalized mutual intrusions and does not guarantee peaceful coexistence or nonintervention." Thus before further interdisciplinary contact occurs, history should first verse itself in a thoroughly "ahistorical" anthropology, just as anthropology should show interest in a form of history that relativizes phenomena in the extreme. For example our historical anthropology should not seek out only those fields that already are highly historicized like cultural ethnology, but also those disciplines like ethology that vigorously resist any historicizing influences. It is only the mutual contact between "strong" disciplines that will prove beneficial.

4. It is above all in the human sciences that the current interdisciplinary trend is accompanied by a drive to historicize these disciplines.

5. This drive must be seen as a consequence of a crisis situation experienced by many human sciences and above all by anthropology. For them histo-
ricization implies primarily the reconstruction of alternative orientations for a discipline whose present state has been seriously corrupted.

6. The drive to historicize the human sciences has been not only a result of concrete historical circumstances specific to each discipline but has also been underscored by Kuhn's conception of the history of science, itself having become a sort of paradigm in the process with notions of crisis, revolution and paradigm-change as its main conceptual tools.

7. In its traditional form, for example in the works of Sarton, history of science was superfluous to a practicing natural scientist; at best it served to reinforce his awareness that legitimate progress had been made. The new conception of history of science now confronts natural scientists with a much more disjointed picture of their history and claims to challenge precisely that awareness of progress. Although it defines a mature discipline as one that can undergo crises, this new conception of the history of science oddly enough strengthens rather than weakens the natural scientist's awareness of legitimate progress.

8. The human sciences are profiting from the state of the natural sciences in two ways: they imitate the positive aspects of the natural sciences by adopting quantification, mathematical techniques, etc., which grant them the trimmings of "hard science", but they lay claim to that same negative experience of crisis which is by definition characteristic only of mature disciplines. The fact that our historical anthropology goes beyond merely tolerating historicization and quantification in the same discipline and actually encourages their joining is therefore fully in line with the new conception of the history of science.

9. The interdisciplinary trend threatens the identity of history and anthropology. The resulting reflectiveness has led to calls for an anthropology of anthropology as well as proposals for a history of history. In this manner additional affinities emerge that may promote the formation of an historical anthropology.

10. Interest in an historical anthropology must be seen in the light of the convergence between sociology and history — another clearly identifiable development in present-day academia. Peter Christian Ludz ascribes this to the relaxation of traditional methodological rigor and the resulting competition between theories, both of which have led to a methodological and theoretical arbitrariness and are making the merging of disciplines more probable than ever before.

11. Furthermore, Ludz claims that scholars today — completely overturning the principle laid down by Windelband and Rickert — are in search of a "nomologically oriented science of history" and an "idiographically attuned sociology". This being the case, historical anthropology has a clear-cut and mediating role to play in this mutual crossing-over between disciplines, especially because an historical science geared toward nomological studies to such an extent that it searches for historical and social con-
stants and invariables should also analyze behavioral patterns, attitudes and processes of institutionalization.

12. Historical anthropology must take on the task of distributing research problems ("competencies") as judiciously as possible among those disciplines that contribute to its formation. To ensure that the specific nature of a given problem will truly correspond to the competency of the discipline to which it is assigned, history of anthropology should fall in the field of anthropology, and historical anthropology in the field of history.


Notes

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3. Kuhn's book has actually acquired the type of paradigmatic significance for the history of science that it itself analyses. Since Kuhn, the history of science has shifted its emphasis primarily to an analysis of discontinuities. It has often been forgotten, however, that this same perspective lies at the center of the French "épistémologie" associated with the names of Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault. In both the American and the French varieties the convergence between anthropology and history has been determined by this new prominence assigned to discontinuities.


Only after finishing this essay was I able to read François Furet's very interesting remarks on the "historisation of ethnology" and the "ethnologisation of history", which — although not identical — come very close to what I have called the "anthropologization of history" and the "historicizing of anthropology". Cf. J. Dumoulin and D. Mosi (eds.), *The historian between the ethnologist and the futurologist*, Paris/The Hague, 1973, pp. 41-45. H. White has reviewed this volume in a very informative and concise way: "The historian at the Bridge of Sighs", in: *History and conciseness.*


18. It appears as if Ariès' book has unfortunately triggered a debate that repeats the same unproductive stereotyping which accompanied much of the discussion about Max Weber's ideas on the relationship between protestantism and capitalism: "Perhaps only as childhood was recognized on a mass scale and as a larger proportion of the population therefore developed a sense of industry could capitalism and large scale industrialization proceed". K. Kenniston, "Psychological development and historical change", *The journal of interdisciplinary history* 2, 1971, pp. 329-345. It is not at all difficult to foresee the difficulties and unsuited reactions historical anthropology will incur upon itself through such simplified statements of causal relationships.


25. In the human sciences the discussion of "normal science" has wisely been delegated a less important role — a process truly characteristic of "mature" disciplines. Revolutionairy crises are in fact easier to imitate than successful, daily puzzle-solving over a long period of time.


For the most recent discussion of "historical anthropology" in Germany, cf. the articles by Oskar Köhler and others in *Saeculum: Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte* 25 (2/3), 1974.