Putting Hierarchy in Its Place

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In the essay that follows, I shall be concerned with the genealogy of an idea. But before I put forward this genealogy, I need to make two preliminary arguments. The first involves the anthropological construction of natives. The second involves a defense of one kind of intellectual history.

The Place of the Native

On the face of it, an exploration of the idea of the "native" in anthropological discourse may not appear to have much to do with the genealogy of the idea of hierarchy. But I wish to argue that hierarchy is one of an anthology of images in and through which anthropologists have frozen the contribution of specific cultures to our understanding of the human condition. Such metonymic freezing has its roots in a deeper assumption of anthropological thought regarding the boundedness of cultural units and the confinement of the varieties of human consciousness within these boundaries. The idea of the "native" is the principal expression of this assumption, and thus the genealogy of hierarchy needs to be seen as one local instance of the dynamics of the construction of natives.

Although the term *native* has a respectable antiquity in Western thought and has often been used in positive and self-referential ways, it has gradually become the technical preserve of anthropologists. Although some other words taken from the vocabulary of missionaries, explorers, and colonial administrators have been expunged from anthropological usage, the term *native* has retained its currency, serving as a respectable substitute for terms like *primitive*, about which we now feel some embarrassment. Yet the term *native*, whether we speak of "native categories," or "native belief-systems" or "native agriculture," conceals certain ambiguities. We sense this ambiguity, for example, in the restricted use of the adjective *nativistic*, which is typically used not only for one sort of revivalism, but for revivalism among certain kinds of population.

Who is a "native" (henceforth without quotation marks) in the anthropological usage? The quick answer to this question is that the native is a person who is born in (and thus belongs to) the place the anthropologist is observing or writing about. This sense of the word *native* is fairly narrowly, and neutrally, tied to its Latin etymology. But do we use the term *native* uniformly to refer to people who are born in certain places and, thus, belong to them? We do not. We have tended

to use the word *native* for persons and groups who belong to those parts of the world that were, and are, distant from the metropolitan West. This restriction is, in part, tied to the vagaries of our ideologies of authenticity over the last two centuries. Proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue. We exempt ourselves from this sort of claim to authenticity because we are too enamored of the complexities of our history, the diversities of our societies, and the ambiguities of our collective conscience. When we find authenticity close to home, we are more likely to label it *folk* than *native*, the former being a term that suggests authenticity without being implicitly derogatory. The anthropologist thus rarely thinks of himself as a native of some place, even when he knows that he is from somewhere. So what does it mean to be a native of some place, if it means something more, or other, than being from that place?

What it means is that natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated,* or confined, in those places.[1] What we need to examine is this attribution or assumption of incarceration, of imprisonment, or confinement. Why are some people seen as confined to, and by, their places?

Probably the simplest aspect of the common sense of anthropology to which this image corresponds is the sense of physical immobility. Natives are in one place, a place to which explorers, administrators, missionaries, and eventually anthropologists, come. These outsiders, these observers, are regarded as quintessentially mobile; they are the movers, the seers, the knowers. The natives are immobilized by their belonging to a place. Of course, when observers arrive, natives are capable of moving to another place. But this is not really motion; it is usually flight, escape, to another equally confining place.

The slightly more subtle assumption behind the attribution of immobility is not so much physical as ecological. Natives are those who are somehow confined to places by their connection to what the place permits. Thus all the language of niches, of foraging, of material skill, of slowly evolved technologies, is actually also a language of incarceration. In this instance confinement is not simply a function of the mysterious, even metaphysical attachment of native to physical places, but a function of their adaptations to their environments.

Of course, anthropologists have long known that motion is part of the normal round for many groups, ranging from Bushmen and Australian aborigines, to Central Asian nomads and Southeast Asian swidden agriculturalists. Yet most of these groups, because their movements are confined within small areas and appear to be driven by fairly clear-cut environmental constraints, are generally treated as natives tied not so much to a place as to a pattern of places. This is still not quite motion of the free, arbitrary, adventurous sort associated with metropolitan behavior. It is still incarceration, even if over a larger spatial terrain.

But the critical part of the attribution of nativeness to groups in remote parts of the world is a sense that their incarceration has a moral and intellectual dimension. They are confined by what they know, feel, and believe. They are prisoners of their ''mode of thought.'' This is, of course, an old and deep theme in the

history of anthropological thought, and its most powerful example is to be found in Evans-Pritchard's picture of the Azande, trapped in their moral web, confined by a way of thinking that admits of no fuzzy boundaries and is splendid in its internal consistency. Although Evans-Pritchard is generally careful not to exaggerate the differences between European and Azande mentality, his position suggests that the Azande are especially confined by their mode of thought:

> Above all, we have to be careful to avoid in the absence of native doctrine constructing a dogma which we would formulate were we to act as Azande do. There is no elaborate and consistent representation of witchcraft that will account in detail for its workings, nor of nature which expounds its conformity to sequences and functional interrelations. The Zande actualizes these beliefs rather than intellectualizes them, and their tenets are expressed in socially controlled behavior rather than in doctrines. Hence the difficulty of discussing the subject of witchcraft with Azande, for their ideas are *imprisoned in action* and cannot be cited to explain and justify action. [Evans-Pritchard 1937:82–83; emphasis mine]

Of course, this idea of certain others, as confined by their way of thinking, in itself appears to have nothing to do with the image of the native, the person who belongs to a place. The link between the confinement of ideology and the idea of place is that the way of thought that confines natives is itself somehow bounded, somehow tied to the circumstantiality of place. The links between intellectual and spatial confinement, as assumptions that underpin the idea of the native, are two. The first is the notion that cultures are ''wholes'': this issue is taken up in the section of this essay on Dumont. The second is the notion, embedded in studies of ecology, technology, and material culture over a century, that the intellectual operations of natives are somehow tied to their niches, to their situations. They are seen, in Lévi-Strauss's evocative terms, as scientists of the concrete. When we ask where this concreteness typically inheres, it is to be found in specifics of flora, fauna, topology, settlement patterns, and the like; in a word, it is the concreteness of place. Thus, the confinement of native ways of thinking reflects in an important way their attachment to particular places. The science of the concrete can thus be written as the poetry of confinement.[2]

But anthropologists have always known that natives are not always so incarcerated. The American anthropological tradition, at least as far back as Boas, and most recently in the voices of Sidney Mintz (1985) and Eric Wolf (1982), has always seen cultural traits as shared and transmitted over large cultural areas, as capable of change, and as creating shifting mosaics of technology and ideology. The French tradition, at least in that part of it with roots in Herder and Vico, and more recently in Mauss, Benveniste and Dumézil, has always seen the links, at least of the Indo-European ''linguaculture'' (Attinasi and Friedrich 1987), across many geographically scattered places. Even in British anthropology, there have been minority voices, like those of Lord Raglan and A. M. Hocart, who have seen that the morphology of social systems and ideologies is not confined by single, territorially anchored groupings. It is now increasingly clear that in many instances where anthropologists believed they were observing and analyzing pris-

tine or historically deep systems, they were in fact viewing products of recent transregional interactions. Diffusionism, whatever its defects and in whatever guise, has at least the virtue of allowing everyone the possibility of exposure to a world larger than their current locale.

It is even more evident that in today's complex, highly interconnected, media-dominated world, there are fewer and fewer native cultures left. They are oppressed by the international market for the objects once iconic of their identity, which are now tokens in the drive for authenticity in metropolitan commodity cultures. They are pushed by the forces of development and nationalization throughout the world and are attracted by the possibilities of migration (or refuge) in new places. Natives, as anthropologists like to imagine them, are therefore rapidly disappearing. This much many will concede.

But were there ever natives, in the sense in which I have argued the term must be understood? Most groups that anthropologists have studied have in some way been affected by the knowledge of other worlds, worlds about which they may have learned through migration, trade, conquest, or indigenous narratives. As we drop our own anthropological blinders, and as we sharpen our ethnohistorical tools, we are discovering that the pristine Punan of the interior of Borneo were probably a specialized adaptation of the larger Dayak communities, serving a specialized function in the world trade in Borneo forest products (Hoffmann 1986); that the San of Southern Africa have been involved in a complex symbiosis with other groups for a very long time (Schrire 1980); that groups in Melanesia have been trading goods across very long distances for a long time, trade that reflects complex regional relations of supply and demand (Hughes 1977); that African "tribes" have been reconstituting and deconstructing essential structural principles at their "internal frontiers" for a very long time (Kopytoff 1987).

Even where contact with large-scale external forces has been, till recently, minimal, as with some Inuit populations, some populations in lowland South America, and many Australian aboriginal groups, these groups have constituted very complex "internal" mosaics of trade, marriage, conquest, and linguistic exchange, which suggests that no one grouping among them was ever truly incarcerated in a specific place and confined by a specific mode of thought (see, for example, Myers 1986). Although assiduous anthropologists might always discover some borderline examples, my general case is that natives, people confined to and by the places to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed.

Natives, thus, are creatures of the anthropological imagination. In our dialogic age, this may not seem like a very bold assertion, but it ramifies in several directions. If anthropologists have always possessed a large amount of information that has militated against the idea of the native, how have they succeeded in holding on to it? How have places turned into prisons containing natives?

The answer lies in the ways that places have been married to ideas and images, and here I resume an argument initiated elsewhere (Appadurai 1986a). Anthropology has, more than many disciplinary discourses, operated through an album or anthology of images (changing over time, to be sure) whereby some fea-

ture of a group is seen as quintessential to the group and as especially true of that group in contrast with other groups. Hierarchy in India has this quality. In the discourse of anthropology, hierarchy is what is most true of India and it is truer of India than of any other place.

In the subsequent sections of this essay I shall show that ideas that become metonymic prisons for particular places (such that the natives of that place are inextricably confined by them) themselves have a spatial history, in the evolving discourse of anthropology. Ideas and images not only travel from place to place, but they periodically come into compelling configurations, configurations which, once formed, resist modification or critique. By looking at Dumont's conceptualization of hierarchy in India, I shall explore the archaeology of hierarchy as an image that confines the natives of India. In the last part of the article, finally, I shall propose a theory about the circumstances under which such resilient configurations tend to occur in the history of anthropological discourse.

The Genealogy of Hierarchy

The recent wave of reflexivity among anthropologists, especially those practicing in the United States, has already created a backlash, founded on many reservations, including temperamental and stylistic ones. But one of the reasons for the backlash has been the suspicion that the self-scrutiny of ethnographers and fieldworkers might be a prologue to the extinction of the object of our studies. Faced with the disappearance of natives as they imagined them, some anthropologists run the risk of substituting reflexivity for fieldwork. I belong to that group of anthropologists who wish neither to erase the object in an orgy of self-scrutiny, nor to fetishize fieldwork (without carefully rethinking what fieldwork ought to mean and be in a changing world), in the way that Victorian educators fetishized cold baths and sport as character-building devices for the public-school elite. So why engage in any sort of genealogy?

All genealogies are selective, as any good historian of ideas would recognize. They are selective, that is, not through sloppiness or prejudice (though these could always creep in), but because every genealogy is a choice among a virtually infinite set of genealogies that make up the problem of influence and source in intellectual history. Every idea ramifies indefinitely backward in time, and at each critical historical juncture, key ideas ramify indefinitely into their own horizontal, contemporary contexts. Nontrivial ideas, especially, never have a finite set of genealogies. Thus any particular genealogy must derive its authority from the moral it seeks to subserve. The genealogy I have constructed in the case of Dumont's conception of hierarchy is one such genealogy, which subserves my interest in the spatial history of anthropological ideas. Thus my genealogy, like any other genealogy, is an argument in the guise of a discovery.

There is another way to characterize my position. The sort of genealogy I am interested in has something in common with Foucault's sense of the practice he calls "archaeology," a practice which, when successful, uncovers not just a genetic chain, but an epistemological field and its discursive formations. The dis-

cursive formation with which I am concerned, at its largest level, is the discourse of anthropology over the last century, and within it the subdiscourses about caste and about India. This sort of genealogizing is intended to occupy the middle space between the atemporal stance of certain kinds of contemporary criticism (especially those affected by deconstruction) and the exclusivist and genetic assumptions of most standard approaches to the history of ideas.

In Dumont's (1970) conception of *hierarchy* as the key to caste society in India, we see the convergence of three distinct trajectories in Western thought. These separate trajectories, which come together in recent anthropological practice, are threefold. First there is the urge to *essentialize,* which characterized the Orientalist forebears of anthropology. This essentialism, which has a complicated genealogy going back to Plato, became for some Orientalists the preferred mode for characterizing the "other." As Ronald Inden has recently argued (Inden 1986a), this led to a substantialized view of caste (reified as India's essential institution) and an idealized view of Hinduism, regarded as the religious foundation of caste. The second tendency involves *exoticizing,* by making *differences* between "self" and other the sole criteria for comparison. This tendency to exoticize has been discussed extensively in recent critiques of the history of anthropology and of ethnographic writing (Boon 1982; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983) and has its roots in the "Age of Discovery" as well as in the 18th-century "Age of Nationalism," especially in Germany. The third trajectory involves *totalizing,* that is, making specific features of a society's thought or practice not only its essence but also its totality. Such totalizing probably has its roots in the German romanticism of the early 19th century and comes to us in all the variations of the idea of the *Geist* (spirit) of an age or a people. Canonized in Hegel's holism, its most important result was the subsequent Marxian commitment to the idea of totality (Jay 1984), but it also underlies Dumont's conception of the "whole," discussed below. In this sense, the dialogue between the idealistic and the materialistic descendants of Hegel is hardly over. In anthropology and in history, particularly in France, it is to be seen in Mauss's idea of the gift as a *total* social phenomenon and in the Annales school's conception of *histoire totale.*

Hierarchy, in Dumont's argument, becomes the essence of caste, the key to its exoticism, and the form of its totality. There have been many criticisms of Dumont's ideas about hierarchy. I shall be concerned here to deconstruct hierarchy by unpacking its constituents in Dumont's scheme and by tracing that aspect of the genealogy of these constituents that moves us out of India and to other places in the ongoing journey of anthropological theory. As we shall see, this genealogy is in part a topographic history of certain episodes and certain links in the history of anthropological thought in the last century. Since my argument is concerned largely with the extra-Indian implications of Dumont's ideas, let me briefly place them in their Indian context.

Arriving on the scene in the late 1960s, when American cultural particularism, British structural-functionalism, and French structuralism had come to a rather dull standoff in regard to the study of caste, *Homo Hierarchicus* had a gal-

vanizing effect. It was widely (and vigorously) reviewed, and it generated numerous symposia, an army of exegetes, acolytes, and opponents. For almost two decades it has dominated French structuralist studies of rural India, formed the intellectual charter of the influential journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology,* and generated much empirical and theoretical activity both in England and the United States. Dumont's ideas have been subject to careful and sympathetic criticism by a host of scholars who have pursued his French intellectual roots, his conception of ideology, his model of renunciation and purity, and the fit of his ideas with Indian facts (see, for example, Berreman 1971; Das 1977; Kolenda 1976; Marriott 1969; Parry 1980; Srinivas 1984; Yalman 1969).

While difficulties have been seen with almost every important aspect of Dumont's methodology and claims, most scholars working on the caste systems of South Asia (even the most obdurately empiricist critics of Dumont) will grant that Dumont's idea of hierarchy captures the distance between the value-assumptions of India and post-Enlightenment Europe like no previous characterization.

There are thus two trajectories within which *Homo Hierarchicus* fits. One is the trajectory that has to do with the history of Western values. Dumont, as early as the mid-1970s, had shown his concern with the dynamics of individualism and egalitarianism in the West. This latter concern has intensified since the publication of *Homo Hierarchicus,* and Dumont's latest collection of essays (Dumont 1986) makes it clear that the argument about hierarchy in India was an episode in a long-term exercise in the archaeology of modern Western ideology.

Yet, since *Homo Hierarchicus* also made a bold and sweeping structuralist argument about the ideology of the caste system, it demands assessment and critique in its areal context as well. This it has amply received. What is now called for is an effort to bring these two trajectories into a unified critical discussion, a discussion in which areal and theoretical issues are not invidiously separated and ranked. This essay is a preliminary contribution to this sort of unified discussion.

Pauline Kolenda (1976) has shown the ambiguities in, and polysemy of, Dumont's use of the word *hierarchy* in *Homo Hierarchicus,* and has provided a valuable basis for extending our understanding of the roots of his idea of hierarchy. Dumont owes a very large part of his understanding of caste society to Célestin Bouglé, about whom I shall have more to say shortly. Bouglé (1971) argued that the caste system was a product of the unique configuration of three relational properties of the castes: separation, hierarchy, and interdependence. Dumont's advance is to find a principle linking and underlying all three and developing a more sweeping and abstract conception of hierarchy than Bouglé's.

The ingredients of this conception of hierarchy, each of which has a different genealogy, are (1) a particular conception of the whole; (2) a particular conception of the parts; (3) a particular conception of the opposition of pure and impure; and (4) a particular commitment to the idea of the profoundly religious basis of caste society. I shall consider each of these in turn, starting with the idea of the whole.

Dumont's idea of the whole is consciously derived from Hegel, to whom he attributes the view that the hierarchy between castes is a matter of the relation to a *whole*. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1902), his most important contribution

to German Orientalism, is the main link between Dumont and the tradition, going back to Plato, in which a conception of the social or collective whole is the primary source of values and norms.[3] India, in this Hegelian view, ceases to be a showcase for rank and stratification (which is a commonplace of foreign notices of India from the beginnings of the Christian era) and becomes instead a living museum of that form of social holism that has been lost to the West. Less conscious, but equally decisive for Dumont's idea of the whole, is the conception of the Années Sociologiques, in which certain archaic social forms, especially gift and sacrifice, are seen as *total social phenomena*. Although I shall have more to say on the topographic genealogy of Mauss's ideas, it is worth noting that they are the product of a particular French philological tradition that seeks to link the Indo-European world with the world of the primitive. Its *topos* is the spatiotemporal landscape of the vanished Indo-European heartland and the scattered islands of early ethnography. In Dumont's conceptualization of hierarchy, Hegelian *holism* and Maussian totalizing come together, and a decisive break is made with the earlier Western obsession with Indian stratification. The subordination of parts to the whole is at the heart of Dumont's understanding of the ideological basis of the system of castes. This whole ("the system of castes") is taken by Dumont to be complete, more important than its parts, stable, and ideologically self-sustaining. Dumont's idea of the whole represents one variant of the wider anthropological commitment to holism, a commitment that has elsewhere been opened to critical examination.[4]

So much for Dumont's conception of the "whole." What about his conception of the parts? Here the plot gets thicker. Dumont's understanding of *castes* as parts of a very particular type of hierarchical whole comes from two sources, both of which he acknowledges. The first is Evans-Pritchard, whose classic study of the *segmentary* nature of Nuer society influenced Dumont greatly (Dumont 1970:41–42). As Srinivas has recently emphasized, the topographic roots of the segmentary nature of Indian castes comes from Evans-Pritchard's analysis of the Nuer data, a special sort of African case (Srinivas 1984). In turn, Evans-Pritchard's view has complex, though obscure, roots. One aspect of the Nuer model doubtless goes back to Robertson Smith's classic work on Semitic religion, which contains a particular English Orientalist picture of Arabian society (Beidelman 1968; Dresch, this volume). On the other hand, the general roots of the classic British social anthropology of African political systems surely goes back to the 19th-century Anglo-Saxon tradition in studies of ancient law. Especially central here is the work of Henry Maine, who is a critical theorist of kinship as a basis for jural order.[5] Since Maine also worked on Indian law and society, in comparison with ancient Rome, we have here a wonderful circle. From the ancient village republics of India, via ancient Rome and comparative law, through African political systems and Nuer segments, back to Indian castes.

But the other source of Dumont's conception of the castes as "parts" is Bouglé's image of the "repulsion" of the castes toward each other, a fascinating Gallic precursor of Evans-Pritchard's conception of the fissive tendencies of Nuer segments (Bouglé 1971:22; Evans-Pritchard 1940:148).

It is not easy to trace the roots of Bouglé's emphasis on the "repulsion" of the parts for each other, except as a synthetic insight based on the ethnography and Indology available to him at the turn of the century. Since Bouglé was not (unlike Mauss) an Indologist, and since he was mainly concerned with the history of egalitarian values in the West, we can only guess that the areal interests of his colleagues in the Années Sociologique group had some effects on him. One such specific influence we shall note shortly.

Before we come to Dumont's critical contribution—the opposition of pure and impure as the axiom of the entire caste system—we need to ask about the larger view on which it is based, namely that in India, *religion* is the dominant shaper of ideology and values. Although this is something of a commonplace, and has been noted by centuries of observers from the West, Dumont places a special emphasis and interpretation upon the religious basis of Indian society. One source for this orientation again is Hegel. But more proximate are Bouglé, mentioned already, and A. M. Hocart. As to Bouglé, he attributed the hierarchical Hindu conception of castes to the utter predominance of the priesthood in India. On the one hand, this predominance was attributed to a weak state organization (and here we have a parallel to the link that leads from Henry Maine to Evans-Pritchard). On the other hand, Bouglé attributes it to the centrality of the *sacrifice* in ancient India. This, in turn, Bouglé derives from Hubert and Mauss's classic work on *sacrifice* and—you guessed it—Robertson Smith on the Semitic religion of sacrifice. So we are back in the shadow of Arabia.

But the other crucial source of Dumont's ideas about the religious basis of Indian society is the work of the English anthropologist-administrator, A. M. Hocart. Although Dumont makes many criticisms of Hocart's work on caste, he is explicit in acknowledging his debt to him on the centrality of religion to caste. What is interesting about Hocart's own anthropological career is that it began in the South Pacific, where he conducted anthropological researches in Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. He was also Headmaster for some time of a native school at Lau (Fiji), and he wrote a learned monograph on the Lau Islands. It was this experience of the centrality of chieftainship and castelike specialization that was on his mind when, after World War I, he was appointed Archaeological Commissioner in Ceylon, where he further developed his ideas on caste and kingship. In fact, his entire model of Indian society—centered on the ritual of kingship—is based on his apperception of Ceylon, where the ritual of royalty remained a macro reality. When he finally wrote his comparative study of caste in the 1930s, it reflected an understanding of Indian caste that echoed a Ceylonese redaction of his understanding of rank, chieftainship, and religious order in the South Pacific, especially in Fiji.

An interesting variant on this genealogy can be seen in Dumont's understanding of the contrast between the pure and the impure. Dumont acknowledges the important but mistaken ideas of scholars like H. N. C. Stevenson (1954) (whose work on status evaluation in the caste system may have been influenced by his own earlier work on the Chin-Kachin group in Burma, whom Leach subsequently immortalized). But he must have also been greatly influenced by Ho-

cart, whose comparative work on caste (Hocart 1950) contains an important, though tacit, emphasis on the problem of ritual separation and the purity of chiefs. Although Dumont does not explicitly attribute this part of his thinking to Hocart, there is a very interesting section in *Homo Hierarchicus* where he notes that his ideas about food prohibitions in India are owed to an unpublished course on sin and expiation taught by Mauss at the Collège de France, where Mauss partly drew his ideas from Hocart's work on Tonga (Dumont 1970:140). Thus, in the central matter of food prohibitions, which exemplify the contrast between pure and impure, which is in turn the cultural pivot of Dumont's ideas on hierarchy, the topographic genealogy leads back to Hocart on Tonga.

Let me conclude with a review of my findings. Dumont's conception of hierarchy leads from India in at least four major topological directions: Africa, in regard to its conception of the parts; ancient Arabia, for its conception of religious segmentation and solidarity; ancient Rome, for its conception of jural order in the absence of a powerful state; and the South Pacific (via Ceylon), for its conception of the power of *taboo* and the ritual implications of specialization. But, of course, there are two other discourses that mediate this one, discourses whose analysis lies outside the scope of this essay. One is the metropolitan discourse of anthropology, conducted at places like Oxford, the Collège de France, and the various sites of colonial administration. The other is the grander discourse of Orientalism, whose strengths and weaknesses are still with us in the anthropological study of India (Inden 1986a, 1986b).

Hierarchy in Place

It remains now to ask, more generally, about the circumstances under which certain anthropological images—such as hierarchy—become hegemonic in, and confined to, certain places. This question is inescapably both historical and comparative.

From the comparative point of view, ideas or images that become metonyms for places in anthropological discourse appear to share certain properties. First, for the nonspecialist they provide a shorthand for *summarizing* the cultural complexity that has already been constituted by existing ethnography. By extension, they provide a handy guide for navigating through new (or newly discovered) ethnographies without getting lost in the minutiae of the locality. Although some ethnographies become classics because they are compelling works of literature, most routine ethnographies profit from those summarizing metonyms that provide a point of orientation for the nonspecialist reader. Of course, this does nothing to increase the likelihood that the nonspecialist is likely to pick up the situational diversities of these local worlds.

Second, from the point of view of the specialists who work on a place, certain ideas or images are likely to become hegemonic because they capture something important about the place that transcends intraregional variations and that is, at the same time, *problematic,* because it is subject to ethnographic or methodological question. Thus, hierarchy is (at least in some of its Dumontian mean-

ings) undeniably a striking feature of Indian society, but its exact status is profoundly debatable. For the specialist, images like hierarchy acquire their appeal not because they ease the labors of traveling through the jungles of other people's ethnographies, but because they are compelling ideas around which to organize *debate,* whether such debate is about method, about fact, about assumptions, or about empirical variations.

Finally, neither of the above properties is quite sufficient to guarantee that a particular idea (expressed as a term or a phrase) will become hegemonic in regard to the construction of a place. It is also important that the image provide a credible link between internal realities (and specialist accounts of them) and external preoccupations (and their larger discursive contexts). The most resilient images linking places and cultural themes, such as honor-and-shame in the circum-Mediterranean, hierarchy in India, ancestor-worship in China, *compadrazgo* in Hispanic America, and the like, all capture internal realities in terms that serve the discursive needs of general theory in the metropolis.

This hypothesis about the images of place in anthropology needs to be put into a historical perspective as well. Such hegemonic ideas not only come into being in specific conjunctures but are also liable to being pushed out of favor by other such ideas. What accounts for such shifts is not easy to talk about in a general way, or in a brief space, since it involves the gradual accumulation of small changes in metropolitan theorizing; in local, ethnographically centered debate; and in the relationship between the human sciences in (and in regard to) particular places.

Assuming that such topological stereotypes cost us more in terms of the richness of our understanding of places than they benefit us in rhetorical or comparative convenience, how are we to contest their dominance? Here three possibilities present themselves. The first, exemplified in this essay, is to remain aware that ideas that claim to represent the "essences" of particular places reflect the temporary *localization* of ideas from *many* places. The second is to encourage the production and appreciation of ethnographies that emphasize the *diversity* of themes that can fruitfully be pursued in *any* place.

The third, and most difficult possibility, is to develop an approach to theory in which places could be compared *polythetically* (Needham 1975). In such an approach, there would be an assumption of family resemblances between places, involving overlaps between not one but many characteristics of their ideologies. This assumption would not require places to be encapsulated by single diacritics (or essences) in order for them to be compared with other places, but would permit several configurations of resemblance and contrast. Such a polythetic approach to comparison would discourage us from thinking of places as inhabited by natives, since multiple chains of family resemblance between places would blur any single set of cultural boundaries between them. Without such consistent boundaries, the confinement that lies at the heart of the idea of the native becomes impossible.

Notes

[1]For a fascinating account of the ironies in the historical evolution of such terms as *native, inlander, indigènes,* etc., in the context of Dutch colonialism in Southeast Asia, see Anderson (1983:112–128).

[2]Lest I be seen as excessively critical of the attention that anthropologists have paid to this poetry of confinement, I should add that some of the ethnography that best combines description and theorizing capitalizes on the enmeshment of consciousness in culturally constituted environments: Evans-Pritchard on Nuer time-reckoning (Evans-Pritchard 1940), Irving Hallowell on Saulteaux measurement (Hallowell 1942), Steven Feld on Kaluli poetics (Feld 1982), and Fernandez on the imagery of African revitalization movements (Fernandez 1986).

[3]Hegel's own ideas about Indian religiosity were greatly influenced by the romantic Orientalist treatises of Herder and Schlegel (see Inden 1986a and Schwab 1984).

[4]When I published my own critique of anthropological holism, in the context of a critique of Dumont's ideas (Appadurai 1986b), I had not had the opportunity to see Fernandez (1986). In this essay, Fernandez is concerned with the mechanisms that create "the conviction of wholeness" in African revitalization movements. He is thus able to propose a more optimistic solution to the problem of "cultural wholes" than I was. The time seems ripe for a full-fledged debate about the many dimensions of the problem of cultural wholes and the relationship between them.

[5]Evans-Pritchard seems to have been conscious of this debt, and has stated that one of Maine's most important generalizations was that "kinship and *not* contiguity is the basis of common political action in primitive societies" (Evans-Pritchard 1981:87). Of course, Dumont was also influenced by Maine, but I believe that in this regard, the influence was mediated by Evans-Pritchard.

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