

## **Bronislaw Malinowski**

### **On Fieldwork**

“The Ethnographer has in the field... the duty before him of drawing up all the rules and regularities of tribal life; all that is permanent and fixed; of giving anatomy to their culture, of depicting the constitution of their society. But these things are nowhere formulated. There is no written or explicitly expressed code of laws, and their whole tribal tradition, the whole structure of their society, are embodied in the most elusive of all materials; the human being...”

The collecting of concrete data over a wide range of facts is thus one of the main points of field method.

The obligation is not to enumerate a few examples only, but to exhaust as far as possible all the cases within reach...But whenever the material of the search allows it, the mental chart ought to be transformed into a real one; it ought to materialize into a diagram, a plan an exhaustive synoptic table of cases... The method of reducing information, if possible, into charts or synoptic tables ought to be extended, to the study of practically all aspects of native life”

"[I]n this type of work, it is good for the ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, notebook, and pencil, and to join in himself in what is going on. Out of such plunges into the life of natives... I have carried away a distinct feeling that their behavior, their manner of being, in all sorts of tribal transactions, became more transparent and easily understandable than it had been before"

### **On Culture**

“The science of culture should not be concerned with the raw material of anatomical and physiological endowment in the individual, but rather with the manner in which this endowment is modified by social influences. The raw material of individual psychology is found everywhere refashioned by cultural and social determinism. But still, from the biological point of view, the group acts as an indispensable medium for the realization of individual bodily needs. Culture appears... first and foremost as a vast instrumental reality... all of which allow man to satisfy his biological requirements through co-operation and within an environment re-fashioned and re-adjusted. [But] the human organism ... itself becomes modified in the process and readjusted to the type of situation provided by culture. In this sense, culture is also a vast conditioning apparatus... Culture thus produces individuals whose behavior cannot be understood by the study of anatomy and physiology alone, but has to be studied through the analysis of cultural determinism... At the same time, however, from the very outset the existence of groups is made indispensable by culture. Parallel consideration of individual and organized groups is indispensable.”

## **Emile Durkheim**

"When the individual has been eliminated, society alone remains. We must, then, seek the explanation of social life in the nature of society itself...since it infinitely surpasses the individual in time as well as space..."

“The determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of the individual consciousness... The function of a social fact cannot be but social, i.e., it consists of the production of socially useful effects. To be sure, it may and does happen that it also serves the individual. But this happy result is not its immediate cause. We can complete the preceding proposition by saying: the function of a social fact ought always to be sought in its relation to some social end”

“When one comes in contact with social phenomena, one is...surprised by the astonishing regularity with which they occur under the same circumstances... The most bizarre customs...are observed among the most diverse peoples and are symptomatic of a certain social state”

“To show how a fact is useful is not to explain how it originated or why it is what it is. The uses which it serves presuppose the specific properties characterizing it but do not create them. The need we have of things cannot give them existence, nor can it confer their specific nature on them. In sociology as in biology, the organ is independent of the function – in other words, while remaining the same it can serve different ends. The causes of its existence are...independent of the ends it serves.”

"...Man is double. There are two beings in him: an individual being which has its foundation in the organism and the circle of whose activities is therefore strictly limited, and a social being which represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order...This duality of our nature has as its consequence in the practical order, the irreducibility of a moral ideal to a utilitarian motive, and in the order of thought, the irreducibility of reason to individual experience. In so far as he belongs to society, the individual transcends himself, both when he thinks and when he acts.”

“Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”