Functionalism

• Every trait/feature/institution has some function/purpose in the overall system.
• Based on an *organic analogy* like that of Spencer.
• More concern with contemporary functions of traits/institutions than with their origin.
  • [http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php?culture=Functionalism](http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php?culture=Functionalism)
  • [http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc/s00/soc111-01/IntroTheories/Functionalism.html](http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc/s00/soc111-01/IntroTheories/Functionalism.html)
2 main types of functionalism in anthropology

1. Biopsychological functionalism
   - Associated singularly with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski.
   - Focus shifts from group to individual – how do social institutions function in the satisfaction of individual needs?

2. Structural-functionalism
   - Based on ideas first expressed by Emile Durkheim.
   - Further articulated by Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown.
   - Individuals play little role
     - "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... So, social behavior is more than a sum of all individuals."
Bronislaw Kaspar Malinowski (1884-1942)

- Like Boas, came from a science-based background.
- PhD, physics & mathematics, 1908.
- PhD, anthropology 1922.
- Fieldwork in Australia & Trobriand Islands
- Interest in anthropology stimulated by reading James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*.
  - First published 1890.
  - Subtitled “A Study in Magic and Religion”.
  - One of first attempts to look at religion dispassionately as a cultural phenomenon rather than from a theological perspective
The other Malinowski

- Born in Nowe, was a Polish track and field athlete, named after the famous anthropologist.
- Best known for winning a gold medal in the 3000 m steeplechase race during the 1980 Summer Olympics held in Moscow, Soviet Union.
- A year later, Malinowski was killed in a car accident in Grudziądz, at the age of 30.

Memorial to Malinowski in front of the Grudziądz stadium
Bronislaw Malinowski

• Two major contributions
  1. Biopsychological or biocultural brand of functionalism.
  2. Setting standards for modern ethnographic research.
     • Extended fieldwork
     • Participant observation
Bronislaw Malinowski

- Argonauts of the Western Pacific, 1922
- Crime and Custom in Savage Society, 1926
- Sex and Repression in Savage Society, 1927
- The Sexual Life of Savages, 1929
- Coral Gardens and Their Magic, 1935
- A Scientific Theory of Culture, 1944 (Posthumously)
- The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa, 1945 (Phyllis Kaberry, ed.)
- Sex, Culture, and Myth, 1962 (Posthumously)
- A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term, 1967 (Posthumously)
Bronislaw Malinowski

- Focus of his theoretical approach came to be placed on *individuals* – how do social institutions function in the satisfaction of individual needs?
- For Malinowski, culture is utilitarian, adaptive, functionally integrated
Bronislaw Malinowski

- Humans have certain *basic needs* – nutrition, reproduction, bodily comfort, safety, relaxation, movement, growth.
- *Basic needs are satisfied by derived cultural/social institutions.*
- Culture is essentially a tool that responds to the needs of humans.
- In *The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis* (1939) he claimed that an *institution* is a group of people united and organized for a purpose with a charter or explanation and technology with which to achieve that purpose.
The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis

• “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.”

• “
### Synoptic Survey of Biological and Derived Needs and Their Satisfaction in Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Needs (Individual)</th>
<th>Direct Responses (Organized, i.e., Collective)</th>
<th>Instrumental Needs</th>
<th>Responses to Instrumental Needs</th>
<th>Symbolic and Integrative Needs</th>
<th>Systems of Thought and Faith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition (metabolism)</td>
<td>Commissariat</td>
<td>Renewal of cultural apparatus</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Transmission of experience by means of precise, consistent principles</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>Marriage and family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bodily comforts</td>
<td>Domicile and dress</td>
<td>Characters of behavior and their sanctions</td>
<td>Social control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Protection and defense</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Means of intellectual, emotional, and pragmatic control of destiny and chance</td>
<td>Magic, Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>Systems of play and repose</td>
<td>Renewal of personnel</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Set activities and systems of communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Training and Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Organization of force and compulsion</td>
<td>Political organization</td>
<td>Communal rhythm of recreation, exercise and rest</td>
<td>Sports, Games, Ceremonial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922)

- Malinowski’s study of the kula system of Trobriand Islands.
- Contained Malinowski’s prescription for fieldwork.
- “First cut oneself off from the company of other whitemen and remain in as close contact with the natives as possible.”
- Long-term residence involving both observation and participation – “concern with the inponderabilia of actual life.”
- Necessity of learning local language.
Argonauts

• “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...”
Argonauts

• Kula transactions are examples of what we today call *reciprocal exchange*.
  ▪ elements of generalized & balanced reciprocity.

• Most of all Malinowski emphasized *ceremonial aspect* of the Kula.
  ▪ demonstrates that *exchange is not just a material transaction* in small-scale societies with nonmarket economies.
Argonauts

• Shell ornaments (*vaygu'a*) exchanged with trade partners.
  ▪ White shell armbands (*mwali*)
  ▪ Red shell necklaces (*soulava*).
  ▪ Armbands & necklaces go in opposite directions.
  ▪ Must be traded for one another – arm bands for necklaces & vice versa.

• No utilitarian function.
  ▪ in fact they were seldom worn.

• Prestige attached to specific *kula* items
  ▪ like family heirlooms or sports trophies.

• Prestige accrues with possession.
  ▪ but not for long since they must continue circulating.
Argonauts

• Men used kula as a way to enhance, at least temporarily, their prestige & standing in their own community & in the eyes of others.

• Usually lifelong trading **partnerships** with men on other islands.
  – Some men had as many as 100 partners.

• Kula partners are like kinsmen who could be counted upon for support.

• Kula etiquette required that size & value of items had to be perfectly matched.
  – But could be **no haggling or discussion** by any of traders.
Argonauts

There is also a more **utilitarian trade** accompanying the ceremonial trade – Malinowski called it secondary trade or barter.

Economic production and exchange of utilitarian goods is embedded within the social practices and cultural norms of the kula exchange, which was non-economic.

Thus, Malinowski said to see the kula only in its economic aspects is to misunderstand it completely.

His conclusion was that Kula is truly a multi-functional social institution central to Trobriand society.
Criticisms of Malinowski’s approach

• Sidky accuses Malinowski of using logical fallacy of affirming the consequent
  ▪ “if X then Y: Y therefore X”

• He also claims that Malinowski substituted description for explanation
  ▪ To describe the effects of a cultural element is not the same as explaining it.

• The effects of a phenomenon cannot explain why the phenomenon developed in the first place.
Famous Dead Germans

• The Science of Culture (Tylor)
• "Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family" (Morgan)
• Marx & Engels
• Franz Boas Blues
• Malinowski song
• Hey Hey Durkheim
Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893)
- *Suicide* (1897)
- *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912)
Emile Durkheim

- Primary concerns were **beliefs & symbols** shared by members of society.
- Wanted to understand & explain nature of social solidarity/cohesion
  - i.e., what binds people together.
- Sought out & used cross-cultural data
  - e.g., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.
- **Social solidarity** is result of binding moral force that arises from participation in common set of beliefs & values
  - He called it the **collective conscience**.
  - Essentially what we mean by **culture**.
Rules of the Sociological Method

• In Durkheim's scheme **individuals played little role**
  
  ▪ "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..."
Rules of the Sociological Method

- Claimed **social facts** are basic unit of social analysis
  - norms, common expectations, understandings, and behavioral rules that exist prior to individual and will outlive individual.

- Durkheim asserted that

  “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...The function of a social fact ought always to be sought in its relation to some social end.”
Rules of the Sociological Method

• Durkheim wanted to make the study of social phenomena more scientific.

• He was looking for regularities:

  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.

• Advocated separating search for causes of social phenomena from search for functions.

  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
Rules of the Sociological Method

- Advocated separating search for *causes* of social phenomena from search for *functions*.
- *Seek causes before trying to ascertain functions*.
- Answering question of causation can help answer question of functions.

When... the explanation of a social phenomenon is undertaken, we must seek separately the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfils.

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.
Rules of the Sociological Method

• Interestingly enough, Durkheim claims that a social fact can exist without at all being useful
  ▪ because it has never been adjusted to any vital end or
  ▪ because, after having been useful, it has lost all utility while continuing to exist by the inertia of habit alone.

• Does this sound familiar???
The Division of Labor in Society

• Observed differences between "primitive" & industrial society

• Distinguished between mechanical & organic solidarity or cohesion:
  ▪ Mechanical solidarity comes through likeness.
  ▪ Typical in “primitive” societies
  ▪ Ties based on kinship & common socialization.
  ▪ Parts (individuals, families) of society are similar & interchangeable.

• Industrial society promotes different arrangement.
  ▪ Complex division of labor.
  ▪ Leads to organic solidarity based on economic complementarity & functional interdependence.
  ▪ Individuals must cooperate in order to survive.
# The Division of Labor in Society

## Mechanical and Organic Solidarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanical</th>
<th>Organic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity through Likeness</td>
<td>Solidarity through Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Division of Labour</td>
<td>High Division of Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Collective Consciousness</td>
<td>Weak Collective Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repressive Law</td>
<td>Restitutive Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Division of Labor**
- **Social Solidarity**
- **Types of Law**
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

• One of most important studies of religion ever conducted.
• “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."
• Sought to do two things:
  1. Establish that religion is not divinely or supernaturally inspired
     • It is a product of society.
  2. Identify common elements that all religions emphasize and identify effects those beliefs have on the lives of members of society.
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

• Religion is "something eminently social & religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities..."

• Humans have a dual nature: we are both individuals & social beings.
  
  "...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."
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

• Utilized Australian aboriginal culture as a case study.
  ▪ Wanted to study religion in its most basic form.

• Religion, philosophy, & morals can be understood only as products of the social condition of man

• Source of religion & morality is in collective mind of society – not inherent in isolated minds of individuals.
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

• Religious ceremonies
  ▪ bring people together
  ▪ reaffirm common bonds
  ▪ reinforce social solidarity.

• Religious observance
  ▪ maintains & revitalizes social heritage of group.
  ▪ helps transmit its enduring values to future generations.
Marcel Mauss


- Describes obligations attendant on gift-giving:
  - obligation to give gifts -- giving shows generosity and thus is deserving of respect.
  - obligation to receive them – by receiving respect to giver & proves one's own generosity.
  - obligation to return gift – demonstrates that one's honor is at least equivalent to that of the original giver.

- Gift-giving is thus steeped in morality
  - by giving, receiving and returning gifts, a moral bond between the persons exchanging gifts.

http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/pers/mauss_marcel.htm
Marcel Mauss

• At the same time, Mauss emphasizes competitive & strategic aspect of gift-giving
  ▪ by giving more than one's competitors, one lays claim to greater respect than them, and gift-giving contests (such as the famous North-West Coast Native American potlatch), are thus common in the ethnographic record.

• In this work, Mauss thus lays the foundation for a theoretical understanding of the nature of social relations.
FUNCTIONALISM

- Functionalists are very POSITIVE about society and always see the GOOD in everything. They even think that crime is good for society! - They look at society on a MACRO scale [this means that they look at society on a large scale]. They want to generalise their ideas to the whole of society. For example they look at what education does for society as a whole not just certain people in society.
- Functionalists also believe that society is based on CONSENSUS, this means agreement, i.e. we are all SOCIALISED [brought up] to agree on how to behave [known as NORMS] and what is right and wrong [known as VALUES].
- Functionalists believe that each part of society has a FUNCTION [a job to do] to make sure that society runs smoothly and everything stays in harmony. For example education has a function to make sure people are educated to be good at the job they will get after school.

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF FUNCTIONALISM
1. True or False Quiz
2. Drag & Drop Quiz

http://sixthsense.osfc.ac.uk/sociology/as_sociology/functionalism.asp
Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, (1881-1955)

Fieldwork

- 1906-1908, Andaman Islands (off coast of Burma)
- 1910-1912, Australia
- 1920-1923, South Africa.
- Generally not known for his fieldwork.
- More of a theoretician.

Major Publications:

- 1922 *The Andaman Islanders*
- 1931 *Social Organization of Australian Tribes.*
- 1935 "On the Concept of Function in Social Science."
- 1952 *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*
Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown

• Basic question – what function does a trait or institution perform in continuation of social system?
• Institutions such as religion, kinship, politics, & economics work to maintain the larger system.
• Like Durkheim before him Radcliffe-Brown believed that satisfaction of individual needs is incidental to meeting needs of system maintenance.
**Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown**

- **Concern with social structure**
  - patterned interpersonal relations that exist independently of individual members of society.

- Radcliffe-Brown sought to discover regularities/laws in human societies.

- Resurrected idea of *comparative method* but without 19th century ethnocentric mental baggage.
Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown

- 1924, "The Mother’s Brother in South Africa."
- Dealt with special relationship between mother’s brother & sister’s son.
  - Fairly widespread cross-culturally.
  - How can it be explained?
  - Some saw it as a vestige of a past state of matriarchy.
- Radcliffe-Brown disagreed
  - must study these types of institutions in relation to other social institutions.
  - MOBRO/ZSO relationship is part of overall kinship matrix.
- Even in patrilineal societies there is some emphasis on maternal relatives – due to bilateral nature of kinship.
- Relationships get expressed in rituals, making them more meaningful.
Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown

• “On Joking Relationships” (1940)
• *Joking relationships & avoidance relationships* are means of establishing & maintaining equilibrium.
  – Symmetrical - both people allowed to mock & tease.
  – Asymmetrical - only one person allowed to joke.
• A combination of friendliness & antagonism in which a charade of hostility & rivalry veil friendliness between the two persons.
Max Gluckman (1911-1975)

- Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand (1940)
- Custom and Conflict in Africa (1955)
- Judicial Process Among the Barotse (1955)
- Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa (1963)
- Ideas in Barotse Jurisprudence (1965)
Max Gluckman

• South African anthropologist.
• Founded what became the Manchester school of social anthropology.
  ▪ Interested in conflict.
  ▪ Methodological focus on analysis of social situations.
  ▪ Data collected on observed social actions of individual people.
  ▪ Cases were described in great detail.
• Concern for social process in observable cases of conflict & conflict-resolution.
• Analyze particular instances of social interaction to infer rules & assumptions.
• Recurring themes:
  ▪ conflict & reconciliation in small-scale societies & organizations
  ▪ tension between individual agency & social structure.
• In essence Gluckman was trying to deal with criticisms of mainstream functionalism.
Max Gluckman

- Gluckman's ideas centered on notion of *equilibrium* interrupted by conflicts that erupt.
- Conflicts are always present as part of social structure, but get resolved before the system is destroyed.
- *Social equilibrium emerges through balancing of oppositions in a dialectical process.*
- Anthropologists must study these periods of comparative stability, when social system approaches a state of equilibrium.
- “The License in Ritual”
- From *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (1956), a series of essays dealing with the subject of how equilibrium is maintained in the face of conflict.
E. E. Evans-Pritchard

- Undergraduate degree from Oxford, Ph.D. from London School of Economics.
- Malinowski was his professor.
- Fieldwork with the Azande of Upper Nile region of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1926-30.
- University of Cairo 1932. Could not get a job in UK due to conflict with Malinowski.
Witchcraft, Oracles & Magic Among the Azande

• First published in 1937.
• Documented the system of beliefs and practices associated with magic and witchcraft.
• Azande have no concept of bad luck.
• Use oracles to get answers to questions.
E. E. Evans-Pritchard

- **Evans-Pritchard: Strange Beliefs**
- **Political Structure of the Nandi Speaking Peoples of Kenya.**
- **Withcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande**
- documented system of beliefs & practices associated with magic & witchcraft
E.E. Evans Pritchard

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