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evolutionism are deleted, what remains is a plausible twenty-first-century evolutionary account of the origins of human society. While I hesitate to try to say in a few words what I said in that article, the crux of my argument is that if humans descend from a predecessor living in groups characterized by a dominance hierarchy with an alpha male at the apex, which seems plausible enough, then the acquisition of lethal weapons available to everyone, on the one hand, and of language allowing a greatly enhanced technology for cooperative planning on the other, would have led to the replacement of the dominance system with one of egalitarianism (for the adult males) and monogamy and hence spouse exchange. I supported this contention with arguments from writers who themselves clearly had no intention of proving the validity of the primal horde scenario: Christopher Boehm (2012), Bernard Chapais (2008), and James Woodburn (1982) (whom I cited in my book *Mixed Messages* [Paul 2015]). I do not have the space here to spell out my argument, so I can only suggest that those interested read my article. But I will only mention that subsequent human history does seem to show that absolute rulers—human and/or divine—emerge with distressing regularity and are regarded with the strong ambivalence the theory would predict.

Reply

Cultural Psychodynamics: Integrating Culture, Society, and Psyche

Recently I was talking with a sociologist friend, lamenting the general lack of interest in psychoanalysis among anthropologists. His response was simple and direct: “At least you *have* a field called psychoanalytic anthropology.” This fact, which I sometimes forget, speaks to the enduring contributions made by the pioneering psychoanalytic anthropologists I discuss in my paper. Indeed, several of the commenters—Hollan, Johnson, LeVine, and Paul—have played significant roles in developing this field, and their comments remind us of the decades of foundational work that now allows us to imagine something like a “cultural psychodynamic” approach in anthropology.

In my article I trace the ebb and flow of psychoanalytic influence in the anthropology of the past, while making a case for its critical relevance to the anthropology of the future. Many commenters elaborate on the broader historical milieu I discuss: Loewenberg provides us with a detailed biographical sketch of Boas’s personal and professional formation; Johnson highlights both the Boasian rejection of biological accounts of culture and the post-Kardinerian shift toward ecological and materialist approaches at Columbia; Paul summarizes the complex and ongoing anthropological assessment of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*; Denham discusses the British anthropol-

ogists’ engagements with Freudian ideas, which similarly centered on the interpretation of Oedipal dynamics in culture; LeVine touches on some of the postwar developments in psychocultural anthropology at Yale, noting the largely uncredited role Kardiner’s adaptational psychodynamics played in the later work of Whiting and Child; and Darnell reminds us that it was Boas who first called for an integration of psychology and anthropology, also highlighting differences between Sapir’s interpersonal approach and Kardiner’s more structural-functional adaptationist psychodynamics. Although I am tempted to trace out each of the historical influences mentioned in the comments, I leave that task to the reader. When considered alongside my paper, they point toward other “hidden histories,” suggesting an outline for a much broader accounting of the history of psychoanalytic anthropology—one that has yet to be written.

Boasian Stasis and Freudian Dynamism

In the opening comment Darnell notes—somewhat critically—that I “[could not] resist psychoanalyzing the ‘latent content’ of Boas’s letter,” in which he offers his assessment of Freud’s influence on anthropology. I find her observation both illuminating and instructive, as it reflects precisely the broader disciplinary resistances toward psychoanalytic interpretation and analysis I discuss in my paper. Given the content of the letter, viewed within its historical context, how could we not seek to understand the emotional ecology, shadow agendas, and interpersonal politics that informed its writing? As Hollan observes in his comment, most academic pursuits are accompanied by strong emotional and disciplinary commitments—often unconscious—that fuel otherwise “rational” intellectual debates and arguments (see also Devereux 1967; Kulick 2006). To reduce Boas’s famous antipathy toward Freud to nothing more than an abstract intellectual disagreement diminishes our ability to understand both the complex human motivations that underlie the fraught relationship between anthropology and psychoanalysis and the forces that continue to maintain the disciplines as largely separate enterprises.

While I agree with Darnell’s caution that we not overestimate the “overall state of depression and bitterness” or the “crisis of confidence” with which Boas regarded these developments, his antipathy toward psychoanalysis was well known (see Herskovits 1953:71–72; Mead 1959:305). The dominant Boasian version of psychological anthropology—as reflected in Boas’s own comments on the topic and in the “culture and personality” approach he promoted among his later students—was decidedly static, descriptive, and nonpsychodynamic. Although Boas recognized the relevance of Freud’s emphasis on childhood socialization, particularly in producing automatic habits and rendering them largely unconscious (Boas 1920:320), he remained skeptical of efforts to trace the vicissitudes of this “unthought” mental material and explicitly rejected fundamental psychodynamic tenets such as “the

theory of the influence of suppressed desires,” which he seems to have viewed as a pathological process applicable only to individual neurotics (Stocking 1992:319). This broad rejection of explicitly psychodynamic thinking was replicated in the work of Benedict and Mead, Boas’s torchbearers in the study of culture and personality. As Johnson and Loewenberg note, given the Boasian rejection of biology as a significant shaper of culture—along with a corresponding rejection of universalizing theories in favor of historical-particularist and relativist accounts—Freud’s psychobiology (or as Devereux [1958:81] called it, his *pseudo-biologia phantastica*) was dead on arrival for most anthropologists. However, the anthropological rejection of psychoanalysis was not wholesale; rather, it focused on Freud’s more fantastic paleoanthropological and biologically determined speculations, not the underlying system of psychodynamics fundamental to a psychoanalytic approach to mind.

Indeed, during the interwar years both psychoanalysis and anthropology were—in their own ways—wrestling with precisely the project Boas identified as central to a “modern” psychological anthropology: moving beyond descriptive and evolutionary concerns toward “a penetrating study of the individual under the stress of the culture in which he lives” (Boas 1940 [1930]:269). While Boas remained fixated on *Totem and Taboo*, psychoanalysis was in flux. Alternative psychoanalytic approaches were flourishing in both the United States and Europe and would give rise to new schools and theoretical approaches. A small group of dissident émigré psychoanalysts from Germany and Vienna—most notably Franz Alexander, Alfred Adler, Sándor Radó, and Karen Horney—began the task of purging psychoanalysis of its most conservative and culture-bound orthodoxies, inspiring the “culturalist” or “neo-Freudian” revisions associated with Abram Kardiner, Edward Sapir, Harry Stack Sullivan, Erik Erikson, Erich Fromm, Clara Thompson, and others. These developments would open the field to greater interdisciplinary dialogue with the social sciences, laying the groundwork for contemporary relational, interpersonal, and intersubjective approaches (see Hale [1995] and Mitchell and Black [1995] for overviews). It is no coincidence that many of these Freudian revisionists were directly influenced by their contact with ethnographers—mostly students of Boas—who drew their attention to the critical importance of the culturally variable interpersonal field as the proximate environment within which psyche develops.

Freud himself continued to revise and refine his own understanding of mind, shifting from his early concerns with individual psychopathology to broader questions of metapsychology (1915, 1920, 1921, 1923) and social theory (1927, 1930, 1939). His second model of mind—the so-called structural model, based on the three metaphorical “agencies” of id, ego, and superego—allowed for a more sophisticated understanding of psychodynamics and, crucially, allowed us to conceptualize the structuring role of social context in normal ego development (Freud 1923). Anna Freud (1937) extended and developed the theoretical implications of this model, emphasizing the role of

both defensive and conflict-free processes in normal ego functioning and the fundamental importance of personality adaptation and adjustment to the sociocultural environment. Over time, this gave rise to ego psychology, which defined American psychoanalysis for decades and strongly influenced various “adaptationist” and socialization approaches in psychological anthropology (see, e.g., Devereux 1969 [1951]; Erikson 1950, 1959; Kardiner 1939, 1945, 1949; Whiting and Child 1953; Whiting et al. 1966). Despite this, as Darnell notes, Boas’s views on psychoanalysis appear virtually unchanged over a span of 30 years. This is unfortunate, particularly given the rapid diversification and refinement of psychoanalytic theory taking place during this period. Boas seems to have been unaware of these developments, or perhaps simply uninterested.

As this brief overview illustrates, Boas’s understanding of the actual scope and dynamism of psychoanalytic thinking was quite limited. Indeed, throughout much of its history, anthropology has engaged with psychoanalytic thought through similar distorting reductions and motivated misunderstandings: in contrast with our own disciplinary heterogeneity, we imagine Freud to be the sole representative of psychoanalysis; we highlight the field’s most questionable and contentious speculations while ignoring the more generative concepts (unconscious mentation, affect, motivation, internalization, defense, etc.) that lie at the heart of psychoanalytic theory and practice; and we reduce psychoanalysis to a set of overly psychologized (and culture bound) clinical-theoretical abstractions having little to do with the complexities of social selves in their cultural worlds. These misunderstandings have allowed anthropology to imagine it has little in common with psychoanalysis and, lacking common ground, has little to learn from it—a bias that persists into the present.

Like anthropology, psychoanalysis comprises an array of often heterodox approaches to human subjectivity that have developed over the past century, diverging—often quite dramatically—from Freud’s founding insights. Its fundamental concern is not the documentation of reified structures or complexes of mind but, rather, the understanding of the role of unconscious mental forces, in both creative and defensive forms, in our personal and social lives. And crucially, the insights generated by psychoanalysis are not the result of mere armchair speculation; they are gained through what La Barre (1978) has called “fieldwork on the couch”—sustained interpersonal observation, listening, and interaction in the clinical setting. If anthropology has traditionally set its goal to be the systematic documentation of human cultural variation through long-term fieldwork, in parallel fashion, psychoanalysis has concerned itself with documenting, theorizing, and engaging with the complexity of human mental and interpersonal dynamics as they unfold in the years-long engagement that forms a psychoanalysis (see Molino 2004b). As Chodorow (2014:126) reminds us, “anthropology, and ethnography more generally . . . are as close epistemologically, theoretically, methodologically and substantively as any discipline to

psychoanalysis.” How can two fields with so much in common remain so indifferent toward one another?

Implications for Anthropological Theory and Practice

Several commenters (Gammeltoft, Hollan, Denham) responded to my observations on the “profound transformations of theory and practice that a full reckoning with the insights of psychoanalysis entails,” offering their own thoughts on how our work as anthropologists might become something more than the superficial “nod” toward psychoanalysis that Denham notes in much of the recent scholarship. Gammeltoft suggests that the problem is one of disciplinary lack of awareness of the “psychic forces that affect human lives profoundly, often exceeding our conscious awareness and yet shaping how we think and act.” She suggests that by “taking the unconscious seriously and attending to its ethnographic manifestations,” anthropologists would increase their ability to critically address the human condition in its full complexity, attending to the inner dynamics that underpin and shadow overt social forms and processes. How, she asks, can we continue to ignore this fundamental fact of social life? And how can we render these unconscious processes amenable to anthropological inquiry?

Both Hollan and Denham suggest that we foreground the clinical methods of psychoanalysis, employing psychoanalytic “listening” and interviewing techniques in the field, and thinking through these encounters in light of the wide range of theories offered by contemporary and classical psychoanalysis (see Hollan 2005; Levy and Hollan 1988). Hollan notes that clinically inspired field techniques have proven more attractive—and perhaps more useful—to anthropology than the recondite theories of psychoanalysis. I agree that a “person-centered” or “clinical ethnographic” approach—one attuned to the transference-countertransference dynamics that attend fieldwork encounters, and thus, to the production of anthropological knowledge—is a key element in the practice of psychoanalytic anthropology. But how do anthropologists learn to “listen” for these unconscious interpersonal dynamics? And what do they make of them once they see their influence? We are immersed in these flows continually—sometimes even becoming aware of them—but without some theoretical understanding of both interpersonal and intrapsychic processes (and some insight into the dynamics of one’s own inner world), “clinical ethnography” is likely to produce little more than confusion. As Denham insightfully observes, an engagement with the theoretical literature of psychoanalysis is necessary, but rarely is it sufficient.

Before anthropology can take psychoanalysis seriously, we must realize that a thing called psyche exists, and gain some intimate familiarity with its dynamics. This is usually possible only after sustained engagement with one’s own inner world, gained through either a personal or didactic analysis. But as Denham notes, barriers to gaining this cross-disciplinary expertise abound: the investment of time and money needed to

pursue analytic training is significant, and the hermetic and clannish nature of many psychoanalytic training institutes does little to facilitate the process. Despite this, American anthropology now counts among its numbers a growing number of scholars with advanced degrees and training in both anthropology and psychoanalysis (including Robert LeVine, Melford Spiro, Robert Paul, Allen Johnson, Katherine Ewing, Doug Hollan, myself, and others). In fact, one of the commenters on this article—UCLA historian and psychoanalyst Peter Loewenberg—played a key role in drafting the California Research Psychoanalyst Law of 1977, legislation that allowed nonmedical university faculty to acquire full psychoanalytic training and to practice as board-certified psychoanalysts.

Although dual training may be the “gold standard” for psychoanalytic anthropologists, other pathways might also lead to similarly fruitful integrations: Devereux, La Barre, and Linton all recommended that anthropologists should undergo a period of psychodynamic talk therapy before starting fieldwork to sensitize them to the existence and quality of their own inner world and its shaping effect on their personal and professional engagements (most notably, their own transference-countertransference dynamics). As LeVine notes, the collaboration of trained anthropologists and psychoanalytic clinicians also remains a viable model for cross-cultural psychoanalytic research (see Herdt and Stoller 1990). Taking a somewhat contrarian position, Devereux (1978)—who was also dual trained—argued that anthropology and psychoanalysis should be maintained as “complementary frames of reference,” distinct domains of expertise that constitute the anthropological object from two mutually supporting perspectives. Crapanzano (1989) takes a slightly different tack, characterizing the relationship between anthropology and psychoanalysis as one of “agonistic complementarity,” in which both fields benefit from the perspectival tensions and “illuminations” produced by the juxtaposition of their very different interpretive sensibilities. Whatever path is chosen, serious cross-disciplinary engagement between the two fields seems necessary if we hope to understand both the psychological dynamics of culture and the cultural dynamics of mind.

Cultural Psychodynamics and Anthropological Metapsychology

In the space remaining, I would like to discuss in more detail what, precisely, a cultural psychodynamic approach commits us to at the level of theory and why it forms a necessary complement to the broader study of cultural processes. First, what does the phrase “cultural psychodynamics” mean? While most anthropologists have a general sense of what is implied by “cultural,” the term “psychodynamics” remains largely an empty signifier. Closely aligned with both “psychic economy” and “psychic structure,” psychodynamics refers to a group of subpersonal unconscious processes that manage the distribution, charge, transformation, and expression of mental content—representations,

thoughts, affects, drives, motivations, et cetera—understood as coexisting in varying degrees of harmony, tension, and conflict (see Kitcher and Wilkes 1988). The very notion of psychodynamics posits the existence of psychic material in need of management: affect that must be contained, expressed, isolated, expelled, or transformed; ideational content that carries complex and often contradictory moral-emotional valences; representational and motivational systems characterized by overdetermination; thoughts and feelings that exist at varying levels of awareness and accessibility; complex and often ambivalent motivations; and desires, wishes, and drives that must be satisfied, denied, or indirectly gratified.

In other words, psychodynamics is about the management, flow, and transformation of psycho-affective energies within the culturally shaped human mind. Despite my emphasis on the intrapsychic, these processes must be understood as internal “demands for work” sponsored by both the organized psyche and the organized sociocultural field. Paraphrasing Obeyesekere (1990a), a psychoanalytic study of cultural forms must recognize both the “work of psyche” and the “work of culture” (which, owing to its historical-transpersonal nature, fundamentally shapes the human psyche, constituting the interpersonal and representational field that yields culturally particularized psyches as well as the dispositional field that psychodynamic processes must engage and manage).

While contemporary psychological anthropology tends toward descriptive and phenomenological concerns, cultural psychodynamics adds a focus on subpersonal processes and dynamics. As Freud wrote in his *Introductory Lectures*: “We seek not merely to describe and to classify phenomena, but to understand them as signs of an interplay of forces in the mind, as a manifestation of purposeful intentions working concurrently or in mutual opposition. We are concerned with a *dynamic view* of mental phenomena. In our view the phenomena that are perceived must yield in importance to [underlying] trends which are only hypothetical” (Freud 1916:67). A simple example clarifies this distinction between descriptive and dynamic accounts: when an anthropologist describes something as “unconscious”—perhaps a desire, an emotional orientation, or some interpersonal norm—we employ the term as a simple descriptor referring to ideas, affects, and motivations not represented in conscious awareness. In contrast, a properly psychodynamic use of the term implies: (a) that something is not present in awareness; (b) that it is actively maintained outside of awareness through a set of identifiable processes; and (c) that this material, despite being “unthought,” persists as an active absence that shapes mental functioning, experience, and behavior. The question is, How? How do active, affectively motivated processes of not-knowing shape the subsequent vicissitudes of disavowed or unthought mental content? What are the underlying processes? And how do sociocultural practices and beliefs catalyze and shape these dynamics?

As stated in the paper, cultural psychodynamics seeks to link intrapsychic processes with a highly particularized understanding of the constitutive role of cultural dispositions,

ethnotheories, and social practices—in other words, joining contemporary psychodynamics with a nuanced understanding of cultural phenomenology. Such an approach asks: How can a relatively small set of variably conscious, dynamic, mental processes—developing and functioning within specific sociocultural worlds—give rise to the complex cultural subjects we know so well from our own anthropological engagements? How does the social, symbolic, ideological, and material surround—what Boothby (2001) calls the “dispositional field”—shape the variable expression and salience of these subpersonal dynamics? How do local ontologies and epistemologies “fill in” psychodynamic processes with the specific cultural content they will come to manage? How do culturally particular emotional ecologies—with their zones of hyper- and hypocognition—shape dynamics of mind? How do relational processes—both early and ongoing—form our inner world of represented others? How does culture—as a field of gratification as well as restriction and prohibition—shape the economy of desire, the demands of the body, and the dynamic work of mind? And how does this often idiosyncratic and particularized inner world—shaped by the press of unconscious fantasy, conflict, disavowal, and not-knowing—come to shape the outer world of sociocultural processes, forms, and institutions? Big questions, but questions amenable to exploration through a cultural psychodynamic approach.²⁶

Moore (1994:142) has argued that anthropology needs a working model of psyche in order to understand the constitution of cultural subjects in their full complexity. Going further, to the degree that complex cultural subjects simultaneously embody, perform, reproduce, resist, and create sociocultural forms (many of which, as Kardiner recognized, reflect individual psychological processes, externalized and institutionalized), anthropology requires a model of psyche to understand culture itself. As Gammeltoft notes, while anthropologists have developed significant expertise in understanding the often opaque and complex processes of the outer world of culture, we have paid little attention to the similarly complex and obscure dynamics of the inner world. Psychoanalysts, in contrast, have focused their efforts on developing a fine-grained understanding of this inner world in both its conscious and unconscious aspects, but they have done so without a sophisticated understanding of culture. Cultural psychodynamics seeks to bring these two bodies of expert knowledge together into a unified project: the study of the mutually transformative dynamic system constituted by the interaction of the sociocultural field and its psychically complex cultural subjects. Such an approach recognizes the unique contributions and insights deriving from both anthropology and psychoanalysis, marshaling their perspectival differences to transform

26. Readers interested in classic and contemporary ethnographies reflecting diverse “cultural psychodynamic” sensibilities are referred to Hollowell (1955 [1940], 1955 [1941]), Kluckhohn (1944), Groark (2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017), Hollan (2014), Mageo (2013, 2015), and Denham (2015 and forthcoming).

the working postulates of both disciplines. Lacking a better term, we might think of the cultural psychodynamic project as providing the foundation for a sort of “anthropological metapsychology,” one that allows us to apprehend being human in its full dimensionality, with equal weight given to the outer world of culture and society, the inner world of psychic reality, and the complex blending of the two that constitutes each individual life.

In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to close with a quote from Slavoj Žižek that has always served as a sort of personal lodestone:

One of the big reproaches to psychoanalysis is that it's only a theory of individual pathological disturbances, and that applying psychoanalysis to other cultural or social phenomena is theoretically illegitimate. [Psychoanalysis] asks in what way you as an individual have to relate to [the] social field—not just in the sense of other people, but in the sense of the anonymous social as such—to exist as a person. . . . What is to be interpreted, and what not, is that everything is to be interpreted; that is to say, when Freud says [*Das Unbehagen en der Kultur*—Civilization and Its Discontents, more literally “The Uneasiness in Culture”—it means that . . . culture as such, in order to establish itself as normal—[or] what appears as normal—involves a whole series of pathological cuts, distortions, and so on. . . . There is, again, a kind of an *Unbehagen*—an Uneasiness—we are out of joint, not at home, in culture as such. Which means, again, that *there is no normal culture: culture, as such, has to be interpreted.* (Žižek 2006; emphasis added)

—Kevin P. Groark

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