

SAVING A SYMBOL IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY:

WHY LIBERTARIANS SHOULD CARE ABOUT 'CULTURE SHOCK'

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Abstract

This article will chart the rise and fall of the phrase 'culture shock' and its central component 'culture' in social anthropology. It will argue that the term is 'culture shock' and the way it has been treated symbolizes the dominance of irrational ideologies in anthropology. This can be noted in part of the well-known stage model but more significantly in the way that 'contemporary anthropologists' have been rejecting it. The article will argue that they are not philosophically justified in their rejection and that their arguments are fallacious. It will show that this rejection of 'culture shock' is ultimately underpinned by a form of anti-freedom historicism which aims to displace critical thinking with dogma and it will argue that continuing to use 'culture shock' is thus confronting this anti-freedom movement.

Introduction

It's a beautiful thing the destruction of words... Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?
Syme in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

There cannot be many people who have not come across the phrase 'culture shock.' Initially popularized by the Canadian social anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (Oberg 1954), culture shock has made its way into the popular sphere (e.g. Toffler 1970, Marx 2001) and, at the time of writing is central to growing disciplines such as intercultural communication (see Stier 2006) and intercultural education (e.g. Jokikokko 2009, Nagata 2004). It is also increasingly employed in business studies, especially on courses which prepare businessmen for assignments in foreign countries (e.g. Selmer 1999). Oberg divided culture shock into a number of phases. Phase one was the 'honeymoon phase' where you found the new culture endlessly fascinating. Phase two involved xenophobia. You reacted against the culture and experienced a breakdown where you became angry and irrational and sought-out fellow expatriates and co-nationals to create almost certainly negative 'stereotypes' about the host culture. After this there was 'resignation,' where you could accept your situation and develop various coping mechanisms, and, finally, you had a realization. After sufficient immersion, you understood that the culture was 'just another way of living' and you realized that it was not worse than your own culture but simply a product of a different history.

But why do those interested in freedom of thought need to understand culture shock? Why is 'culture shock' relevant to libertarians? The answer is that the way in which 'culture shock' has been treated, in particular over the last fifteen years, uncannily reflects the ideologies that have come to dominate both social anthropology,¹ and perhaps to a lesser

extent, the social sciences more broadly. 'Culture shock' – and, indeed, 'culture' – are increasingly being rejected by social anthropologists. This potentially useful model is left to languish for no justifiable reason. In this article, I will demonstrate that there is no justification for rejecting either 'culture shock' or 'culture' and that doing so is part of an attempt to silence intellectual opponents and shut down free debate and critical thinking and I will delineate precisely how this is the case. Accordingly, 'culture shock' is more than simply an example of popular 'naïve psychology' such as 'jet-lag' (see Furnham and Bochner 1986). Its treatment symbolizes the dominance of philosophically indefensible and anti-liberty ideologies in social science and it needs to be defended.

The Rise and Fall of Culture Shock

Some highly respected sources (e.g. Furnham and Bochner 1986, xvi) have argued that Kalervo Oberg coined the phrase culture shock. This is inaccurate. Kalervo Oberg's presentation 'Culture Shock' took place before the Women's Club of Rio de Janeiro on 3rd August 1954 (Oberg 1954). The club was composed of the wives of American expatriate businessmen. His presentation in Brazil was distributed to Americans via embassies (McComb and Foster 1975, 96) and eventually published in the now defunct journal *Practical Anthropology* (Oberg 1960). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first published mention of 'culture shock' came in 1932 in *The Economic Journal* (Reynard 1932) but this is the first mention in a British publication. The Oxford English Dictionary does not mention that this was simply a review of a book on sociology and economics published in the USA in 1931 (Carpenter 1931).

At the time of the Dust Bowl in the USA and, more broadly, the Great Depression, large numbers of rural people were being compelled to migrate to cities in search of work. According to sociologist Niles Carpenter, having migrated they fell into crime, mental illness, poverty and 'religious indifferentism' due to the shock caused by the change. Carpenter termed this reaction 'Culture Shock' (217), comparing it to the concept of 'Shell Shock' (337). There is also a reference to 'Cultural Shock,' with regard to Mexican immigrants, in a 1929 article (Gamio 1929). This applies 'cultural shock' to immigrants, arguing that some are forced to return home because they cannot deal with life in the USA. In 1940, sociologist J. B. Holt slightly nuanced the term culture shock in an article for the *American Sociological Review* (Holt 1940). He argued that rural people experience 'cultural shock' when they move to the cities and then retreat into fundamentalist religiosity which recreates something of the social life of living in a village. The next published account cited by the OED

is in the BBC magazine *The Listener* in August 1960 and by now 'culture shock' is understood in Oberg's terms and he is effectively paraphrased.

Though I do not wish to concentrate on this, Oberg's model of culture shock – the one which has become so popular – reflects many philosophically unjustifiable positions and possesses what we might call 'implicitly religious' (see Bailey 1997) dimensions.² In his final stage, Oberg seems to argue that you will overcome the feelings of culture shock if you accept a dogma – that all cultures are equal and any differences are the products of different histories. This seems to be a subtle advocacy of cultural relativism which has been criticised as inconsistent, epistemologically pessimistic, because it prevents any comparison, and empirically unjustifiable, in terms of the belief that all cultures are equal (see Kuznar 1997, Sandall 2001, Dawkins 2003). Oberg's model is also, in effect, an advocacy of cultural determinism, something which has been widely discredited (see Freeman 1983). And finally, in a kind of New Thought Metaphysics, Oberg seems to argue that you can change how you think and feel by accepting a certain dogma. This is comparable to certain forms of conversion experience (see Dutton Forthcoming), the Prosperity Gospel (see Coleman 2000) and the self-help movement (see Wilson 2003). It may be the case that expatriates unconsciously feel that the new culture, no matter how impoverished, is equal to or better than the old one because they have got used to it and this would explain the phenomenon of 'reverse culture shock' (see Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963), but this is another issue. Oberg's final stage reflects the influence in anthropology – and it remains – of cultural determinism and cultural relativism. The model can only be useful to scientific scholars if it is rescued from this.

But, in the wake of Oberg's presentation, culture shock takes off in academia and especially in social anthropology where anthropologists regard it as a useful way of understanding their reaction to cultures which they study through immersion. However, there has been a recent sharp decline in the use of the phrase 'culture shock' both in the best academic journals and specifically in anthropology journals. There are a few scattered references from 1932 onwards and then a gradual climb in references from about 1960. References to culture shock reach a peak in the mid-1990s before beginning a gradual decline which accelerates almost into free-fall in about 2005.³

An analysis of the 56 leading anthropology journals⁴ differs from the journals more broadly. The first references are not until the 1950s, there is a gradual rise after 1960 and very sharp peaks both in the early 1970s and the mid-1990s before another clear decline but, this time, down to zero references in 2010. The concept is now mainly being used by leading journals outside anthropology. The JSTOR only reflects a minority of journals deemed especially prestigious so it does not show the popularity of the concept in intercultural communication.

Why the Decline in 'Culture Shock' in Anthropology?

'Culture shock' and its central term 'culture' have both declined in anthropology for unjustifiable reasons. So let us

examine the arguments employed by critics for rejecting 'culture shock' per se.

There is relatively little detailed contemporary discussion of culture shock by anthropologists, as we have seen. James Davies (2010, 95) refers to it but only right at the end of a very detailed article which otherwise examines it without actually using the phrase. Elizabeth Hsu (2010, 167) also only mentions culture shock – and by implication 'reverse culture shock' – in passing, referring to it as a 'platitude' which unhelpfully makes it appear as if fieldwork is a bracketed phase rather than something which alters the fieldworker's perceptions for the rest of their life. It is also mentioned, very briefly, by two other scholars in the same volume, but only in terms of it being a cliché (Lorimer 2010, 112) or rather old-fashioned, popular in the 1970s (Crapanzano 2010, 55). Staying with relatively recent anthropological literature, Jeffrey Sluka and Antonius Robben (2007) also refer to culture shock in terms of its historical importance in social anthropology. They write (Sluka and Robben 16) that: 'The common experience of culture shock as a consequence of fieldwork in a foreign culture is one of the oldest themes in cultural anthropology... This shared subjective experience provides one of the most fundamental bonds that unite anthropologists...'

So what appear to be the essential anthropological arguments for not using 'culture shock'? According to philosopher Sir Karl Popper (1966), we can make a divide between 'essentialists' and 'nominalists.' 'Essentialists' tend to focus on defining their terms but the problem is that too strict essentialism prevents us from actually commencing analysis. Nominalists are interested in how things work (in answering questions) but without some form of essentialism – some form of constructed category which breaks reality up into manageable bits – they cannot gain purchase and thus begin analysis.

A healthy compromise is 'cautious essentialism' (see Dennett 1995) where you employ categories carefully, aware that they always play down nuance. Hsu (2010) presents essentialist nitpicking about the possible implications of the label 'culture shock.' Any attempt to identify a 'phase' involves 'bracketing' but this does not mean that it is not helpful to analysis to identify phases. We are seeing an inability to comprehend the possibility of cautious essentialism. Culture shock is also termed a cliché. Firstly, clichés are like essentialisms. They can be useful as analytical tools if used cautiously. Secondly, the fact that a statement such as 'English people drink a lot of tea' is a cliché does not make it any less empirically comparatively accurate and so terming a statement of this a kind a cliché is really a kind of appeal novelty and elitism: 'People say it a lot, so it's wrong.' This is no more accurate than an appeal to 'majority' or 'tradition': 'People say it a lot so it's right.' And, thirdly, that it may be a cliché to term being tired when you return from the West Coast USA to the UK 'jetlag' is no argument for not calling it jetlag. That it has become a cliché is, if anything, a testimony to what a persuasive metaphor it is. Novelists and other artists avoid clichés because they are trying to manipulate people's feelings and clichés are, often, not successful in so doing because you know you are being manipulated and lose your suspension of disbelief (see e.g.

Kawin 1992, 61). Social scientists are not trying to do this. Whether a label is a cliché is irrelevant. The question is purely about whether it is accurate and whether it is useful and I will argue below that culture shock is both a successful metaphor and, to a great extent, empirically accurate in terms of Oberg's stages. Finally, culture shock is termed old-fashioned. This is an appeal to novelty.

What about 'Culture'?

Part of the problem with 'culture shock' for 'contemporary anthropology' is that it uses the term 'culture' and it has become fashionable amongst anthropologists to reject this category.

The most commonly heard argument amongst contemporary anthropologists is that the term 'culture' has become somehow 'reified',⁵ a kind of 'timeless' category which straight-jackets fresh ethnographic enquiry. But this is not accurate. Robin Fox and Barbara King (2002) point out that there has never been a 'single concept of culture' within social anthropology. To the extent that a tradition – or traditional definition – can be discerned, 'culture' is understood as patterned, consistent representations and perceptions of reality which are reproduced across generations within a group (1). Later in their volume, Norwegian anthropologist Frederik Barth (2002, 24) draws upon early anthropologist E.B. Tylor (1871) to define 'culture' as 'the ideas behind human behaviour ... "that complex whole"' which is inherently difficult to define. Fox and King argue that anthropologists should 'stop fretting over this' (2). Anthropologists should employ the concept in a 'self-aware' manner. They should be mindful of its positive dimensions but also of its faults. Anthropologists should start out with research questions and if the concept of culture turns out to be useful they should pragmatically and carefully employ it (4).

So we have come up, once more, against the old debate of nominalism verses essentialism. It may well be the case that 'culture' is vague, inconsistently defined and, in some cases, doesn't quite seem to fit what it is being used to describe. But this is true of any category of apprehension. The category is useful solely to the extent that it helps us to taxonomise reality, make comparisons and answer research questions. Some form of essentialism is always necessary in order to do this and this essentialism will inherently play down nuance in favour of a broad model. But this is useful as long as we are talking about 'cautious essentialism' – as long as the anthropologist remembers that the category involves these inherent conceptual problems. If he does not – if he, on some level, accepts the Platonic view that categories are fixed in the World of Forms – then 'culture' may well become 'reified,' as category critics often seem to summarise it (e.g. Rasmussen 2008). But, assuming we are talking about cautious essentialism, 'culture' is no more 'reified' than any other category and nor is it any more inconsistent or vague. Using 'culture' does not assume that the world is divided into discrete, fixed, separate cultures any more than using the term 'species' assumes that the world is divided into fixed species that are in no way evolving. Of course, the world is gradually changing all the time. The category is simply a means of beginning some kind of

analysis. And the fact that the term has a 'history' is irrelevant to whether it is useful. All categories have a history.

The counter-argument to this – amongst post-modern anthropologists – is that the use of 'culture' is imposing a foreign category on that which you are studying. Hymes (1974) criticises anthropologists for imposing 'Western categories' – such as Western measurement – on those they study, arguing that this is a form of domination. Talal Asad (1973) criticised field-work based anthropology for ultimately being indebted to colonialism. As we have seen, anthropologists in this school advocate cultural relativism and some even suggest that, as the anthropologist is simply their culture (anthropology being a product of culture) they are as much an object of study as the tribe. Cultures should simply be described in their own terms because to do otherwise starts to become imperialist. To a certain degree, we have already looked at the problems with this viewpoint. It is epistemologically pessimistic and so unscientific (see Kuznar 1997, Popper 1963).

As far as I can see, sinking the post-modern perspective sinks all of the criticisms of culture. But many anthropologists ignore this and continue presenting specific criticisms that need to be countered. Barth (2002) argues that 'culture' is problematic because the term is defined in so many different ways. As I have said, I think that this difficulty can be dealt with by employing the term with caution due to an awareness of the debate over its meaning. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2002, 38) argues that the term is difficult because it has become so successful and is commonly used. He suggests replacing it with something else. This seems to be an appeal to novelty and snobbery. Human Rights expert Richard Wilson (2002, 229) argues that 'culture' is not useful because it is never just an analytical category and has become highly political as in South Africa for example. If you wanted to, you could trace the political power dimensions, and history, to even the most mundane categories and would end up with no categories – acceptable to post-modernists – at all. It is true that some terms are so emotionally charged (and even associated with murder) such as (currently) 'racist,' 'Fascist,' 'Holocaust Denier' or 'paedophile' (and, in the USA more than Western Europe, 'Communist') that almost nobody would self-identify as being one. Using these terms about an intellectual opponent or their arguments is, even if inadvertently, an appeal to emotion (the 'connotation fallacy'); an attempt to win an argument other than through reason, to intimidate people into silence.⁶ It is questionable whether those who employ them in these contexts have any interest in reasoned argument. 'Culture' is not generally in this category and nor is 'race' because, unlike 'racist,' it cannot be easily used as a means of intimidating people into submission. Religion scholar Lila Abu-Lughod (1991, 138) argues that 'culture' should be rejected because enforcing 'separations' it preserves a 'sense of hierarchy.' This seems to assume that those that use 'culture' are uncritical essentialists and a similar argument might be used about any category division.

Canadian anthropologist Tobias Rees (2010b) suggests that 'insistence' on the use of this 'culture' category is limiting because everything is seen as a grounded in culture. He

gives a series of examples of potential human thought and asks rhetorically 'All culture?' They are 'all culture' because the term 'culture,' in anthropology, means the entire way of life of a people. We might expand from 'nations' to talk about 'Northern European culture' or 'Islamic culture' but this does not undermine the usefulness of 'culture.' 'Culture' is all encompassing. Rees argues that the consequence of keeping to the culture category is 'boredom' which is another fallacious argument – an appeal to novelty. This seems to me to be the central argument of culture critics: 'Let's start using a new category because it's exciting and because it's new and new is good! Let's get rid of culture because it's old and old is bad!'

Rees (2010a) argues that a 'profound' reason for 'turning away from culture' is 'the emergence of new ways of thinking/knowing.' This is because if one wishes to inquire into 'new ways of thinking/knowing' that 'escape established categories and thereby make reality accessible in new ways' it is 'counterintuitive' to begin the inquiry with the 'assumption that whatever is emergent is cultural or social.' It is 'counterintuitive' because it 'codes whatever is potentially new as a variant of the old' and thus 'presumes ... cultural or social essentialism, timeless ontological categories' (162). But the very nature of language means that we code that which is new in terms of variants of the old. As philosopher Dedre Gentner (1982, 108) argues, we make sense of the 'domain of enquiry' by means of the 'known domain.' The way in which we begin to comprehend anything new is as a development of that which we already know. This attitude of asserting radical divides is not in the spirit of science and it contributes to an anthropology which reflects this. Rees counters (2010b) that this view defines humans in terms of language and posits a tribe which believes that plants talk. If we hold to our language-based humans we are imposing our categories on the tribe which is a kind of violence. This simply reflects the cultural relativism we have already countered. This possibility – that some groups understand the world in an empirically unjustifiable way – provides no argument for not defining humans in terms of language. And, moreover, I am not defining them in such terms. I am simply stating the fact that what we know – empirically – gradually evolves from our previous knowledge and this is reflected in the nature of language. Rees also argues that his form of anthropology questions the established categories – such as culture – allowing him to better document groups that are conceptually different from his own. But, as I have stressed, this is not convincing. He would require some kind of conceptual framework to make sense of these cultures and this would, to some degree, reflect his culture because it would be expressed through his language – and if he tried to express it through foreign categories he would still have to explain them through his language – and it would therefore be based on certain implicit assumptions. I suppose he could try to avoid language and make sense of the culture through abstract painting. But this would not be science. It would be art (see Dutton 2009).

A Brave New World

The next argument which culture-critics present is a kind of historical one. The world has changed and it has bored

radically since the 1980s and, consequently, 'culture' should if not be abandoned then at least sidelined (Rees 2010b).

There has been considerable debate on the influence of globalisation on the practice of anthropology, which has traditionally engaged in local studies of cultures bounded to a place. Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2003) observes the movement away from studying a bounded place and towards studying trans-national processes as the process of globalisation raises questions about the nature of the nation and of culture. He suggests that units of analysis have become 'fuzzier' as globalisation has contributed to a more complex and mutually influencing set of social networks. Identity can, in many cases, be less constrained by place and thus by nationality leading to many trans-national identities becoming highly significant in constructions of self.

The fact that migration and new forms of cultural space – such as on the internet – may gradually move cultures away from being bounded and local does not render the concept of culture any less inherently useful as a category with which to engage in analysis. Rees (2010b) disagrees. He critiques the 'culture category' by claiming that the world has been 'reconfigured' (895) since the 1980s and that 'many' anthropologists have concluded, since this time, that the world cannot be 'spatially ordered into discrete societies and cultures' (895) as it was when anthropology was 'a project of modernity.' This has led to a 'new kind of anthropology' that is 'set apart' (896) from traditional anthropology. He claims that this is important 'context' to moving beyond the use of 'culture' to studying 'the contemporary.' Whether or not 'culture' should be rejected is a philosophical question. To examine the historical developments which have led to some anthropologists rejecting 'culture' is no more relevant than examining the psychological reasons why a particular philosopher might be inclined towards a particular viewpoint rather than a different one.

Where there is any attempt at justification it is a kind of appeal to authority and intuition: 'many of those anthropologists who have conducted research in the new domains have found themselves in an open, undefined space to which their established analytical terms did not speak and which rendered the stakes of their discipline unstable and even uncertain.' It doesn't matter how many anthropologists feel this way, it doesn't make their decision philosophically sustainable. This appeal to authority is smattered with poetic-sounding jargon such as 'it creates a no-longer, not-yet situation' or the assertion that anthropology should be focused on studying 'the emergent' or that it exists in an 'open, uncertain space' which intellectually intimidates the reader. I do think that Rees (2010a) makes a very insightful point when he argues that examining an object of study through a new analytical framework can lead to fresh insights. However, in order to, for example, make a comparison between 'culture shock' and 'religion' I am implicitly accepting that we comprehend 'religion' and we are using it as a means of better comprehending culture shock. So, to begin the process of comparative understanding we must – albeit cautiously – begin with accepting the usefulness of a particular analytical framework; such as 'religion.' Rees is suggesting that the only way to gain fresh insights is to be-

gin with no analytical framework. I do not think he is really doing this because even ‘the contemporary’ is some kind of framework as is (even attempted) logical reasoning but if he is doing this, he is suggesting that insights are generated out of nothing. This is comparable to religious experience (see Rambo 1993) not scientific understanding (see Kuznar 1997).

‘Culture,’ Psychological Manipulation and Revolution

As I think is by now clear, none of the arguments for rejecting ‘culture’ or ‘culture shock’ are acceptable. They are either illogical thinking or they are informally fallacious and thus a form of psychological manipulation. But what is going on? What are the political implications of rejecting either ‘culture shock’ or ‘culture’?

The very fact that fallacious arguments are employed by culture-critics is a clue, as is the nature of these fallacious arguments: appeal to the novel, appeal to snobbery, appeal to insult and appeal to popularity. The rejection of ‘culture’ has very little to do with achieving a more measured and nuanced understanding of the human condition. It is about political power and the empowering of a particular way of thinking. In this regard, I am suspicious of Rees’ implicit divide between – one assumes – ‘modernity’ and ‘post-modernity’ (post-1970s) as so radically different that our former categories do not work any longer. This takes us back to Karl Popper’s (1957) critique of historicism – that is to say implicitly religious ideologies based around dogmas, with a clear ‘other’ and a strong sense of fate and inevitability in the unfolding of history. In historicism, the ‘now’ is considered to be so different from the past that it requires new categories of apprehension and a fundamental break with the past is made. The rejection of culture on these grounds reflects a peculiarly ‘modern’ worldview which asserts that the ‘modern’ world is somehow self-critical, sophisticated and complex but the past was not and, accordingly, ideas and notions which have become widely understood and employed should be expunged as, in the words of German sociologist Ulrich Beck, the ‘living dead’ or ‘zombie categories’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). The concept of ‘family’ (which Beck advocates rejecting) or ‘culture’ is central to how many of us apprehend reality – so, in that sense, it is a useful grappling hook in gaining ‘understanding’ of the world. Moreover, it has the potential to be malleable as human behaviour changes.

Beck’s dogmatic essentialism is not scientific. It is scientific to draw upon established knowledge and develop it by answering discrete research questions employing (carefully) essentialist concepts to the extent that they are useful (see Dennett 1995). To get rid of ‘culture’ is change for the sake of it, as in a revolution. Popper’s (1957, 160) summary of this – highlighting the implicitly essentialist view that history is divided into dramatic and quite separate eras which are literally revolutions apart – could almost have been written about Beck’s zombie categories and, indeed, those who suggest we reject ‘culture’ because ‘so much has changed since the 1980s’:

They believe – and what else could their deification of modernism permit? – that their own brand of histori-

cism is the latest and boldest achievement of the human mind, an achievement so staggeringly novel that only a few people are sufficiently advanced to grasp it... Contrasting their “dynamic” thinking with the “static” thinking of all previous generations they believe that their advance has been made possible by the fact that they are now “living in a revolution.”

The Symbolism of Using ‘Culture’ and ‘Culture Shock’

Our continuing use of ‘culture shock’ and ‘culture’ is of symbolic importance. It is a direct challenge to what Popper (1957) sees as ‘revolutionaries.’ As Sean Gabb (2003) summarises, revolutionaries tend to present themselves as somehow uniquely modern and dismiss the state of affairs prior to their ascent to power (or the views of their opponents) as out-moded, old-fashioned; engaging in a manipulative appeal to novelty. They attempt to further their power by jettisoning important words and concepts, usually arguing that they should be dismissed for illogical and emotionally manipulative reasons – they are not just old-fashioned but offensive, hurtful, symbolic of something uniquely bad. And highly emotive smear labels – such as ‘enemy of the people’ or ‘racist’ – are wont to be employed against those who disagree with them as are, sometimes, intimidation tactics (see Ellis 2004). In removing these ‘old-fashioned’ terms, they create a clear essentialist break with the past – because the past is now clearly linguistically different – helping them to dismiss the past and its thinking as inherently bad and other. It also allows them to dismiss those who will not conform as being immoral. Once people are manipulated, or even threatened, into accepting this rejection of certain terms then revolutionaries are dictating the terms of debate and have power over people every time they think or speak. Ultimately, this permits them to take power and for their way of thinking to take power. After a while, they will argue for the rejection of terms which they have themselves advocated just to exert their power and to keep people on edge about what they can and cannot say and think. The revolution is, in a sense, eternal.

This is directly relevant to culture shock and culture. The arguments of ‘contemporary anthropologists’ (even calling themselves this implies their intellectual roots in what Popper calls ‘historicism’) are that the two terms should be dismissed because they are, variously, old-fashioned, clichéd and popular and because, in the case of ‘culture,’ it is ‘imperialist’, symbolically violent ... in other words ‘immoral,’ as expressed in manipulative terms. Moreover, their anthropological opponents face the threat of, albeit unfairly, having their work refused publication because they will not conform. Indeed, in a rejoinder to my critique (Dutton 2010c) of his article in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (Rees 2010a), Rees (2010b) refers to ‘Dutton’s Dilemma’ (899-900). He quotes my concern that rejecting ‘culture’ has become illogically popular in anthropology leading, sometimes, to unfair peer-review treatment of those who employ it. Rees states, ‘These lines document how Dutton’s holding on to his theory-based conception of science has seemingly alienated him from much of contemporary anthropology’ (900). With emotive language such as ‘alienate’ this is an appeal to threat – you will be alienated if you accept Dutton’s view rather than mine – and, regarding

myself, to popularity: reject your theory, embrace mine and you will not be 'alienated.'

Conclusion

If we permit people to take away our categories of apprehension – our words – for philosophically unsustainable reasons then we are ceding power to them and to their unscientific and illiberal ideology. If I stop using the term 'culture shock' because I'm told it is old-fashioned, outmoded, clichéd or even that abandoning the word 'culture' will improve my prospects of being published in 'cutting edge' anthropology journals then I am permitting irrational people to have power over science, power in the world and power over me personally. I am letting them dictate the boundaries of debate. 'Culture shock' may be 'old-fashioned' but this is completely irrelevant to whether or not it is useful and can be used in new ways. And to criticise anything because it is 'old-fashioned' is as nonsensical as criticising something just because it is new. This kind of criticism creates an essentialist break with the intellectual past and, in doing-so, bypasses the incremental steps of science to cement the 'hegemony' of its own 'new' – though not logical – way of thinking, which permits it to smear any counter-arguments as 'old-fashioned.' Such actions are not the products of scientific minds. They are the products of social scientists who wish – through controlling language – to ensure that any debate is ultimately on their terms and controlled by them. They must not succeed in their goal and partial evidence of their failure will be an insistence on continuing terms such as 'culture' and 'culture shock.'

Notes

(1) Social anthropology has traditionally studied tribes and folk culture. In the last fifty years it has diversified to study aspects of complex Western cultures. For a history see Gellner (1995). It has been argued that anthropology is divided between 'scientists' and 'naturalists' (see Fearn 28th November 2008) and is now dominated by those who are anti-scientific (see Berrett 30th November 2010 or Dutton 2010b).

(2) Edward Bailey uses the term 'implicit religion' to refer to ideologies which operate in the same way as religion – because they are fervently believed and even involve an element of fate – but which lack the 'sacred' or 'spiritual' dimension which is taken to characterise 'religion.' For a discussion of implicit religion see Dutton (2010a).

(3) As indexed by JSTOR between 1930 and 2010: <http://www.jstor.org>.

(4) As indexed by JSTOR between 1955 and 2010: <http://www.jstor.org>.

(5) This term has been looked at elsewhere as epitomising social science jargon (see O'Leary 2007, 'Reification'). The word 'reified' is usually meant to refer to a particular fallacy whereby an abstraction is treated as if it is a concrete, real thing. In anthropology it often seems to be used as a criticism of employing categories of apprehension without critiquing those categories in depth (see Rasmussen 2008) or of employing widely accepted categories. In my own experience with reviewers for a particular anthropology journal, 'social class' was dismissed as 'reified' and my attempt to defend it further dismissed. When I changed it to 'social

status,' the reviewers deemed this acceptable. Obviously, this is anecdotal and personal but, in that it is unlikely many anthropologists are genuinely reifying categories this may reflect a post-modern desire to deconstruct and replace categories.

(6) It might be argued that this suppresses discussion of a particular social issue. I do not agree. Those wishing to discuss this issue would simply have to state precisely what they mean rather than use an emotive label.

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