

DISINHERITING THE TZOTZIL:

NEUTRALITY AND IDEOLOGICAL EFFECT IN ETHNOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE

Despite a wide divergence between the methodological practices of North American and European anthropology and the difference in the problems they take as constituting their principal interests, some of the effects of their discourse are remarkably similar. The point is reminiscent of the ideological effects of neo-Marxist texts in radically undermining the foundation and nature of indigenous cultures - caused by their uncritical use of a language, politically circumscribed, permeated by ethical nuances which continue to stem from an essentially bourgeois or western epistemology. Similar considerations lead us to scrutinise more closely certain unsettling characteristics of North American ethnography, which through its own particular practices give almost identical effects. The presuppositions which run through their methodological practices are almost never articulated, nor even thought problematic. In contrast with neo-Marxism, American ethnography is notable for its complete blindness to the presuppositions and effects of its theoretical practice. In the United States, philosophy, politics and anthropology are never mixed. Ignoring its own practice, ideologically impregnated according to the precepts of a distinct cultural logic, it is unable to detect other logical structures in alien societies. Its own discourse, perceived as scientific, rigorous and exacting, employing a neutral language, more often than not effects an absorption of indigenous categories according to the tenets inherent within itself.

The problems, within the limitations of our phrasing of them, will be pursued through a series of texts originating from the work of the rather ambitious Harvard Chiapas Project under the auspices of Evon Vogt.

Neither Vogt nor any of his associates have ever articulated

the theoretical method from which they proceed. Presumably, they have thought it has not been worth the effort since its tenets have appeared elsewhere defining the 'scientific method' and the status of the anthropologist as voyeur (such as Parsons), or perhaps they themselves are largely unaware of the practices which they execute in deriving primary information and its subsequent articulation in textual discourse. It is a truth not easily disputed that we show a greater interest in results than in the practices, which we follow almost automatically at a sub-conscious level. We are able to perceive some of the presuppositions which inform these texts as they appear in (a) explicit but abstract statements, i.e. as heuristic props to the principal arguments, divorced from further theoretical consideration, and (b) implicitly within the organisation and presentation of the 'ethnographic data'.

The principal document informing us of category (a)-type intent is Vogt's 'The Genetic Model and Maya Cultural Development' (1971). In this paper which has had a widespread influence on many of his colleagues, Vogt assumes that a population must successfully adapt itself to the 'ecological niche' in which it finds itself before it can prosper and expand.

In the genetic model as applied to human populations, we assume that a small proto-group succeeds in adapting itself efficiently to a certain ecological niche and in developing certain basic systemic patterns which constitute the basic aspects of the proto-culture. If the adaptation proves to be efficient the population expands and the group begins to radiate from this point of dispersal. As members split off from the proto-group and move into neighbouring ecological niches, they make appropriate adaptations to these new situations and begin to differentiate - that is there are adaptive variations from the proto-type over time as the members of the genetic unit spread from the dispersal area. (Vogt 1971:11-12)

We cannot be sure from this statement which aspects of the proto-group emerge as adaptations to the environmental pre-conditions and which, if any, grow wild as weeds. On the level of collective representations, Vogt does not state whether his 'basic systemic patterns' encode relations between the group and its ecology and as such represent symbolic articulations of an external logic decreed by the laws of natural survival, whether they pre-exist the group's efficient adaptation, and therefore, I would understand, the social organisations which accomplish that adaptation, or simply co-exist independently. He goes on to suggest that three factors can lead to variation in language, physical type and systemic patterns. The first of these is, again, change of ecological settings, but the other possibilities are the experiences of external culture contact and internal biological, linguistic and cultural drifts that take place over time within

the different genetic units.

Thus it would appear that Vogt gives primary significance to an initial ecological context demanding specific and efficient adaptation on behalf of the proto-group. He does not state explicitly if adaptation is achieved specifically by the patterns of social organisation which emerge, but he does note that exceptions to the general dispersed settlement patterns among the Maya have emerged only in areas where special topographical conditions exist, such as the mountainous constrictions around Lake Atitlan or population pressure exerted by neighbouring groups in Northern Yucatan. Once the initial and successfully accomplished adaptation has taken place, internal factors within the basic cultural configuration can diversify and lead to elaboration and innovation. Before considering their view on ideology or collective representations, we can achieve a greater clarity on the relation between environment and social organisation through the work of Vogt's colleague, G.A. Collier, *Fields of the Tzotzil: The Ecological Basis of Tradition in Highland Chiapas* (1975).

Collier, while not apparently holding that kinship as a whole is an adaptive response to local environmental conditions, does believe that certain functions of kinship evolve as responses to external situations. Among the general functions of kinship is the direct relation it often imposes between succession of property rights and biological descent. In small communities with abundant land and natural resources, conflict will be limited, but as the population increases and land becomes harder to obtain, conflicting claims will often enhance descent-based systems, clearly defining the legitimate lines of succession. As an inverse corollary, populations that derive their solidarity from shared resources would experience a decline in this solidarity if the resource base increased, creating a large excess. Similarly, with high population density, the resulting fragmentation of the land could cause the decline of such groups. Applying this hypothesis to several Maya communities - Chichicastenango, Santiago, Chimaltenango, Apas, and Chan kom, where swidden agriculture dominates the economy, and Chamula and Amatenango, in which wage labour and craft specialisation are of more importance - Collier finds strong principles of patrilineal descent in the former, while bilateral descent characterises the latter two. Thus the functional connection between kinship and land use is substantiated. He concludes:

...in the Maya culture area, patrilineal emphasis in social organisation is strong where land is highly valued as a resource and is available in amounts great enough so that it can serve as a mechanism through inheritance, for binding together the affairs of a man and his heirs (Collier 1975:76).

A second adaptive function of the family is in stabilising the relation between socially valued resources and roles within

it. In this sense the family as the elementary unit of production maintains traditional relations of production with the environment and reproduces the ascriptive values associated with the process, despite the constant flow of maturing adults. The stability of these systems depends on the balance that a population achieves with its resources. These may be undermined, however, by demographic increase, either internally, or by pressure exerted from externally expanding groups on limited available resources. As we have seen, demographic increases and the resultant shortage of land in Chamula and Amatenango have resulted, according to Collier, in a shift from patrilineal to bilateral kinships. In summary Collier writes:

Kinship is a traditional behaviour that is not a regressive survival from the past but rather a dynamic adaptive response to placement in a setting, a locale with limited potential for human use (Collier 1975:107).

Generally, where land is abundant and a free good, swidden farmers do not have a descent organisation, but where land is scarce and a valued commodity, descent emerges to systematise rights to land. When, however, landownings are overtly used and excessively fashioned by inheritance, farming tends to give way to other occupations and land ceases to motivate descent based kinship (Collier 1975:206).

How collective representations and the wider ideological system enter all this is not clear. We are, however, given one clue in Vogt's (1971) suggestion as to the origin of the pyramid in Mesoamerica. He assumes that as among the contemporary Tzotzils, the early Maya believed that the mountains and hills were the dwelling-places of ancestral spirits and gods. With their later migrations to the lowlands, a religious problem would have ensued because their gods would now be homeless - hence the beginning of the pyramid constructions as metaphoric mountains in which the gods could adapt and live. Thus, just as the modern Tzotzils, like the ancient Maya, adapt their social organisation to fit into the environment, the divine order of beings also adapted their residence in accord with external factors. Ideological constructions appear to follow the same logic as social organisation. Whether man or divinity, the environment takes precedence; man follows in his utilitarian activities and the gods are dragged behind.

Regarding the implicit indications which would substantiate such a theoretical methodology, we must observe the organisation of the texts of these authors. This is complicated by the minute dissection they have achieved of indigenous cultural categories, packaged up, one might say, into Western standardised portions which are then examined and scrutinized. However, it does seem that Vogt himself has been designated to write the syntheses of the work and here we shall discuss the presentation

of his *Zinacantan: A Maya Community in the Highlands of Chiapas* (1969).

This work is divided into two parts. The bulk of the volume is dedicated to recording the ethnographic data as a description of the life of the Tzotzil community. Tagged at the end are a few chapters which then discuss in very general terms the relationship between various parts of the society, projecting present tendencies into the future. Below I have arranged an abstract of the contents of this volume following the same sequence as it appears in Vogt 1969. The accompanying notes to the right of each entry are inserted as commentary.

1a. Physiography, soils, geology, flora and fauna

It is curious how every ethnography begins with the unethnographic. Physical descriptions are made from Western standards, pointing out those things of interest to ourselves (fertility of soil, rainfall, economic geology) using our classifications (zoological, botanical, geological). There is nothing indigenous in this and the discourse here is completely separate from the rest in anthropology. In some works, however, the remainder can be a continuation of the naturalism that informs the text at its very inception. If this is a background, and introduction to the basic problems of survival, a context in which the ethnographic description begins or which circumscribes it, then it is just that, from the tainted vision of the Western observer.

1b. History

Here opens the second distinct discourse of the text. History always has a different epistemology to that preceding and proceeding this chapter. It must be a hypothetical reconstruction and the logic which informs the venture can be naturalist or cultural. It can never refer to a past reality and contains within it the ideological pretensions of the method. If it is to give depth to a contemporary culture it may be a backward projection of that culture already mediated through Western eyes, thus its remoteness is twice distanced.

If it is indispensable to the analyst then it is as a means of projecting his methodological tenets onto historical cultures as a means of their utility and justification, i.e. to show the same factors occurring in the past as during the present, historical adaptation. Thus history can be the hinge on which the naturalisation, already described for the physical environment, opens out into the domain of cultural history and from there into culture generally. Note physiography and ecology are included in the same section as history.

2. Subsistence Activities. The third discourse is again different from the former and is concerned with description and technique, what an older academicism termed 'material culture'. These activities are all utilisations of nature and are traditionally cited as traits that mark the separation of man from his animal relations, and the foundations of culture. They are in fact all activities that mark the transformation of a rude and savage nature by conscious activity, and in this context the importance of these practices are noted and made spatially prior to any other elements that make up a society. These are direct relations determined largely by the environmental pre-conditions. Note the continuation of discourse one into the realms of discourse three and the subsequent naturalisation.
 - Housing, manufacture durability and cost
 - Clothing
 - Agricultural activities
 - Trade and other economic activities

3. Social Structure
 - Groupings
 - Settlement patterns
 - Life cycle
 - relationship system
 - cargo system
 - political systemFrom subsistence activities, nature enters into society and ensures its efficient adaptation and economic survival. All these systems have a logic and economy of function which matches them perfectly, harmonising and covering the contradictions of dysfunctional components. In the last analysis it follows the natural logic which

had its initial moments in the perception of nature by man and his grasping of 'essential' relations.

4. Religious beliefs and rituals

Once the naturalist interpretation of a society has been completed religion and ritual remain as the residual categories of the indigenous symbolic logic (what the British evolutionists termed 'survivals'). They are either subsumed as positive expressions of natural relations constituted outside of themselves or as curious and arbitrary. They are the remains of a much larger classification which the anthropologist takes as his domain of inquiry.

5. Some principles and processes

This discourse is that of anthropology, i.e. it is said to be external and different from discourses two to four. External because it derives from a foreign culture to that of the subject of the text; different not only through this, but in its higher abstractive and interpretive abilities. In fact, here begins the articulated explication of the relations and juxtapositions implicit within the previous discourses. Just as at the beginning it was the past that justified the present (and, therefore, the method of the theoretical practice in interpreting it), the conclusion further extends the competence of that method in predicting the future course of natural events and the probable responsive adaptations necessary.

Taken as a whole, the text presented in this way suggests an evolution. Through the textual evolution, we derive a revelation of the society, i.e. that to which the text is said to pertain. This is successive only in as much as the text itself is successive; cumulative only in so far as the text is cumulative, and rational only to the extent of the rationality of the text. Now, the text is none of these 'things', if we take them as signifying pure categories. Rather it is a pastiche, being successive only in as much as it composes and strings classes together, drawn as we have seen from different discourses each based on widely

different tenets; cumulative only in the enforced relations between these classes and the conclusion which bourgeois rationality necessitates; logical only in terms of the implicit and covert rationality of this theoretical practice. What we derive then is not a picture of Tzotzil culture but an interpretive portrait of the interaction between a particular theoretical practice and an alien culture, and the effective consequences for both. I shall return to this later. For the moment I suggest that the organisation of the text displays an evolution from the material to the abstract (the most abstract appearing as general analytic principles and historical projections); from the determinate and determining environmental necessity to luxurious speculation (as in 'anthropological discourse'); and from nature to culture (where cultural expression is again more pronounced in bourgeois practices). This evolution further discloses the oppositions implicit within the text between the Tzotzil and American bourgeois culture, pronouncing the latter in a position of superiority and domination, being a product of successive historical adaptations.

From explicit and implicit sources it appears that the Harvard scholars hold to an ecological model, imbued with determinate efficacy, at least in the first instances of a society's life and during its most elementary periods of subsistence before it achieves efficient adaptation of its social organisation. From the time that it develops surplus resources from the land under its exploitation, its base will have undergone sufficient development to allow the elaboration and diversification of its internal institutions, collective representations, and divine repertoire. These will, however, always bear some relation to their ecological circumstances, even if not direct, and again at the primordial level the assumption would seem to be that the ideological or religious aspirations are directly influenced by the environment. The idea that they are mediated by forms of social organization does not come until later, when certain religious and ritual observances are thought as expressions of divine disfavour towards transgressions of normative behaviour.

We shall elaborate further on the theoretical practices of these authors as we widen the discussion, but our principal interest is in tracing the effects of this naturalised kind of discourse in its presentation and understanding of Tzotzil culture, and its implications for Western civilization in general.

Notable throughout the works of these authors is the emphasis placed on descriptive ethnography and on economy of interpretation. At the beginning of *Zinacantan* Vogt (1969) writes that it is a descriptive account and whatever interpretation it comes to disclose is incidental and unavoidable. Again in Collier's work the emphasis is placed on the description of patterns of land-use from the possibilities inherent in the environmental backdrop. He concentrates on physical features ignoring almost anything that is cultural. It is a curious feature of his study (Collier 1975) that despite his concern with demonstrating the adaptive and functional fit between kin-

ship organisation and patterns of resource availability, he fails to give account of the system of kinship itself. Everything is from the point of view of the environment; all he has told us about kinship is that succession is tied to descent and the solidarity of the kin group is a function of its efficiency and ability in allocating scarce resources. This is perhaps among the most impoverished reductions of kinship existing in the ethnographic literature and it tells us nothing of the particular form and relational system characteristic of Tzotzil culture. Clearly, the problem in proceeding with the analysis of kinship in this vein is that the environmental pre-conditions or other natural facts have little or no further heuristic utility in disclosing the nature of particular relations and behavioural patterns within the family group. On the other hand, structural, semantic, and social anthropology (i.e. those approaches that begin with culture), take consideration of Collier's conclusions at the very beginning, and embrace the finer and elaborate particularities of kinship within a wider system of symbolic classifications and causalities. Here, however, the emphasis is on descriptive intangibles rather than physical and material manifestations. Collier feels at ease only in describing the obvious: that part of nature which presents itself to our perception and can therefore be transcribed textually in the terms of its ordinary presentation. This he presumes is the only way of avoiding ideological or subjective interpretations to intervene in the description of alien social systems. In other words the text must parallel the phenomena under consideration at the most elementary, closest, and most obvious level, so it itself can always be questioned by reference to the object-relations which it signifies. This same line of reasoning I suspect to be the *modus operandi* of an earlier paper by Collier, *Categorías del color en Zinacantan* (1966), which summarises the results of perceptual tests on a sample of Tzotzils. From this he summarises relations between the range of their colour perceptions and linguistic classifications as compared with North Americans. Between the two ethnic groups there are marked differences in the names they give to abstract colours, but similarities exist as well demonstrating basic cognitive correspondences. In this paper Collier again describes natural phenomena and explores the relation between them and linguistic categories through 'controlled' experiments. He finds that even though linguistic classification can vary between cultures, they remain fundamental as encodings of naturally occurring phenomena and processes. The particular view of language hinted at here will become important later on in the discussion.

As further examples of the importance given to description, we can point to the work of Silver (1966) on shamanism and Cancian (1965) on the religious cargo system of Zinacantan. Both authors exhibit the same caution in stipulating relations other than those at the most superficial and apparent level. Thus the greater part of Cancian's work is a description of the organisation and the attributes of the religious cargo system and the

behaviour of its incumbents. Thus, for these authors a descriptive chronicle seems to be considered as the best way in attaining scientific documentation while minimizing individual bias and subjective values. From this body of data relations can be abstracted that are self-evident functions, and thus the mechanism of the society derived. In keeping with the economy of interpretation, relations governing the structural ensemble are basic, necessary and often elementary and self-explanatory. In all cases they are conceived as the means of survival for that society. This of course brings us at last to that old and faithful ghost of ethnographic interpretation, functionalism.

In no instance have we begun with categories and positions common in the interpretive classifications of ethnographic literature. Rather we have begun with a corpus of work and located within it certain propositions that indicate its methodological orientation. Ecological determinism, materialism, and functionalism can assume many forms. We have wanted to discuss only one manifestation of these and so trace their particular effects in this context. A brief discussion of the functionalism of these authors is necessary precisely because functionalism outside of its theoretical practice is nothing but a formal category which has assumed more than enough ideological connotations to make it meaninglessly abstract.

Functional utility begins with nature. We have seen how the form of social organisation, kinship and settlement patterns must follow the rationale of its ecological setting to adapt efficiently. Once the initial adaptation has been accomplished successfully the society can undergo development of its internal institutions. It is assumed throughout the texts of these authors on the Tzotzil that subsequent development and diversification proceed to widen the ecological base of their subsistence and to reconcile contradictions and anomalies pre-existing within institutions, which are expressed through dysfunctional forms of behaviour. Relations between institutions, which are extrapolated as the essential mechanisms maintaining the society, are conceived as functionally adapted reinforcements and counterbalances to areas of stress. Thus Cancian considers the functions of the religious cargo system as defining the limits of community membership by participation, reinforcement of commitment to common values, reduction of potential conflict and support of traditional kinship patterns. In *Zinacanteco Divination* (1974) Vogt sees shamanistic healing ceremonies as being expressions of the public redressing of socially generated conflicts between individuals. According to Vogt, the shaman '...is saying that the person has been socially disruptive and requires re-socialization by the lengthy procedures that are incorporated in a Zinacanteco ritual of affliction' (1974:205).

The entirety of Tzotzil is reduced to mutually reinforcing adaptive mechanisms following a natural logic independent of themselves and man. Vogt taints this functionalist conception with his theory of replication, but in keeping with the tradition of this work replication is apprehended only at the behavioural

and organisational levels. The linguistic affiliation of words indicates the cases of replication, which are seen at a behavioural level; but again language is understood as nothing but an encodation of experience and is not credited with applying a logic of its own to the situation. Vogt's theory of replication seems to be quite shallow and does nothing more than state thematic and organisational correspondences as they occur throughout the culture. The question he asks through this is, astonishingly, 'what themes are repeated in rituals that are to be found elsewhere in the culture?' (Vogt, 1965:385). He does indeed find correspondences, notably the idea of 'embracing' which occurs at a number of different levels, and the replication of the organisation of the social and cultural levels which show parallel development towards increasing size and complexity. I have set the two parallel systems out side by side so that relations become clear.

Social Organisation	Ceremonial Organisation
a) Patrilocal extended family occupying a house compound.	Ceremonies involving the family and no more than one <i>h'ilol</i> (shaman), e.g. curing ceremonies, new house dedication ceremonies.
b) The <i>sna</i> composed of one of more localised patrilineages genealogically related.	<i>K'in krus</i> ceremonies twice a year that involve all the families and <i>h'ilolét</i> who live in the <i>sna</i> .
c) Water-hole groups composed of two or more <i>snas</i> .	<i>K'in krus</i> ceremonies performed semi-annually, preceding those above.
d) <i>Paraje</i> composed of one or more water-hole groups.	Two ritual ceremonies performed at the beginning and end of the year, by all <i>h'ilolétik</i> of the <i>paraje</i> .

With this information, however, all Vogt accomplishes is to note that the ceremonial order expresses and reinforces the social order. The *k'in krus* ceremonies at the level of the *sna* compound serve as symbolic expressions of rights of land ownership. The *k'in krus* ceremonies of the water-hole group express rights and obligations to the water-hole from which they derive their water. Finally, the ritual ceremonies of the *paraje* are a collective affair which symbolize solidarity. One is puzzled as to the nature of the 'theory of replication' since it does not

claim to disclose organisational replications (as these are already apparent at the morphological level to which most of these writers restrict themselves). However, what is clear under this label, whatever its worth, is that Vogt finds functional relations following rules of an identical nature. Replication is nothing other than a statement of observed coincidence between institutions, implying no explanation or relations other than those of the functionalist model.

A substantial theoretical practice has been isolated from the writings of these authors who presumed neutrality. Their empiricism, an ill-conceived and passively accepted standard of scientific enquiry, effected a substitution of explanation by description. They assumed that a division of the society under investigation into individual units and the assignment of a 'social scientist' to report on each would lead to deeper insights and a greater understanding of the society as a whole. The resulting specialisation should not be underrated. The study undertaken by an academic institution profited by dividing the society among its post-graduate students who were working towards their professional qualifications. Not surprisingly, as will be demonstrated, the work that came out of this practice told us more about the organisation and pre-suppositions of Harvard anthropology than it did about the Tzotzils.

Beginning with the empirical assumption on the possibility of the neutrality of discourse, we shall make explicit the effects of these arguments on Tzotzil culture, and the consequences they hold for our own. Language can never be neutral in an absolute sense, since it exists and presents itself to us already constituted. In this the language itself has a history of development through which it has evolved together with its connotative aspects. Etymological analysis teaches just this; the differentiation and specialisation of a language, the accumulated nuances and meanings that retain their quality form part of the sense of a word, even after its original significance has long gone and no appropriate context exists for the use of the word in any original sense. Language is not a static representational system from which we can choose constituent elements and combine them to form new meanings and expressions with perfect liberty. It follows rules and traditions as well as embodying a culturally constituted logic of classification through which it expresses relationships between objects and classes. On a different level we have a further ideological formation which consists in the incidental connotations of words, the nuances which they come to possess in association, and the values that these represent and which are most apparent in the written text. Language in general, as in this particular case textual discourse, can never be assumed to be the neutral medium of expression which empiricism so desires. For Vogt, Collier, and their colleagues, their texts express real things, processes, and relations external to them because they are amenable to their senses, and the same can be recorded because they can be recreated in their relational positions through accurate and faithful description. The 'reality' of the text is no more

in doubt than that of their senses, and the sense of both is common. One cannot help but recall the most fundamental dictum of inquiry, that the 'signifier' and the 'signified' do not get confused. This is precisely what has happened throughout the texts of these authors. They have equated the two. Just as Vogt has perceived a replication between social organisation and the ceremonial order in Zinacantan, he also has assumed a correspondence between language and that which it comes to designate in his own method. This is an interesting correspondence because we can assume the same process is at work in both cases. Vogt reduces the ceremonial order to simple symbolic expressions of social organisation, in the same way as linguistic denominations are made expressions of external phenomena. In both cases the logic is not seen as already constituted either within Zinacantan ritual language or within his own textual discourse, but as external and having a common source. The logic they conceive is natural. It is a primary characteristic and necessity for any discourse, and resides outside that discourse itself. The neutrality and, incidentally, the worth of the discourse is dependent on its correspondence to an object reality outside of itself. If it clearly lacks any semblance then, and only then, is the presence of an ideological mask suspected and the discourse suspended in favour of another.

Returning to the problematic of logic, we can suppose that for these authors the same logic is the foundation of all meaningful discourse and the basis of all communicative systems, regardless of cultural origin and expression (i.e. underlying different languages and between language and other symbolic representations). This logic would then be transcultural and transcendental. Implicit in this formulation is that language serves to verbalise and articulate external relations which must be grasped if a population is to adapt and survive the enmity of nature. This, of course, was Malinowski's view of both culture and language, and he succeeded in proving the rationality of different indigenous societies only by reducing them to the terms of his own discourse. Vogt *et al.* adopt the same assumptions and produce identical effects.

Following the assumption that logic is an attribute characteristic of human thought and classification Vogt *et al.* begin to disassemble Tzotzil culture at the very inception of their project. The rigour of their dissection is best illustrated by the titles and subject-matter of the doctoral theses and published books which the project begat. The list which follows was obtained from Vogt's record of manuscripts and publications of the Harvard Chiapas Project included in his 1969 publication, which is not exhaustive, and includes: *Childbirth in Zinacantan* ; *Economic Role of Women in San Felipe* ; *Infant Development in the Zinacanteo Indians of Southern Mexico* ; *Color Categories in Zinacantan* ; *The Economics of Divorce and Re-marriage in Zinacantan* ; *Women in Ritual in Zinacantan* ; *Ritual Objects, Their Pre-Fiesta Logistics* ; *Clothing Norms in Zinacantan and Chamula* ; *Tzotzil Ethno-anatomy* ; etc. The categories that they reflect are surely

distinct from any logic, natural or other, except that which characterises Western social sciences. The participants of this project have produced a massive fragmentation of even the traditional divisions within the discipline of cultural ethnography. By projecting these miniscule areas, each one as the domain of their legitimate study on Tzotzil culture, they have created a barbarous disfiguration of indigenous categories which they have simply ignored. Even though each investigator has produced a 'little theory', in Cancian's words, to account for his own slice of the Tzotzil, it is remarkable how alike they all are. The only way of explaining this is by the common theoretical practice which they follow and its constituent and culturally based logic that they deny. The logical foundations of Tzotzil classifications are presumed before the ethnographic work is even begun, and indigenous categories are subsumed and identified with the logic of the theoretical practice itself. Any translation between one society and another, despite wide differences, is a technical problem and not one of semantics. It can be assisted by the observation of behaviour and organisation of activities which are concrete exemplifications of the work of the logic contained in the language, and which accordingly are clarificatory. Ritual, religious, or symbolic representations also represent expressions of basic relations and serve to strengthen the solidarity and adaptive capacity of the institutions to which they are related. They obey the same logic insofar as they have adapted to local circumstances, clearly seen to be the case once the anthropologist has penetrated the 'forest of symbols' and ritual expressions which convert the inner-most statements of necessary relations and observances.

Vogt perhaps demonstrates this well in his paper on *Zinacanteco Divination* 1974 which we have already mentioned. Here the rites and incantations practised by the shaman in a curing ceremony are thought to be outward expressions of a deeper function which is ideologically presented through the ritual medium. The causes of illness, although phrased as 'soul loss' inflicted as punishment by the ancestral gods or witchcraft (Silver also mentions natural causes as a third source in *Enfermedad y Curacion*, 1966), is seen either as a castigation for anti-social behaviour as in the first case (Vogt 1974), or an expression of tension between kin and resultant accusations of malice (Silver 1966). In both instances the function of the shaman is to arbitrate and redress the situation judicially. In explaining what he calls the ambiguous nature of the shaman's performance, Vogt reveals his bias to his own disadvantage:

...since his final decision in the diagnosis is based neither upon the sophisticated technology nor the tested principles of modern science and since he does not possess the legal power of a judge backed by a police force, and the threat of fines or a jail sentence, it is crucial that his divinatory procedures have an ambiguity about them which allows him a measure of latitude in his decision and

reinforce his judgement with supernatural sanctions.
(Vogt 1974:204)

So does Vogt dispose of ritual behaviour and symbolic associations if they are inexplicable to his understanding. 'Culture' is derided throughout in favour of natural logic.

Since it is our opinion that a crucial and important part of any viable anthropology is the study and elicitation of indigenous symbolic classificatory systems, we shall examine the characteristics of that which presents itself in Vogt's theoretical practice.

Most clearly it is a logic of adaptive response. The social organisation of the culture must adapt to the local environment in an efficient manner, and the ideological representations must ideally express these relations and serve to ease tensions where these are produced in the process through adaptive responses. The whole structural *ensemble* of the society is rationally ordered, mutually complementary and self-adjustable to the pre-conditions to which it must adapt. What motivates the positive responses to environmental necessities is the instinct of survival. In the first instance it is the primordial instinct of 'populations' to maintain themselves at whatever cost, thus they mould their institutions accordingly so as to guarantee their subsistence within a given ecological niche. At a more abstract level the survival imperative is built into their social institutions. Its guiding logic works towards harmonising and complementing these institutions and governs the relations between them. The logic of relations, which it is man's fortune to grasp, is therefore utilitarian. It is self-interest necessary for his survival and reproduction, these same principles being at the foundation of both his own actions and those of the organisations which compose his society. Here is the re-vindication of utilitarianism; that man's over-riding concern is with his own survival and that his actions are directed by this most basic of instincts, therefore reflect a particular rationality formed by his perception of the logical relations existing between himself and the environment in which he is situated. Again, not how language is naturalised in this conceptualisation becoming nothing more than the coherent articulation of already existent natural relations.

This view of humanity implies a familiar nature. It is a charter for aggression, assertion and individuality: aggression to defend oneself from a savage and threatening nature; assertion in its utilisation and defence; individuality because this is accomplished for one's own survival or that of the immediate family group. In fact all the values that are most endeared to the bourgeois imagination we find imputed to other indigenous cultures, perhaps not surprising since the methodological tenets presume that societies share a common heritage. The Hobbesian conception of man thus comes to take its place alongside the doctrine of utilitarianism and the theory of adaptation and survival of the fittest as begat by Darwin and Huxley. Finally,

given this particular view of human nature, rationalised according to the laws of a daunting logic, emerge the functions of social institutions once they have evolved from the primordial state. These very values that are said to be necessary in ensuring man's subsistence are potentially disruptive at the social level. The individual values implied by this view of man must be assumed by the social institutions themselves in promoting a collective response to the problems of human existence and survival. So it passes that social institutions emerge to soften and diminish the basic attributes of individual human nature to make society possible. They continue to function as a system of checks and balances guaranteeing the survival of the group through their physical and moral restraints on the individual. For Vogt this is precisely the function he attributes to the role of the shaman within Tzotzil society, and Cancian, writing of the religious cargo system of the same community, observes that it allows the expression of basic values inherent in human nature through socially prescribed roles and behaviour. He writes: 'It stipulates the rules under which a man may enhance his public image, and thus helps to minimise potentially disruptive innovation and competition'. (Cancian 1965:135)

We have traced a set of presuppositions which have their origin in the very basis of bourgeois society. They constitute the charter of its morality and values and justify its preoccupations. They present themselves as rationally derived natural propensities which form the very foundation of human nature, and from this claim their universality. Presumed, in the very construction of the theoretical practice which masquerades as neutral, they are found time again in alien cultural traditions, thus justifying methodological utility and the consequences this holds in our perception of bourgeois society. The rationality of the bourgeois imagination is one based on nature, and through the extension of its ideological modes of discourse it is attributed to other cultures; thus uniting the world according to tried and tested bourgeois precepts, and placing its cultural achievements at the pinnacle. The ethnographic work of Vogt *et al.* is an exemplification above all of how a methodology, imputed with scientific pretensions, serves as an ideology, transforming whatever it touches into the parallel experiences and values of those of its own society, in the process of which it justifies its own existence while leaving only a charred remain of the object of its scrutiny. I believe this is no exaggeration given the effects of this discourse on the Tzotzil and the reduction or destruction of their cultural concepts and indigenous logical categories. The example of Vogt's treatment of shamanism has already been cited. Collier by phrasing his investigation of land in Western terms has produced nothing but a technical account of land usage as viewed by him. The tendencies he finds inherent in the process he describes are projected as a social forecast of successive changes given the continuation of population growth and resulting pressure on land. In economic forecasts it is usual to interject that certain conditions are accepted as 'givens', so too with Collier and Cancian; but

what they accept as given is the rationality and the resulting picture that it gives of the specific cultural logic at work. Basically, that which is 'given' is unknown or at best mediated by a bourgeois ideology, while whatever resulting predictions are effected are untrustworthy. A notable consequence of this method is to circumvent whatever is culturally unique. In the case of Collier, we are never told how the Tzotzil visualise, regard and value their land, though we glean from scattered comments made by other authors that there is an indigenous conception of sacred geography where mountains, caves, and water-holes are thought as sacred and are associated with particular beliefs and supernatural persons. Libations are made to the fields during cultivation, and differential values are ascribed to different kinds of land and natural phenomena. One cannot help wondering if these are all part of an involved symbolic classification which perhaps might regard the environment as a metaphor of religious expression as is the case among the Huicholes of northwestern Mexico. In similar fashion, the discussions on Tzotzil architecture have been limited, with minor exceptions, to technical accounts. Vogt (1969) describes their appearance, means of construction, durability and cost, while Warfield's (1966) account can be no liberal stretch of the imagination be seen as having any anthropological inspiration. Nevertheless the values and symbolic associations of architectural practices are of importance, just as those are of the land, particularly if external agencies govern development in indigenous areas (and it seems that these reports are meant only for technical assistance to such agents). In both instances anthropological practice has not been to articulate specific cultural sensitivities but to undermine them. Again, despite scattered references to linguistic oppositions between words used to designate the space occupied by houses and the space dominated by wilderness, house-dedication ceremonies and even evidence that the names of parts of the house are coincidental with those used to designate parts of the human body and the sacred mountains (Vogt 1969) has not been pursued.

Obviously, despite its repression, the indigenous logic of classification continues to attempt its emancipation from the ideological discourse to which it has been reduced. This is not only evident in the examples we have quoted but it has been fully recognised in another series of texts written by different members of the same project. Blaffer's *The Black Man of Zinacantan* (1972), Gossen's study of *Time and Space in Chamula Oral Tradition* (1977) and the various publications of Robert Laughlin (e.g. 'El simbolo de la flor en la religión de Zinacantan', 1962), indicate how, through their careful explications of other parts of culture, the other members of the project have distorted indigenous classifications. Vogt himself apparently has come to understand the impoverishing effects of his theoretical practice on the Tzotzil and has since written a second monograph, *Tortillas for the Gods* (1978) which deals more fully with indigenous classificatory principles.

Concluding on a positive note of anticipation, the

ethnography of the Tzotzil still awaits to be written and in his venture the investigator will find rich information derived from some of the work of the Harvard Chiapas Project, but much of it will perhaps not be of use until supplemented by further fieldwork of a better-informed nature. Until that time the Tzotzil carry their cultural disinheritance heavily upon them in the eyes of others.

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