

ANT10 0 Notes Cult.

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1 Lecture 1 Jan.11 2018

1.1 Culture: universal ability and particular culture

being able to *have culture* is *programmed* by our genes the *program* enables culture=specific ways of acting, living and thinking:

- Forming precreative relationships.
- Recognizing hierarchy.
- Dealing with violence.
- Sharing and giving.
- Education.
- Speaking: language, how you see it.

1.2 Cultural universals and particulars

Cultures are significantly different, but not infinitely different.
Human cultures have more in common than not.

1.3 Language

Language is a distinctively human resource and central element of culture, used for:

- Communication and cooperation.
- Adapting to the natural and social environment.
- Signification. *Making meanings*.
- Structuring our imagination.
- How we see the world.
- Each other.
- Ourselves.

Language and languages Like cultures, languages have more in common than not.

Word universals:

- Nouns and verbs.
- Importance of word order.

1.4 Recap: Universals and Divisions

Language and Culture are human universals, but specific language and specific cultures are human particulars.

Universals(language, culture) are innate. *Transmitted via gene (through sex)*

...

1.5 Adaptive Value of Social Transmission

Social transmission is much more flexible than genetic transmission:

- Major changes can occur within a generation or two.
- Major changes can occur without a change of species.

Language and culture allow us to adapt to new situations.

1.6 Why the differences?

Specific languages and cultures develop to cope with specific environment and social contexts. **niches**.

Cultures: potlatch, brides-wealth / dowry.

Culture can change the niche itself.

Result: Adaptation without becoming a new species.

1.7 Difference. Conflict. Prejudice

Within all species, groups can come into conflict, often over *resources*.

The resources may be *natural* or *socials*.

In *homo-sapiens* these groups may have different cultures and languages. and this may be accompanied by prejudices about the other.

Prejudice does **not** come from difference but from its **context**

1.8 Physical Type and Prejudice

Race a *folk* notion, not a scientific notion. Human **race** are not scientifically but *popularly* defined.

Does races exist?

Yes! But not as a scientific category. And race is not really based (only) on physical appearance.

Different humans do look different. and human looks can correlate with some other genetic traits. But this is **not** consistently enough to justify *scientifically* the notion of human races.

There is more variation (other than skin color, and some other exceptions) across than within races.

The popular definition of race are *imprecise*.

1.9 The One-Drop Rule

If you have any *black blood*, then you're black.
Also word for other non-white groups: if you have any non-white blood, then you're not white.

Brown a new racial category. Cover people who are neither black nor white.

Lesson from the One-Drop Rule Humans do differ by appearance, but their *classification* by difference is not given nature, It is given by **language**.
If there were no words for the different races, then there would not be races.
Possible test question: How does the one-drop rule prove that race is not a classification given by nature.

1.10 Social Construction and Nature

Social construction is the source of ideas and arrangements that are not given by nature.
Social construction is not part of nature, but does works with natural materials.
Race works with real, natural evidence, yet is determined by society, not nature.

Invented Ideas that are the result of social construction.

1.11 Naturalization

Naturalization The process that people come to think of what was socially constructed as if it were given by nature.

Conclusion Race is real: invented but naturalized.
Other examples: national identities, gender roles.

1.12 Talking About Race

Silence and color-blindness is **not** the solution.
Social science *describe* before it can (if it ever can) prescribe.
Political correctness aims to protect others.
but it can be a hindrance to understanding.
if it prevents us from *talking* about what we see as happening,
or ...

1.13 The Role of Anthropology

Unravel the social constructedness of invented (but real) categories like race, national identity, or gender.
Discover their **genealogy**.

This work must precede any advice anthropologists can give on what is right or *correct*.

Genealogy What history makes them possible.

Race and Power Relations: The Genealogy of Black and White

Racial classification is made in the context of relations of power within society.

People have always perceived differences of skin color ...

but did not classify people into distinct categories of *race* ...

Race means imagined common descent, and include English or Irish ...

The *black race* and *white race* were *invented* along with slavery in the Americas.

Whiteness means freedom and need to be protected.

2 Lecture 3 Jan. 25 2018

Lecture outline

- Real and not real
- Reality as a construct
- Whorf hypothesis how different languages construct different realities.
- Self as a construct
- Lacan's stages of development the real, the imaginary and the symbolic.

2.1 The importance of making up things

Some signified are real and others are not.

Irony, lies, fantasy, plans.

Making up things is an act of **signifying** - using signs it is an adaptive advantage of *homo sapiens*. Together with inventing categories of understanding.

Signs reflect but also make our world.

2.2 What do we mean by "real"

Studied by philosophers, psychologists, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropology.

Overlapping disciplines.

Anthropologists focus on small-group constructs and interactive practice.

Philosophers John Wisdom(1904-1993) and John Austin(1911-1960)

2.3 Fake News

Real, imaginary, fake.

2.4 No contradiction

Reality is constructed

Yet we can distinguish reality from irreality (truth from lies).

2.5 Reality as a construct

Reality

- What is verifiable.
- The world as *it makes sense to us*.

Construct formed by people in society. Most of reality comes across to us through the filter of signs and language.

It is socially constructed. It may not always be the same as what *really exists*: **the real**.

2.6 Jargon v.s. ordinary language

In ordinary language: reality is what is real.

In social science/ humanities jargon: reality is how we understand the real, it is "*our reality*".

For the most part, reality seems pretty real and we are well advised to live in it.

But a lot of the *real* is not our reality: we do not understand it.

2.7 Species-specific vision

Different animals see the same scene in different ways.

Their eyes construct the image of the scene they see.

What is the real, unconstructed scene?

2.8 The "Whorf Hypothesis"

Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941)

Linguistic relativity Each language decisively influence the way its speakers think, different languages construct different reality.

2.9 Colour as a social construct

Example Colours: Green and blue.

2.10 Perception and interpretation

The point is not that old-time Chinese *could not* see green and blue, but they did not *understand* them as essentially different.

So our understanding of how the world is constructed by signs, and especially languages.

2.11 The self as a construct

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) Reinterpreted Freud.

Stages of How the self develops:

- Real.
- Imaginary (mirror stage)
- Symbolic (accomplish through "language")

2.12 The Real(stage) - ego not yet formed.

- The Real is undifferentiated.
- No signs
- Uncategorized experience.

2.13 The Imaginary(Mirror) Stage: The ego forms.

To remember about the imaginary stage

- It corresponds to the icon: images rather than words. (the most typical image sign is the icon)
- In the imaginary stage, the world is perceived without words.
- The ego image is supported by the authority of Mother/ Father/ Society.
- Roughly: this is the image v.s. the word stage.

2.14 The symbolic stage

- Language appears (language is mostly symbols).
- Language is learned from parents/ society.
- Language is a complicated system.
- In this stage the world is differentiated into categories marked by signifiers (e.g. words).
- Ego is called "I".
- Ego learns to understand "I" as part of a society that is in relation to "you" and "he/she/they".

2.15 "I"

- "I" is a symbol.
- Each occurrence of *I* is a signifier, whose meaning is developed from relations to other signifiers. From other times and I said "I" and from times I heard others say "you".

2.16 Inner conversation

We are both "I" and "you" to ourselves.

In inner conversation, one party coaches the other.

This *coach* is more influenced by the society, it *represents* society.

Freud: **superego**

Our self is a conversation, and it includes a representation of society(the superego).

2.17 Conclusion

So Language and signs

- make sense of the work - they construct it.
- help us function in society - to communicate.
- but also help society function within us - our self is socially constructed.