Chapter 06: Analyses in cultural anthropology

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Outlines, Issues, Suggestions

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The present part of “Law and Anthropology: Outlines, Issues, Suggestions” is an abridged version of the text of the hardcover edition, shortened by certain subchapters or other sections. The text and the footnotes left out are indicated by the words: not included. The reader who wants to see these omitted parts is referred to the hardcover version (see preceding paragraph).
Chapter 6: Analyses in cultural anthropology

Chapter 6, on anthropological analyses, starts with a criticism of ethnocentrism by using some contemporary examples, including the much debated “export of democracy”, in connection with Immanuel Kant’s theory of “eternal peace” through democracy. Chapter 6 also introduces the new idea of using synepeia analysis, as developed for the cultural anthropology of the modes of thoughts, as useful for other issues of cultural anthropology as well. This adds a new dimension to the much debated emic-etic discussion. It will be shown that a solution to this discussion might be the replacement of the traditional inside-outside approach by a consequential - “synepeical” - separation of epistemological levels and meta-levels: One wants to know something – then one discovers the other who also wants to know something about the same object – and then one has to proceed on one’s way of thinking taking into consideration the other’s way of thinking which can only be done by stipulating meta-facts and meta-values. That procedure amounts to a more satisfying re-orientation of the emic-etic issue.

What is the purpose of studying the analyses of objects to be observed in anthropology? Imagine to have applied for and received a grant to study the formation and eventual separation of marriage as practiced by a newly discovered tribe on a newly discovered island in the South Pacific. No outsider ever has set foot on that island. The language of the inhabitants is unknown. It is even unknown whether they have a language at all. Photographs taken from a helicopter of a nearby research ship indicate that they look like humans. It is not known of these islanders whether they have marriage at all, whether they live in families, whether they have law, etc.

How does one tackle such a research project? How can the behavior of these islanders be interpreted, their language be learned, their way of describing themselves and their environment be studied, including their customs, laws and other valuations? Would it be correct to study the islanders’ family law according to the categories of New York, New Jersey, Nebraska, French, Dutch, or Skandinavian law, depending on the nationality or education of the grantee? Certainly not. But by which other standards? Questions of this sort – here illustrated by a hypothetical scenery – are the task of cultural anthropological analysis.

Cultural anthropological analysis serves to learn the material and mental life of a cultural entity. Before going to Japan to do business there, or deciding in the UN Security Council on a peace keeping or restoring mission in Korea, Yugoslavia, Somalia or Afghanistan, or safeguarding elections by NATO troops in Kongo (Democratic Republic of Zaire), etc., it is necessary to research the local culture or cultures entering the unknown terrain. Otherwise failures may occur.

There are several kinds of cultural anthropological analysis. Here follows a survey and a discussion of the available possibilities, including an own proposal of how to approach such a task. With respect to the modes of thought which are to be presumed to be found “behind” the cultures, the own proposal has already been made elsewhere. It was given the name “synepeia analysis”, from Greek *synepeia* = consequence, indicating that it is necessary to be

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1 The linguistic side of the project is left aside here. The focus is on the material and immaterial environment, including law.
consequential in rendering judgments on the specific-cultural or the meta-cultural level. Further research demonstrated that synepeia analysis also works beyond the limited issue of the modes of thought. It appears that it also applicable for every other culture-related investigation. Therefore, it will be repeated in the following text, adapted from the modes of thought (as a special kind of application) to the exigencies of general cultural anthropological analysis, needed here.

Because closest to a human’s mind, starting point is ethnocentrism, the understandable, but anthropologically wrong attitude to judge foreign cultures by applying standards of one’s own culture. Therefore, ethnocentrism will be discussed in the first subchapter below, although it is no genuine analysis of cultural anthropology at all. All analyses in cultural anthropology to be discussed in the following subchapters have in common that they are refutations of ethnology. An examples of the ethnocentric approach may illustrate this:

In 2006, a German journalist accredited in Washington, D.C. and specializing in Near East problems asked a the US Government official who had been active in US foreign policy for some time to whom he could talk about political issues connected with Islam. The journalist received the answer that the US Constitution provides for the separation of government and church, and that therefore no expert on Islam would be available in the US Government to talk to.

This leads to an even broader modern issue of ethnocentricity: Many international problems

2  W. Fikentscher (19952004), Chapter 4.
4  Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, Amerikas ungeschriebene Islampolitik, Teil 2, 22 KAS Auslandsinformationen 10/06, 89 – 116, at 106; the story reminds me of an own experience in 1966, also in Washington, D.C., where I had a lengthy discussion with a Pentagon official on cultural-psychological aspects of the Vietnam war (which at that time went favorably to the Southvietnam-US side). Our discussion included traits of Mahayana-Buddhism and activities of monks of Buddhist monasteries (who at that time started gruesome self-immolations at an almost daily pace, not in protest against the US-American presence, as the Western media misinterpreted, but in protest against un-Buddhist involvement on any side). Towards the end of our talk, with a view to the psychological side of US warfare in Vietman and its importance for US strategy and tactics, the Pentagon official insisted on a presentation of my points of view to a group of experts in the Pentagon. He said he wanted to bring together a group of experts and inform me of a suitable date for my presentation. After about five weeks, the Pentagon official called, offered an excuse about the delay, and said that to his surprise not a single person in the Pentagon knew anything about Buddhism nor was interested in knowing something about it. After this failure, he continued, he had contacted the State Department and had received the same reaction: no information, no interest. Finally, he said, he had addressed the White House, only to get the same answer: No expert, no interest. He closed by saying: “I am very sorry, but I am afraid that in whole political Washington there is nobody who is interested in the psychological and cultural side of the Vietman war”. I thanked him for his efforts and repeated attempts and asked him whether he would permit me to make a prophecy. He agreed. I said, “You will loose the war”. He, obviously with an undertone of anger, asked for reasons. I answered that if US politics do not understand the modes of thought present in a part of the world in which it is engaged, militarily or otherwise, no matter whether successful or not, the US are bound to loose because people out there do not recognize what is going on. The Pentagon official hung up. No contact was renewed.. In 1974, US withdrew from Saigon, and more than one national trauma took its course.
last longer than four years. Examples are German, Japanese and Italian militarism in the
1930ies and 1940ies, the build-up of a European union after 1945, Soviet expansionism
between Yalta (1945) and Reikjavik (1985) including the Korea, Laos, Vietnam, Angola-
Mozambique, and Falkland crises, foreign aid since the 1960ies, Israel-Palestine relations
since 1948, terrorism since the Olympic Games of 1972, decade-long Iraq and Iran crises,
etc. Problems of this sort outlast democratic administrations which (influenced by the rules
of the Platonic dialog\(^5\)) regularly change every four or five years and whose new governments
cannot but aim at goals opposing the former governments’ initiatives (“Get our boys home!”).
This incongruency between long-term issues and short-term periods of government disfavors
democracies in dealing with global problems. Non-democratic states (in which time concepts
may, for “revolutionary” reasons, differ from the time-as-a-straight-line principle valid in
democracies) often simply have to wait for more than four or eight year get their will.\(^6\) To find
an answer to this ethnocentric miscue is not easy because it touches upon basic constitutional
premises in the democracies. Immanuel Kant, in his book on “Eternal Peace”, presented
convincing reasons why democracies are not inclined to wage war so that a democratic world
should be a peaceful world, but he overlooked the possibility that undemocratic governments
may create reasons to wage war that last longer than the average democratic administration
period.

To cope with these demands of empirical studies of cultures, anthropology has developed and
used a number of types of analysis. Which analysis is preferable is still a matter of dispute. In
the rest of this chapter, these analyses will be discussed with the inclusion of the ethnocentric
approach to other cultures.\(^7\)

I. Ethnocentric analysis. Ethnocentrism and exoticism

The aforementioned examples (newly discovered island, UN peacekeeping activities, US Near
East policies, international reach of national law including national constitutions, Vietnam)
show that calling the ethnocentric approach an “analysis” is almost too benevolent.
Ethnocentrism means that the researcher uses his or her own categories, experiences, and even
bias while problematizing, concluding, reasoning, or systematizing the study of another
culture. Of course it is wrong to measure other people and their cultures with one’s own
cultural standards. But does this interdict cross-cultural contacts and comparisons?
Ethnocentrism continues to be the most pervasive problem in anthropology.\(^8\)

\(^5\) See Chapter 9, below.

\(^6\) Northvietnam, Northkorea, Iraq, and Iran are examples.

\(^7\) It follows a revised version from W. Fikentscher (1995/2004), 117 – 149.

\(^8\) It has its counterpart in the historical sciences when a researcher uses his or her own
conceptual framework for the interpretation of a former period which existed under a different
conceptuality: for example, if a historian calls the rule of the Pharaohs a “state”, or Hannibal’s army
an “organization”. Both anthropology and historical sciences are concerned with the comparison of
culture. Therefore, the methodological problems of anthropology and the sciences of history must at
least in part be identical. It could be demonstrated that the analyses discussed in this chapter –
ethnocentrism; vision of the participants/folk-concepts/emic-etic/inside-outside; componential
analysis; correlational analysis; and synepeical analysis – work just as well in the study of history. For
a criticism of both ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, see Kottak 31.
Most ethnocentrism occurs inadvertently. One example is the influence of English traditions of law and constitutional history upon the formation of basic concepts of descendence and lineage by some authors of the British “social anthropology”. Another example is the assumption that underlies the Cornell project on comparative law: that laws can be compared by identifying the problem to be solved and then comparing the solutions proposed by various national or local laws. Such an approach is flawed because different legal systems may have quite different concepts of what constitutes a problem. A third example are the Pueblos who divide peoples into those with a geographic center (themselves) and nomads who come and go, such as the Navajo, Apache, Ute, Spaniards, Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans. Some analysts think that an ethnocentric approach to other cultures is the only one possible because nobody can get inside another’s mind. For them, ethnocentrism becomes a legitimate mode of analysis. The way Max Gluckman analyses Barotse jurisprudence, for example, in his discussion of reasonableness and uprightness (1955/1967/1972: 125), is indicative of his tendency of starting from English law concepts. However, he concedes that “… this complex process of social control can be understood only in an analysis of the social relationships which are controlled (1955; 1967; 1972: 25)."

A more refined ethnocentrism is the tendency in the United Nations Organization to pretend that there is just one mode of thinking in this world, one world culture, and one type of societal order: namely, that of its own organization, which is derived from the Frankish pledge-of-faith system. Alain Finkielkraut convincingly juxtaposes the “respect” for cultural pluralism arising from Western emancipation, enlightenment, and tolerance with the defeat of emancipation, enlightenment, and tolerance that results from such “respect” in socialist and Third World countries. He ridicules UNESCO’s careless ambivalence to both extremes which, of course, exclude each other. He describes what may be called the “paradox of tolerance” (a parallel issue to the paradox of liberty). One of the reasons for such “refined ethnocentrism is that Greek philosophy dominates Western thinking so much that philosophies of other cultures, or comparative philosophy, are hardly represented. This philosophical or

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9 Raum 1990, esp. at 118 on Radcliffe-Brown’s characterization of Kariera hordes as “corporations”.
11 Fikentscher 1975 a: 62. The same must be said about the attempt to start from “cases”. What a “case” may be differs from culture to culture, Fikentscher 1975 a: 56ff., 61, 154 note 16; see, however, A. L. Epstein 1967.
12 H. A. Tyler, at 3: “… Western man is a nomad …”
14 Rouland (1988), 132 discusses Gluckman’s dilemma.
15 See Ch. 9 III 1 a, infra.
mental ethnocentrism mostly goes unnoticed, so that ethnocentrism may become a ready-to-hand mode of analysis.\(^\text{17}\)

Europe’s special way in history since the 16\(^{th}\) century is an undeniable and much debated fact. Chapter 5 raised some of the involved issues when Western culture had to be compared with non-European cultures. A corollary of Europe’s special way in world history is Western ethnocentrism. It purports that European culture is the “normal” one and the model for others. Christian mission and imperialist colonization are examples. This European self-esteem has two sides. On the one hand, it gives rise to the anthropologically unfounded assumption that other cultures are willing to accept this European “model” and in this manner contributes to the ethnocentrism which has been criticized above. On the other hand, besides looking down on other cultures, there may be for educated Europeans a good deal of interest and curiosity to learn and sense these other cultures. The “savages” and “barbarians” in distant countries became an interesting object of getting to know and to study (“the noble savage”). Amazement and idealization were added to disrespect and despite, so that an antagonistic attitude developed spanning looking down on underhumans and looking up to the unspoiled, aboriginal, simple, pious, strong and healthy “wilds”.

In a word, the other cultures got exotic: Spanish scholasticists praised the morals of the indigenes of the New World, Mozart composed “alla turca”, In his “Western-Eastern Divan”, Goethe delved into Asian wisdom, for Claude Debussy listening to Javanese Gamelan music became a revelation that shaped – through his subsequent compositions – much of post-classical music, and even Hans Küng’s “savages” and “barbarians” in distant countries became an interesting object of getting to know and to study (“the noble savage”). Ethnocentricity and exoticism are two sides of one coin, both taken from the cultural identity treasure chest. However, as we will see, a modern conception of cultural anthropology denies any merit to ethnocentrism, and to exoticism correspondingly. To the exoticists, MacClancy’ collection “Exotic No More” (2002) may be an eye-opener. Other cultures are, for anyone, not only for Westerners, different from the own, neither better nor less valuable, unfit for idealizations as well as for contempt, rather necessary objects of study, deserving respect and tolerance also when criticized as inconsequential, to the degree they are, towards other cultures, respectful and tolerant themselves. The less way is given to ethnocentrist and exoticist inclinations, the better cross-cultural understanding works, and the less xenophobia is imminent.

II. “Vision of the Participants”, Folkways, and Emic-Etic Analysis (Leyden School of Anthropology)

One of the first criticisms of ethnocentrism was introduced by C. van Vollenhoven (1918/1933) and other writers collectively known as the Leyden School of Anthropology,\(^\text{18}\), which advocated that the visie der participanten (the vision of the participants) should control

\(^{17}\) On a general scale, “post-modernist” minimalism tends to deny legitimacy to comparisons of one’s own thinking with that of another, and consequently presses for “doing justice” to the insular, independent unit in language and law, see Derrida 1983; De Man 1986; Hempfer 1992; Odo Marquard (with regard to hermeneutics); see also Ch. 11, infra.

the approach (P. E. de Josselin de Jong 1956). The slogan goes: “het oosterse oosters te zien” (the Eastern must be looked at the Eastern way). However, a detailed theory on how this vision of the participants can be squared with the observer’s own view still seems to be lacking.

Paul Bohannan developed the theory that the two views should be kept apart: the view of the participants of the culture to be observed, which he called folk-terms, folk-concepts, folk-system; and the scientific view of the anthropologist. To this method, Leopold Pospíšil remarked that there is a risk of ethnocentrism, in that the “scientific” view of the observer is nothing but the folk-way of the Western culture. Accordingly, objective scientific standards which one culture could utilize for the study of another culture simply do not exist.

Pospíšil’s own position represents a pragmatic trial-and error approach: neither is it correct to ethnocentrically analyze other cultures, nor is it completely impossible to understand nothing of another culture. A partial approach at least is possible, from both cultures’ points of view, and this approach must be effectuated by trying, modelling, and discarding concepts until they fit the needs of comparison and translation.

The „missionary linguist” Kenneth Pike coined these terms by analogy with the “emic” in “phonemic” and the “etic” in “phonetic”. Although Pike wanted to apply the emic-etic distinction in order to differentiate structural and nonstructural results of both verbal and nonverbal behavioral studies, the distinction was adopted to distinguish the inside (emic) and the outside (etic) views of a social science phenomenon, such as a culture. It soon was accepted that the outside (etic) view could also be “structured”, if only a more general concept of “structure” than the one Pike had in mind was envisaged. The distinction stuck, probably even more effectively than Pike had ever anticipated. A recent account of the wide use of the emic-etic distinction for anthropological purposes was given in Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate, edited by Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth Pike, and Marvin Harris. M. Harris and E. A. Hoebel gave contours to the emic-etic differentiation. Bohannan, on the other hand, developed the theory that the two views should be kept apart.

19 Obviously Bohannan had no knowledge of the Dutch concept of the vision of the participants.
20 Bohannan 1957: 4; id. 1969.
22 The further development of the Bohannan-Pospíšil debate is reported in Pospíšil 1978 c: 3ff. It is still under way. The idea of an artificial scientific language for the comparison of the folk-ways was discussed, and dropped, Pospíšil 1978 c: 7. A recent statement in Bohannan and Glazer (1988), at xv.
25 Marvin Harris (1968: 569).
26 Pike 1954: 8.
27 Headland et al. (1990).
28 Harris (1968/1987: 568ff.) Harris thinks that if it comes to ideas, the investigation is “emic”
other hand, tries to avoid the all-pervasive use of the emic-etic pair by distinguishing between his folk-terms and the emic-etic approach. While the use and usefulness of the emic-etic distinction and of hermeneutics for general analytical purposes in the social sciences is still under debate, another type of anthropological analysis, also inspired by the linguists’ highly operationalized paradigmatic renderings of “cultural phenomena”, has been widely accepted: componential analysis.

*A new trend in cultural anthropology holds teaching the analyses to be dated, and an indepth study of the analyses dispensible. The trend may be owed to the crisis in cultural anthropology concerning the concept of culture (see the remarks made by Jerry D. Moore 2004, 286 f.). This trend is not followed here. The rejection of ethnocentrism necessitates thinking about the thinking of others. Trying to understand how people of different cultures understand the world from their – not from our - perspective, is what the analyses are about. True, a perfect systematic approach to cross-cultural understanding has not yet been found. Much additional research will have to be devoted to global epistemology. What follows is what the state of the art is able to offer, with a special accent on the cross-cultural handling of value judgments because law mainly deals with value judgments.*

III. Componential Analysis

Componential analysis is an analytic procedure first applied in anthropology by Ward Goodenough and Floyd Lounsbury (both 1956). Harris describes it “as an activity devoted to the formulation of the rules by which semantic domains are logico-empirically ordered”. Sturtevant (1964) calls it “The New Ethnography”, others the “The Yale School”. In order to understand the intentions of componential analysis, it is helpful to imagine the following hypothetical situation. A new island is discovered in the South Seas. An anthropologist arrives and sees living beings, similar to humans, communicating amongst themselves in what seems to be language, behaving in ways hitherto unknown, handling objects of unknown character and purpose, and living in an environment that at first sight contains plants and animals which no one has ever seen. The anthropologist has received a grant from a sponsoring organization to write a thesis on the law of inheritance among these islanders. How does he take up his work? It is clear what an ethnocentrist would do: try to learn the language, and then describe the laws according to his own system. However, being no ethnocentrist, our anthropologist knows that “etic” and “emic” make a difference. Now, componential analysis comes to his aid to find out the island’s folk law of succession. Componential analysis claims to be able to do only this, but more it cannot do. In order to avoid confusion, etics, the outsider’s view, and ideas can be actual, and often they are. Inside and outside cannot be made parallel to ideas and facts, nor to emic and etic. Hoebel (1972 a: 542f.) also errs when he calls the emotional identification of his Zia friend with a plant (chamiso) “emic” and his own intellectual understanding of what the friend was saying “etic”. Hoebel’s point of view – while being “rational, scientific, mechanistic” – is just as “emic” as the emotions of his friend. The two examples demonstrate the deficiency of the emic-etic approach.

(1987: 568). For him ideas cannot be real. They have to be subjected to rational, “etic”, study. But ideas can be actual, and often they are. Inside and outside cannot be made parallel to ideas and facts, nor to emic and etic. Hoebel (1972 a: 542f.) also errs when he calls the emotional identification of his Zia friend with a plant (chamiso) “emic” and his own intellectual understanding of what the friend was saying “etic”. Hoebel’s point of view – while being “rational, scientific, mechanistic” – is just as “emic” as the emotions of his friend. The two examples demonstrate the deficiency of the emic-etic approach.

29 Bohannan and Glazer 1988 (Foreword).
30 For details of this debate, and the literature (Fabian, Kohl, Duerr, Blok, Heinrichs, Freilich, Hymes, Geertz, Masson, Stagl, Clifford, Marcus, and others), see W. Fikentscher (1995/2004), 120 f.
31 Harris (1968: 568).
32 Harris (1968: 573).
comparison, must be shelved for a while.

As has been pointed out (I., II., *supra*), a starting point of componential analysis is the differentiation between *ethnocentric concepts* and *folk concepts*. Componential analysis tries to solve the theoretical problem that there may be, at first sight, no way to meaningfully identify folk concepts as the subject of ethnographic investigation because the investigator may be blinded by his or her own ethnocentric biases. For example, an anthropologist from Yale does not know the many kinds of land which are important for the Kapauku, how many kinds of green are important for Amazona Indians, how many types of water are distinguished by the Dutch, how many scales are used in Indic music, etc.33

“Componential analysis” is a basically linguistic method separately adapted to ethnography by Floyd G. Lounsbury.34 and Ward H. Goodenough.35 Both their articles opened up a discussion in which J.-C. Gardin, S. M. Lamb, E. A. Hammel, R. Burling, A. K. Romney, Roy G. D’Andrade, L. Pospíšil, A. F. C. Wallace, H. C. Conklin, Ch. O. Frake, N. Bischof (1985: 54ff.), J. A. Bright, W. Bright, David M. Schneider, R. M. Keesing (1967), Geoghegan (1970) and others participated. Componential analysis proposes a five-step procedure which, condensed into a simplified pattern, may be formulated as follows, based on the writings of the above named authors:

(1) compilation of lexicographic raw data on particular objects (*denotata*) as found by the observer (= the semantic components of a matrix);

(2) assembling of the *denotata* of each single linguistic form as a semantic class of objects in the same manner that the participants establish these collections, still without systematic ordering (= named categories, redrafting folk classifications);

(3) discovery of the classificatory dimensions imposed upon the field by native linguistic usage, i. e., the “folk-generalization” if there are any (= evaluations leading to folk taxonomies);

(4) specification within the classifications under (3) of the distinctive features, defining each of the constituent semantic classes as a type in folk-terms, not in the observer’s experience of particularization (= combination of contrastive components by distinctive features in folk terms); and

(5) ordering of the semantic units into the various hierarchical levels within the folk system, again leaving aside the observer’s experience in distinguishing the various kinds of meaning within the system (= statement of semantic relationships in the form of reasons given by the participants for the specifications under (4), again in folk terms: why and in which manner are the specifica distinguished by the participants?)

If a single item is to be researched, Pospíšil (1978 c: 72ff.) thinks that Harold Conklin’s (1962 a, b) taxonomic approach (the “Linné-system” approach) is appropriate but that for a matrix, such as a kinship system, componential analysis is indispensable. If this method were correct, componential analysis would be preceded by taxonomic analysis in “single item” cases. However, it is doubtful whether “single item” situations are realistic. Rather, componential analysis must reveal whether something can be regarded as a single item.

In the article “A Semantic Analysis of the Pawnee Kinship Usage”, (1956) Language vol. 32/I: 158–194; Lounsbury later preferred the term “rule analysis”. The older term *componential analysis* will be used in the following text.

Upon closer observation, it appears that this five-step procedure can be separated into a linguistic phase 1. and 2. and a logical phase 3. to 5. Steps 1. and 2. can be solved by applying phonemic rules, 3.–5. reflect the logical ideas of genus proximus (3), differentia specifica (4), and giving reasons for this differentiation (5).

In the first step, it is interesting that the ethnographer must first register the sounds of the language he wants to understand. This is what is meant by the “compilation of the denotata”.

The second step is to find out to which objects do the registered sounds apply, which results in an unordered quantity of named things. Then the three following steps remain, intended to find an inner order and arrangement for the named things. This amounts to a three-step concept discovery in folk terms that is accessible from the “outside” while discarding the linguistic “ballast”.

Thus, the third step is the identification, in folk-terms, of a possible genus proximus (for the examples given above: land; color of environment; water; musical scale; another example would be “whether” as genus proximus for rain, sunshine, snow and hail, etc.). Without mentioning componential analysis, Barnett and Silverman (1979, at 7) offer a good example of its application: “If, for example, by asking questions about kinship we learn that in another culture much of what appears as kinship to us, has to do with the relations between people and land, kinship disappears as a relevant analytical category, and is replaced by ‘the relations between people and land’.”

In the fourth step comes the identification in the folk-terms of the differentia specifica, driven by the question: what are, in folk-terminology, the various objects within the genus proximus that make up the genus? In Barnett and Silverman’s example, these denoted objects might be different forms of land tenure based upon kinship relations.

The fifth step concerns the discovery, in folk-terms, of why and how the subparts of the genus are distinguished from each other.

If in taking the third step no genus proximus (or no genus at all) can be detected, it is to be presumed that none exists. Thus, componential analysis of an English-speaking society would on step 1. register the emic sounds of “brother” and “sister”, and on step 2. identify brother and sister as male and female descent in relation to someone born from the same parents. However, on the third step, the analyst would discover that no genus for brother and sister is available, since the word “sibling” also denotes other relatives (cf. Webster: siblings). Componential analysis of a German-speaking society would, by contrast, tell the researcher on step 1. that there are three “emic” sounds: “brother”, “sister”, and (in German) “Geschwister”; and on step 2. that the sound “brother” fits the designatum “male descent in relation to someone born from the same parents”, the sound “sister” means “female descent in relation to someone born from the same parents, and the sound “Geschwister” means brothers, sisters, or brother(s) and sister(s) born from the same parents. Next, on step 3. componential analysis would for a German-speaking society reveal that the designatum “Geschwister” is the genus proximus for the denotata “brother(s) and brother(s), sister(s) and sister(s), or brother(s) and sister(s)”. Step 4. would involve the question of how the Germans (but not the English) understand the meaning of the words brother and sister as concepts within the term “Geschwister”, and whether there are third or fourth differentia specifica. Step 5. would be devoted to the way Germans (not the English) distinguish the concepts of brother and sister (by gender), and arrange those concepts to form the next higher conceivable unit of Geschwister.

Step 3., 4. and 5. involve conceptual operations relative to and constitutive of each other, and could be listed, more aptly, as steps 3 a, 3 b, and 3 c.
A critical assessment may raise a possible objection to componential analysis. Steps 3., 4., and 5. use logical concepts: genus proximus, differentia specifica, and reasons for their specificity. Is there a culturally universal logic fit for steps 3., 4. and 5.? These steps use Greek logic: specifically, the logic of conceptual hierarchies. Greek logic is rooted in one mode of thought, the Western (Ch. 9). Other modes of thought may generalize in different manners. Therefore, componential analysis is mode-of-thought dependent. The investigator must be a Westerner or a user of Western (Greek) logic. If a Pueblo or Yoruba sets out to describe a German, English, or Kapauku speaking society in his own mode of thought, he or she might not be able to use step 3. to 5. of componential analysis. In other words, componential analysis is in part formulated in terms of classical logic (genus proximus, differentia specifica), and thus has no meta-theoretical properties. The question remains whether it is permissible to research a non-Western culture using a Western (classical Greek) research method. Does what is said here also apply to a Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim? This problem of general hermeneutics cannot be discussed without the theory of the modes of thought (the program is developed in Fikentscher 1978 b) and the definite answer to the problem lies in the “uneasy insight”.

However, a pragmatic answer will be given soon (IV 2 infra).

IV. Correlational Analysis

1. General Description

Still, for anyone who accepts Greek logic, componential analysis is a useful tool for the analysis of factual matrices such as kinship systems, alliances, professions, trade systems, etc. However, when it comes to the setting of values through institutions as law, morals, belief systems, and economic or social policies, a new problem arises: whereas componential analysis enables the observer to study the cognitive framework of the society with which he is dealing regarding facts, it does not explain normative thinking in the folk-way. Pospíšil therefore went on to develop from componential analysis what he calls correlational analysis. The main idea of Pospíšil’s approach is that for componential analysis only one matrix is needed (see the five-step procedure above), but that for normative purposes “correlative” normative concepts are to be identified and separately regarded, so that three matrices must be used: the first for the subject to whom the right, the title to land, etc. is to be given; the second for the object to which the right, the title, etc. extends (for example, the piece of the hunted animal which is shared with an elderly member of the tribe; the object can also be a person); and the third for the identification of the legal relationship between subject and object. In this way, normative thinking in the study of culture can be evaluated for consistency within the demands of the visie der participanten, the use of folk-concepts.

Correlational analysis correctly assumes that normative applications of componential analysis require more than one “run” through the five-step process because normativity opposes the

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36 Fikentscher 1979 a: 105f.; 1980 b: 593; 1987 b: 29f.; see also Ch. 1 V, end of first paragraph, above, and Ch. 6 IV 3., below.
categories of “is” and “ought”. Normativity works with rules (legal, moral, religious) that must be implemented by confronting them with sets of fact. Thus, the application of a rule to a set of facts, in every system of law (or morals or religion), can be symbolized by the following graph:

Graph: norm and subsumption ((only the English text, please))

2. Examples

The set of facts in a given culture can be analyzed by componential analysis: for example, let us examine a verbal (“handshake”) agreement under the law of contracts of San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico. To analyze San Juan Pueblo contract law, componential analysis is not enough. In addition, one must ascertain the applicable norm. The norm says: verbal agreements are valid without consideration. To express this in a reasoned way, the requirements of this norm (offer, acceptance, contents, no consideration) must be stated in terms of a second “run” through the componential analysis because the manner in which San Juan legal culture correlates facts and requirements may be different (and is indeed different) from Anglo-American norm implementation. The Paiwan, one of the ten surviving aboriginal tribes on Taiwan (Republic of China), follow this rule of acquisition of crops: if a mango tree has been planted and taken care of by somebody the fruit that falls from the tree belongs to the owner of the tree even if it falls upon the neighbor’s piece of land. If the tree was, however, a nagiduzuVaragashju, a wild growing tree, everyone may pick up the fallen mango fruits regardless where they fall. For the purpose of deciding this issue of crop acquisition, nagiduzuVaragashju is a correlative concept (case No. 28).

The mode in which a culture correlates requirements and sanction in abstracto may be culture-specific, too. Therefore, a third “run” of componential analysis, this time for the abstract sanctions, is necessary. In particular, the kind of “ought” may be culture-specific. Thus, in Chinese tradition, “must” and “should” are much closer related concepts than in western usage (if not identical).

In Chinese, “must” and “ought” is ingae: (follows symbol). Similarly, when a Paiwan finds a precious object in the open, such as a piece of slate, he or she may acquire property of it by putting a twig on the road that points to the object. It need not be taken home right away. I asked what would happen if somebody disregards this rule and takes the piece. The answer was that this would not happen “because it is a matter of trust”. A breach of the law in this situation is simply not envisaged. These qualifications of the “ought” have to be taken into consideration in correlational analysis by the third “run” of componential analysis that connects the correlational concepts and the correlative quality of the ought.

There are cultural differences in the understanding of a legal “must”. When pedestrians lights show red, a German would not cross the street even late at night when there is no traffic and nobody watches, because he is educated to the understand that the law that provides “don’t

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38 Fikentscher 1976: 774ff.
“cross at red” has been decided in a parliament or council which is part of the Frankish democracy: the political unit is made up of “us citizens”, and the citizens have rights and duties among each other, as well as between them and the elected “king” (or organ) of the unit, so that the citizen stands in a reciprocal relationship to the organ: “I owe you, and you owe me”. In US, a no-parking sign does not necessarily represent a strict interdiction to park, but an admonition not to park here to avoid getting a ticket, because the Normanic version of Frankish democracy knows rights and duties among the citizens, but in the relationship between the citizens and the organ – in spite of existing duties of the citizens owed to the unit – in general no duties of the unit to the citizens: “the king can do no wrong”. Thus, there is no reciprocal feeling to be able to wrong the other side. This leads to a lesser strictness of obedience on the side of the unilaterally bound partner. Therefore, quite logically, in front of the United Nations Building in New York City, additional traffic signs say, next to the usual no-parking signs: “Don’t even think about parking here”. Correlational analysis will mark a differentiation in the qualification of a “must”.

An other example is recent Japanese adjudication. A general feeling in the theory and practice of Japanese law is that the two Westernizations of Japanese law (1868 ff. - Meiji Revolution, and 1945 ff. - US occupation) should no longer stand in the way of a search for a genuine Japanese mode of adjudication. A typical Japanese way of deciding a civil case is not to feel slavishly bound to what the parties claim and deny. The judge should be able to propose to the parties a decision that intends helping both sides to find a viable solution to what they want to have but cannot get. Therefore, this adjudicatory proposition can be situated outside of the parties’ motions. In German law, in principle it would not be permissible to let the decision remain outside of the Streitgegenstand, or to go beyond the contested subject matter. This new or not so new Japanese method is called otoshi dokoro. In Japanese characters: (see next page). Its literal meaning is that the decision may be dropped from above to fall down on the case. In term of correlational analysis, otoshi dokoro is a culture-specific manner of connecting the requirements of a legal rule with the abstract sanction an outside-of-the-Streitgegenstand connection. This connection means that otoshi dokoro moves away from the Continental European and common law rule ne eat iudex ultra petitum partium (the judge shall not go beyond the claims and motions of the parties).

The foregoing is nothing yet but a restatement of Pospíšil’s reasoning of correlational analysis presented in slightly different words. The entitled subject makes up part of the requirements, and the object of the right adds the sanction to the requirements: the piece of meat “must” be shared with the elderly member; a Paiwan “must” obey the rules of property acquisition, etc. However, Pospíšil’s third matrix, the legal relationship between the parties can be either the application of the requirements to the set of facts of the case in question or the transformation of the abstract sanction into concrete sanctions. Thus, Pospíšil’s correlational analysis is one “run” short of what correlational analysis requires when it comes to applied norms, because the correlation of the norm and the reality consists of three phases: subsumption, inference of the sanction in abstracto, and concretization. All three underlie culture-specific thought. Therefore, for an application of San Juan contract law, four “runs” of componential analysis are necessary: for the facts of the case; for the San Juan verbal contract as part of San Juan’s

40 More on kinds of democracy in Chapter 9.
41 I thank Kai Fikentscher for sharing these observations with me.
42 I wish to thank Kiminori Eguchi to drawing my attention to otoshi dokoro and writing it in Japanese letters. On otoshi dokoro as an element of procedure see also Chapter 13 I. (near the end).
legal system; abstract sanction; and for the concrete sanction in the particular cases.

An example for the culture-specific nature of the sanction *in concreto*, that is, the application of a rule’s sanction to the realities of life, is the following Rukai case (the Rukai are another tribe of Taiwanese aborigines): A drunken driver killed a person. Unlike under Western and most other laws which would hold the drunken driver liable in one way or the other, under Rukai law the family of the drunken driver offered an excuse and damages repaid to the victim’s family. The victim’s family accepted the excuse and did not pursue further compensation. Still, it was not the actor but his family which was sanctioned.

These examples show that correlational analysis consists of a quadruplication of componential analysis. With the help of correlational analysis, scientific anthropological statements can be made in normative contexts. Impressive as they appear, componential and correlational analysis have been criticized for their dependence upon linguistic methods in a general cultural context, because problems in conceptual understanding sometimes go beyond linguistic problems. The encoding of meaning may vary among people from different cultures. Hopefully, this objection may at least be partially overcome by dividing the procedure into two first steps (1 and 2) of definitely linguistic character, and 3 more steps formulated with reference to language but also to concepts of traditional logic. The first two steps are of necessity merely linguistic because the observer who encounters an unknown society is confronted with the sounds of a language he does not yet understand. But the three subsequent steps involve understanding of the folk context of the words attached to the objects, which requires that logic serve the larger function of solving the semantic problem.

Correlational analysis shares with componential analysis the objection that steps 3. to 5. are taken from the inventory of Greek philosophy and its peculiar way of defining a phenomenon. This disadvantage must be taken into account, although in correlational analysis the problem quadruples in scope. It does not help to say that componential and correlational analysis are “analytical tools” as opposed to folk conceptualizations, because what we call analytical might be a Western folk conceptualization for the participant of another culture. However, a pragmatic, *thought-modal* approach promises a way to solve the dilemma:

3. “The uneasy insight” revisited

The methods of componential and correlational analysis are presented here as the currently most developed methods for conceptualizing and understanding a foreign culture. A caveat was made as to the use of “Greek” logic on steps 3. to 5. of componential and correlational analysis because it seems improper to categorize a foreign culture by logical means that have been exclusively produced by a single culture, in this case the Greek Tragic one. But all cultures do engage in producing some relations between their concepts; therefore it is possible, now that the modes of thought have been introduced, to adjust the componential and correlational analyses by adding the aspect of the modes of thought, resulting in what may be called “the mode-of-thought adjusted componential analysis”. The mode of thought of a given culture comes into play only in steps 3. to 5.: that is, when consistent relationships between concepts are to be identified. Thus, in addition to performing the five steps of componential analysis, it is necessary to consider in a reductive manner whether and to what degree the participants of the culture under observation are able and willing, in view of their cultural traditions, to establish the logical relationship prescribed for performing of steps 3. to 5. Only when this is done, can any purely Greek-Western logical and systematical thinking be avoided

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43 Burling, in Tyler 1969, 419; see also the controversy between Goldberg 1966 and Pospíšil 1966.
in the application of componential or correlational analysis. This thought-modal adjustment of the generalization process within componential or correlational analysis may, for example, result in “illogical”, loosely structured relations between the concepts to be ordered, so that a white horse is not a horse. It may on the other hand lead to much broader generalizations than would be permissible under the standards of Western logic when, for instance, under the influence of mystical conceptions of causality (e.g., bad government causes earthquakes) sweeping generalizations must be made in order to do justice to that particular culture. A classical example of such “illogical” over-generalizations is the Aristotelian concept of quality, which is unempirical in its broadness, and therefore “un-Greek”. This puzzling discovery of the “un-Greek Aristotle”, was the starting point for T. S. Kuhn’s theory of paradigm changes in natural science (see Kuhn; Pirsig 1991).

V. Synepeia analysis. The metatheory

A mode of thought may be an important concept for cultural anthropology, enabling the researcher to assess and explain how people think and behave, and why they do so differently in different cultures. Modes of thought research is certainly not a divinatory panacea in order to discover human mental data without any limitation or qualification. If this were the case, this kind of anthropological research could become a dangerous instrument in the hands of those whose inhuman ideologies call for brain-washing methods in order to produce a “correct consciousness” in their political “followers”. A mode of thought is, first of all, a research object of cultural anthropology, and it should be regarded as an influential factor for sociocultural themes. It should be the respected property of its cultural participant to the same extent as other cultural properties. Intriguingly, modes of thought do lend themselves to comparison, and, by way of this comparison, to practical prospects for applied anthropology.

The theory of thought-modal analysis is called “synepeia analysis” or “synepeics”.44 Synepeia means consequence, and synepeics call for consequential reasoning in any given mode of thought. To illustrate, it is un-synepeical for a Marxist to claim human rights as rights directed against the state; for a rule-of-law democrat to call for an economy of use values, because they are exempt from dialogue; for a Muslim to get organized in the true (Greek) sense of organization as a system of reliance and responsibilities between the members of an assembly, and between the assembly and its appointed “organs”, because the ummah is not structured; for a Buddhist to be socialist; for an American Indian child to play “show and tell”, because showing off is bad manners; for a Guaraní child to play “musical chairs” because fellows should be offered seating facilities; etc. Since a comparison of cultures and their underlying modes of thought is possible through analysis, synepeia analysis leads to a metareasoning and provide for concepts on a meta-level (such as space, time, causality, risk, personhood, and human dignity).45 As already indicated at the beginning of this chapter,
synepeics require consequential thinking in three respects:

Somebody who renders a judgment (= makes a proposition in the sense of Ch. 3 I 3) should know in which mode of thought he does so. A participant of the Western culture with its Greek/Judaic/Christian roots who says: “I claim my basic right” means something totally different from a Buddhist who speaks the same words, and both meanings differ from what a Marxist implies with these words. Thus, it is necessary to take into account the mode of thought used in making judgments. If a Native American says: „One has to account for pain and suffering”, his meaning is the opposite from what an Anglo-American lawyer intends to say with the same words: Indian tort law leaves the damages for pain and suffering with the injured party, while Anglo-American tort law makes the injurer pay. The mode of thought about risk is different. One should heed thought-modal limits when saying something within a given mode of thought. Muslims who say: “Let’s start an organization” overlook that getting organized – in the Greek sense of the word – is un-Islamic (communication Ayyub Axel Köhler 1994; the intricate topic of the use of non-Islamic organizational instruments by Muslims cannot be further discussed here).

It will be shown that synepeics consist of at least three levels of thinking: the theoretical (as opposed to metatheoretical) level (I.), the level of dual perception where one “dis covers the other” (II.), and the metatheoretical level of comparison with its metaconcepts (III.). Synepeics require the thinker to stay consequentially on a chosen level, and to be aware of the changing of levels if the latter is desired. When a Buddhist monk in a debate with Western friends says: “Hinayana Buddhism is the ideal environment for the development of human rights”, this can have two very different, even opposite, meanings. On the level of synepeics I where theoretical statements within a given mode of thought are made, it means: “Getting detached from other persons and things of this world, as recommended by the Buddha, creates a state of non-interference and non-caring that conforms with the true meaning of human rights as we Hinayana Buddhists see them.” If said on the meta-level of comparison (synepeics III), it means: “If a foreigner comes to our country, he or she will be delighted to see how every possible interpretation of what ‘human rights’ can mean is acceptable for us, and our tolerance will provide for fruitful discussions.” Spoken on levels I or III of synepeics, the same words imply either near-intolerance, or tolerance.

Following the explication of consequential thinking with regard to the modes of thought and their comparison, the three levels of synepeical analysis (I–III) as discussed below, and a fourth level – synepeics IV – will be added to cover the policy side of synepeia analysis.

1. **Consequential thinking within a given culture (“Synepeics I”)**

It has been said that a mode of thought is defined as a predominantly covert, ideational mindset in cultural anthropology, having impact upon various cultural themes. Thus, there are different mental reactions to identical or similar perceived data in different cultures. This statement can be challenged as an impermissible segmentation of mankind into ways of thinking. However, permissibility is not the point here. It may very well be that there should be no different mental reactions to identical data input. Then, there would exist just one mode of thought as a universal. Maybe, children up to a certain age, 4 or 5 years old, live under a universal mode of thought. The fact is that, at least for persons over this age, there are different mental reactions. Eibl-Eibesfeldt’s studies of childrens’ behavior (1984 a: 537ff.) are

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46 Some years ago I participated in a conference where this remark was made by a Hinayana-Buddhist religious leader.
indicative of a universal childrens’ mode of thought, at least in some essential behavioral aspects.

An example is the compensation of losses suffered by the negotiorum gestor, the volunteering helper. A makes a vacation trip and takes his dog along. The dog runs home and is fed by person B, the kind neighbor, until A returns (case No. 31). Under continental laws, the volunteer can claim restitution (cf., §§ 681, 670 German Civil Code). The “Puritan” attitude of the common law, on the other hand, arises from the principle that helping your neighbor is a Christian duty. This does not entitle the helper to restitution when he or she, in fulfillment of his or her selfimposed duty, is struck by a calamity or otherwise incurs expenditures. It is a different mode of thought (concerning the partition of risks) which bars restitution for suffered losses in such cases; Noble v. Williams, 150 Ky. 439, 150 S. W. 107 (1912).

For the Kapauku, all that happens takes place because of the will of God. This means that man does not have free will (in the Western sense), and thus cannot sin (Pospíšil, 1986 b: 23). Thus, there is no reward or judgment after death. Obviously, such a mode of thought must lead to attitudes different from those under a mode of thought which conceives of personal guilt, such as the Tragic Mind and the mainstream Judaic/Christian mode of thought. Therefore, synepeics start with the realization that propositions (Ch. 3 I) should be made and consequences be drawn from within a specific culture against the background of a specific mode of thought. This bottomline is named synepeics I. Synepeics I are concerned with the “folk-concepts”. For an Arunta man it is consequential that after going through the witchcraft procedure of “bone-pointing”, the magically attacked person dies. “Western minds” would deem this illogical. For a Marxist, it is correct reasoning within Marxism as a folk concept that a dissident is out of his mind and may be subjected to psychiatric treatment (Marxism defined on the basis of the use-value theory, W. Fikentscher 1976, 497ff.; and Ch. 11, infra). For a dialogue-oriented mode of thought (Tragic Mind; Judaic/Christian) the opposition of a dissident is part of everyday political life, and the Marxist treatment applied to him pseudo-psychiatric. John Rawls’ theory of justice as fairness (1971) is applicable only to a Western (Greek/Judaic/Christian) mode of thought, and cannot adequately explain non-Western ideas of justice (W. Fikentscher 1977 a, 643f.) Rawls does not see this problem. “Right” (or “fair”) and “wrong” are therefore – at this first stage of synepeical reasoning – not absolute criteria, but propositions related to, and deriving their meaning from, a specific mode of thought. Evaluative thinking, positive and negative, is for the most part ideationally and covertly culture-related.

This culture-relatedness concerns even the three questions: (1) whether a specific mode of thought knows the concept of “consequence” at all, (2) what in a specific mode of thought is consequential, and (3) what must the premise be in relation to which a conclusion is consequential. All these questions of consequentiality are think-way-definite, or, in the terminology of this book, mode-of-thought defined. It follows that a mode of thought is therefore competent to define its own concepts of time, causality, risk, aleatoric elements, coincidence, accident, history, subject-object relationship, etc..

Thus one cannot criticize results of mode-of-thought defined reasoning as wrong or objectionable when the argument is drawn from another mode of thought. This would be not consequently “synepeical”, and would amount to an offense against the rules of “synepeics I”. So a Muslim, whose convictions are founded on a notion of a certain unity of religious and (derivate) political concepts, should not criticize the principle of separation of state and church, drawn from the dialogical nature of the mainstream Greek/Judaic/Christian belief in the separability of oikos and polis, of res privata and res publica, and in having subjective private and public rights (W. Fikentscher 1993 a). While the Muslim may of course take issue
with that principle, he should realize that it cannot be duly criticized from the Muslim point of view because the Muslim and the Western modes of thought are in this regard different. However, the Muslim’s criticism could be based upon a method which transcends specific modes of thought. This mode-of-thought transcending criticism, or cross-cultural comparison, follows other rules, which will be discussed later.

A problem, discussed elsewhere, which must be left aside here, is that of the “synepeical unit”: A specific mode of thought is not composed of a “disjointed conglomeration of shreds and pieces” to use a phrase contained in an anthropological text (Pospíšil 1986 a, 38); rather, it is a consistently structured whole, evidencing “synepeical consistency” (Fikentscher 1979, 21; 1980, 565; 1995/2004, 134 f.). By implication a culture which does not know, for example, perspective in its works of art is not likely to use systematic reasoning in its scientific literature; this is because both art and science require a certain cognitive attitude, and the three-pointed structure of perspective art finds its parallel in the three-pointed structure of systematic reasoning (cf. W. Fikentscher 1977 a, 65, 105f.). Or, a culture that does not know the dichotomy “black-white” will lack the dichotomy “good-bad”. Pospíšil reports that the Kapauku say “a little more black”, “a little more white”, and that killing a man is good for his enemies and bad for his family (personal communication). Hence, a “synepeical unit” implies thought-modal consistency.

From an anthropological point of view, the concept of the configuration justifies such study, because modes of thought are part of a culture, and culture is not a mere conglomeration of shreds and pieces but tends to form configurational units. Any further explication of the concept of synepeical units cannot be included in this text due to the limits of space. A thorough study of integrative attempts throughout the history of anthropology would be indispensable for such an explanation, starting from the “psychic unit” theory, and not ending with the “configuration” concept (Ruth Benedict 1943).

Looking back at the debate between the ethnocentrists and those favoring the “vision of the participants” approach, the need to understand a mode of thought synepeically appears to be very similar to judging a culture “emically”: from the inside. Both analytical approaches are indeed derived from the desire to do justice to the other’s life and world. Thus synepeical analysis strongly suggests that the folk-way approach is correct. Moreover, for researching a factual matrix such as a kinship system or succession rules, the folk-concept (“emic”) approach also seems adequate. But many features of different cultures are the same, or similar, because behind these cultures lies the same mode of thought (e.g. in South and East Asia, or with regard to Plains Indians, or Pueblos; see Chapter 3 I. 3., above). Therefore, for researching cultural themes such as space and time perception, the ethics of risk handling, or the conceptuality of units and attributes, justice is done to a foreign culture whenever its modes of thought about these themes are correctly analyzed. One need not go into Kachin culture to understand the meaning of Hinayana Buddhist detachment. Many of the “more evaluative” cultural themes are accessible through the modes of thought and their analysis. This introduction of synepeical analysis of the modes of thought makes a major contribution to the vision of the participants/folk-ways/emic-etic/insider-outsider debate in that it defuses much of the heat of their debate. Synepeical analysis sharpens the focus of analysis by reaching out, whenever appropriate, beyond the cultures.

This is the second contribution of synepeical analysis to the folk-way dilemma. The first was the hint that the folk-way approach is basically correct. There will be a third contribution of synepeical analysis to “emic-etic” as an analytical tool to compare cultures: synepeics III,
which links emic and etic in a more satisfactory way than trial-and-error. The way to synepiecs III presupposes synepiecs II: dual thinking. This is the point where componential and correlational analysis, both concerned with folk-ways only, are left behind, and comparison of cultures becomes possible. “Yale ethnography” is being extended.

2. “Discovering the Other” as the beginning of dual thinking (“Synepiecs II”)

Synepiecs II consists of discovering the other. Consequential reasoning within a specific mode of thought has been called “synepiecs I”. But there is a point where one culture discovers another, when carriers of one mode of thought discover that there is more than one think-way. Thought-modal conclusions (synepiecs I) do not preclude thought-modal transcending argumentation. This step is different, however, because the relation to this “other” is that of the linguistic dual: “You and I, but not we two.” There is no plural yet, no group that could say “we”. “We” is a later discovery. The dual relation is bi-, not multilateral. This next step will be called “synepiecs II”. Also within this step, consequential (in Greek: = synepiecal) reasoning has to be used in order to stay consistent, notwithstanding all the scruples raised by the “uneasy in sight” discussed before.

It is not difficult to see that the discovery of an other moves the argumentation to a new level (Fikentscher 1983 a, 104). It is not only useless but impermissible to treat the other, once discovered, as if it were oneself (and the same is valid for the other). The problem of neighborhood pops up, and with it problems of war and peace, and of relating in general. There is no thought of comparison yet, or of translating. Tribal members were shocked or suspicious when somebody came who could speak Keresan and Tewa (Bandelier 374; see also note 1089, below). The other is discovered long before the concept of another group is completely grasped and the other’s values are ascertained. Now it becomes an issue that it is not advisable to butcher the holy cows of others (cf., Fikentscher 1975 a, 323 note 413), nor is it of any avail to punish others for not beatifying their cows. Synepiecs II is no more than a cross-cultural or, more specifically, a cross-thought-modal discovery procedure. In this it is a naive approach, and, if charged with negative undertones, a naive protest and an unreflected rejection directed towards the value-system and way of reasoning of another mode-of-thought. Synepiecs II demonstrate the need for metatheory to serve as the base for a metatheoretically reasoned comparison which is no longer naive. The second stage of synepiecs has not yet reached the level of metatheory. A metatheory for comparison and criticism of the modes of thought requires an arsenal of common denominators (= synepiecs III; see 3., infra).

In the philosophy of natural sciences, Thomas S. Kuhn (1922 – 1996) observed that “scientific revolutions”, identifiable as such by the introduction of a new “paradigm”, lead to distinguishable scientific modes of thought (he does not use this term; Kuhn 1962, 2000). Some literary reactions have focused upon Kuhn’s seemingly utter relativism, which questioned the scientific and rational striving for truth by replacing that quest with interchangeable paradigms: Kuhn said that Ptolemaios is not wrong and Kepler right, but that both offered theories corresponding to the needs and mental abilities of their time. Later, Kuhn abjured such “relativism”, however without giving up his basic tenet (2000). Kuhn’s observation is correct: synepiecal thinking is also applicable to natural sciences as a matter of course (cf., Fikentscher 1977 b, 29ff.). Kuhn (1952) describes nothing more than the confrontation of different modes of thought in natural science on the level of synepiecs II. Kuhn’s failure to search for common denominators (“synepiecs III”) results in the reprimand of relativism and irrationality. A conscious rejection of a common denominator is the Chinese philosophical adage: “a white horse is no horse”. Here follows more illustrations of mode-of-thought related reasoning on the second level of “discovering the other”.
(1) The first example is given by the development aid policy under the “New International Economic Order” program of the United Nations after 1974 that encouraged direct investments. It was a thought-modal mistake to assume that the rules of credit and loan applicable under “Western”, in particular U.S.-American, concepts of trust and reliance should also apply to the (much more short-termed) bona-fides relations in many developing countries. Too little attention was paid to thought-modal factors of other cultures in the handing out of loans. This does not imply that no credits should have been given. Quite on the contrary, they should have been given, maybe even more generously, but with regard to the conditions of the modes of thought prevalent in the recipient countries: for instance, on a short-term and a “trickle-down”-ensuring basis. The present debt crisis is to a large extent a result of the neglect of differences in modes of thought. Such neglect may have practical results and can be expensive (cf., the warnings in Fikentscher et al. 1980 c: 29ff.).

(2) Governments inventing the truths according to which they want their citizen to live are inclined to distort or cover up news on disasters (some examples in Fikentscher 1979 c, 110ff.). But as soon as the nuclear fallout of the Chernobyl disaster reached Western states with their dialogue-oriented information systems, the Soviet information policy underwent a change, interestingly enough not only with regard to the outside, but also from within the socialist camp. This is an example for what happens to mode-of-thought-defined values when confronted with value systems of other modes of thought.

(3) A third example of synepics II is (in-)tolerance. Arthur Kaufmann writes (1984 b): “There is a powerful institution which confesses, up to this day, in sympathetic sincerity that it is not tolerant: The Catholic church ... This standpoint is consequential if one believes to possess the one and undivided truth which to teach mankind one feels to be called.” Kaufmann quotes Max Pribilla, S. J.: “Never the Catholic church will consent to assigning equal weight to truth and error or leave undecided the question of Lessing’s Nathan the Wise which of the rings is the genuine one; this is the standpoint of dogmatic intolerance which has so often been reproached to the Catholic Church; but only the expression sounds hard ... in reality it just brings to light what is self-evident for every church that takes itself seriously ...; therefore it is a fact to which one has to agree that every church has to be dogmatically intolerant” (case No. 39). Arthur Kaufmann disagrees. In the language of this book, Pribilla argues on the level of synepics I, Kaufmann on that of synepics II. This means that, when speaking of modes of thought or religions, intolerance presupposes that one has made up his mind to confine oneself to synepics I. Many followers of religions do this.

(4) A fourth example is “explaining”. What does it mean to “explain something”? Explanations are on the whole a way of thought-modally confined reasoning. Modes of thought vary as to their categories. Categories cannot be explained; they can be only pointed out (Stephen C. Pepper 1942: 237). Starting from categorial premises, explanations are possible. Cultures and their underlying modes of thought therefore differ in their relative distribution of categorial and explainable concepts. What may be explainable in one culture may not be explainable in another. Thomas S. Kuhn (1962/81) describes how, as a student of physics, he was utterly dissatisfied with Aristotle’s “unscientific” explanations of mechanical movement, of the empty space etc., until he discovered that Aristotle did not start from pure mechanical movement but from a concept of change of quality of which movement is only one aspect, and that “being situated” is another quality which excludes the idea of an empty space. So Kuhn found “that the mistake was mine and not Aristotle’s” (1962, at 10).

(5) Synepics II does not structure cultures or their underlying modes of thought; they just list
both of them. Synepeics II also does not require that one mode of thought should respect the other. To a Muslim, synepeics II teach that beyond dar’al islam, the pacified area of Islam, there is a dar’al harb, an unpacified area of chaos outside. To Hugo Grotius, synepeics II teach that outside the rule of Christianity as the true religion there is only a “terra missionaris” (Fikentscher 1979 a: 77ff.). But synepeics II teach neither to the Muslim nor to Hugo Grotius that Islam should leave the dar’al harb, or Christianity the “terra missionaris”, untouched and existing in their own rights. Tolerance, respect, renunciation of world revolution, etc., do not follow from synepeics II. They are postulates added to synepeics II. Why? Article I of the UN Pact on Civil and Political Rights, and Article I of the UN Pact on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights, both of Dec. 19th, 1966, supply a formal, legalistic, but nevertheless valid answer: every “people” has a right to adopt, retain, and change it own modes of thought (for details and literature see Fikentscher 1983 a: 100–132). A less formal answer that at the same time justifies the underlying philosophy of the mentioned pacts is the assumption that an existing or developing mode of thought, as background of one or more existing cultures, should be respected by the participants of other cultures.

Although synepeics II do not organize or structure cultures or modes of thought, they invite comparison. This calls for comparative tools (= Synepeics III), and also raises the question whether it makes sense at all to compare. It should be noted that the “vision of the participants”, Paul Bohannan’s “folkways”, and most emic-etic-analyses terminate analytical investigation after synepeics I and II.

The epistemological level of synepeics II is burdened with the problems of xenophobia, discrimination, and racism. Discovering the other can provoke such “trap” reactions (Bohannan). A cultural warning is in order. In the present context, only references to these related topics can be given.

3. Common denominators on a meta-level: comparing modes of thought (“Synepeics III”)

A systematic treatment of the similarities and dissimilarities of the modes of thought requires common denominators for comparison, otherwise the view of the other remains dualistic and naive (synepeics II). One may venture the proposition that, under an evolutionist-linguistic approach, the cognitive step from the early dual (“there is a pair of ...”) to the numeric entity two (“There could be more of them, but there are only two of this sort”) rather precisely describes the transition from synepeics II to synepeics III. This is the step when a common ground of attributes is conceived in order to bring the entities to be compared into some order (not necessarily, but possibly, into a system)\(^{47}\). Synepeics III thus is a reduction of cultural complexity (Fikentscher 1992 a). First, some examples will follow (a); next, the source and

\(^{47}\) Fikentscher 1983 a: 104 as to the principle, and as to the problem of cultural plurality; id., 1979 a: 73ff. as to the problem of inter-cultural value-acceptance (cf., also Albach 1980; Mössner 1979); id., 1983 a: 130 as to a cross-cultural economic theory; id., 1979 b: 109; and 1980 as to the concept of law; id., 1979 b: 169 as to the concept of justice; see Clyde Kluckhohn's (1953: 509) call for “a better working-out of the universal categories of culture”; also J. W. M. Whiting 1954 (“cross-cultural method”) and Lawrence M. Friedman 1990. W. Bremer’s criticism of metatheory relates to social sciences in general, a different problem. – Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) may develop into bridging cross-cultural and cross-thought-modal difficulties of communication, Laura Nader and Elisabetta Grande, Current Illusions and Delusions About Conflict Management – In Africa and Elsewhere, 27 Law and Social Inquiry 573-594 (2002); Mark Goodale, The Globalization of Sympathetic Law and Its Consequences, 27 Law and Social Inquiry 595-608 (2002); also Bierbrauer, and Wesche, see Ch. 6 V 2b, infra. The problem with ADR is always the non-represented third party, and thus the possible antitrust offense, broadly speaking: the uncontrolability of “self-made law.”
terminology of the metaconcepts, of both facts and values (b); then, their two kinds (c); and
finally, two general remarks (d).

a. The problem of the common denominators, or common contents, of different modes of
thought can be illustrated by the recognition of human or basic rights. In 1985, a Brazilian
trade union leader was reported to claim the right to form a union and to strike not only for his
(moderate-left) union but also, in a way which was said by an unnamed Brazilian broadcast
commentator to be revolutionary for Brazil, for the right-wing Catholic and the left-wing
Communist unions. The trade union leader gave the following reasons for his demand: there
was, in his opinion, a difference between the right of a union obtained by bargaining a
contract with an employer and the basic right to be a union and to act as such. He did see a
problem in the proposition that one must grant the right to have rights against others who
think and act differently because otherwise the right to have rights will be granted to nobody.
For Brazil, this appeared to be a novel idea; in other words, for Brazilian unions synnepeics III
did not yet work in 1985. The example relates to facts.

As to values, the meta-level is even harder to define. The right to ask for and to discuss values
must be included in synnepeics III (Fikentscher 1977 b, 1979 a). The duty to listen and to be
tolerant of the values of a participant of another mode of thought is the corollary to the right to
explore values. The ability to be someone who is asks about values, and who would like to
discuss their evaluation, is another requirement for the meta-level. This ability may be called
Wertfähigkeit der Person (a person’s ability to be a carrier of values). The right to be left alone
in one’s own value assessment without preventing others from exercising their rights to be left
alone in their evaluations is also indispensable to comparing modes of thought by using
common denominators. It is evident that synnepeics III ask for more protection of basic rights
that some of the modes of thought having or claiming political influence in today’s world are
ready to grant. These basic rights imply not only the rights of single participants, but ask for
the protection of peoples’ and ethnic groups’ rights as well. Every mode of thought is entitled
to be accepted as long as it accepts others.

Regarding conceptual unit-building, on the meta-level one has to be careful to avoid concepts
of ordering which do not fit culture. In fact, as soon as the metaconcept of ordering disregards
the structural corroboration habits (Stephen C. Pepper, 1942) of a single mode of thought – as
phenomena to be considered and compiled –, it is of no use as a common denominator. Hence,
the wide-spread and uncontrolled utilization of terms like structure (Lévi-Strauss; see the
critique in Fikentscher 1975: 134ff.), system (e. g., “système juridique” for tribal laws), team,
organization, etc. must be rejected for thought-modal comparative purposes. Some modes of
thought do not know teams: a road through Kapauku land could not be built by teams of local
workers because the Kapaukus refused working in a team. Even when the Kapaukus were
forced to do so by the police of the Dutch colonial government at gun-point, they risked being
shot rather than join the teams formed by the Dutch. The Dutch police were helpless. Then, on
the advice of Leopold Pospil to the headman, the road in the Kamu-Valley was effectively
built by the individual Kapauku horticulturalists who owned the lots over which the road was
to lead, segment by segment, lot by lot, owner by owner. And as every Kapauku owner of his
individual stretch of road jealously maintained his segment in good order, this road outlasted
by many years other government-built roads in the New Guinea lowlands which soon were
reclaimed by the jungle.

Similarly, to apply the term “organization” to the Majlis (the Iranian “parliament”) does
injustice to fundamentalist Shiite Islam, which rejects the idea of an assembly having the right
by majority vote to elect organs to be entrusted with responsible leadership, and to hold such
organs accountable for their decisions. The wisdom of an Ayatollah need not be accountable. The term “organization” is thus as inapplicable to the Majlis as it is, for different reasons, to the Kapauku road owners. For purpose of synepeics III, therefore, the formal term “ordering” will be used when the topics of “working together” or “unit-building” or team organization are to be discussed. As long as a language spoken in one mode of thought is translatable into a language used in another mode of thought, there must be definable common denominators (insufficient as any translation may be).

However, more is needed to be a common denominator on the level of synepeics III than the ability of being free to ask and to evaluate; otherwise the argument could be made that some people should be slaves, or treated like chattels, or do not have a right to live. Hence, on the level of synepeics III it is necessary to set some absolutes that safeguard the human condition. A test for what should be included in these absolutes would be to imagine the aspect of the human condition being challenged or disregarded. If somebody is being deprived of his or her chances of engaging in the sharing of the values common to the modes of thought on the level of synepeics III, such as life, liberty, personhood, and human dignity, there should be absolute and undebatable protection of such attributes of the conditio humana. These rights exist on level III, due to the generalization by comparison of rights existing on levels I and II.

b. On the level of synepeics III it remains to be explained what, after all, the common denominators are supposed to be. Synepeics III and its common denominators, the metaconcepts, go beyond componential and correlational analyses behind. These two analyses are confined to folk-concepts, to a specific culture. Synepeics III makes it feasible to step beyond a specific culture, for both facts and evaluations. Comparison becomes possible. Concepts common to all modes of thought must necessarily be of higher formal quality. Concepts like causality (J. H. Steward 1949), time, suffering (P. Gilbert 1989), risk, cooperation, and participation (in a culture) vary from one mode of thought to another. But, taking causality as an example, for the purpose of comparison there must be a common (meta)concept that links together historic events. The link may be Euclidean-empirical (traditional “Western”), quantum-mechanical, magical, Karma-cyclic, or of some other quality. There must also be a common (meta)concept of time in order to study whether and how a specific mode of thought handles time (as-a-straight-line, cyclical, reiterative, future-less, eschatological, etc.). There must be common (meta)concepts of suffering and risk in order to evaluate whether and how suffering, anticipated suffering, and risk are handled with in a given mode of thought. The same applies to the question of whether common concepts are conceived at all and if so, how they are formed. For example, the formation of common concepts requires the concept of the plural, a plural that leaves the dual behind. 48

This raises the question of how the metaconcepts are produced. All other anthropological analyses are at a disadvantage in that their “analytical” tools cannot be convincingly inferred from the folk-concepts. Synepeics III looks for what is common in at least some modes of thought: for example, – culturally different – causality concepts, but at any rate a middle-type concept of causality. Moreover, synepeics III evaluates whether this common concept should be accepted and used for meta-purposes. Thus an evaluated commonality of folk-concepts fills

48 For clarity’s sake, it would be better to talk of meta-causality, meta-time, meta-risk (including the theodicy issue), and meta-cooperation to discuss these problems on the level of synepeics III. This terminology is not used here, however. And although it would be permissible to call the metaconcepts “analytical concepts”, this would disregard the fact that the analysis starts on the level of synepeics I with its “folk-concepts”. Componential and correlational analysis, two analyses, are concerned with folk-conceptualities. Hence, to call the metaconcepts, which are used for comparison, “analytical” is confusing. Thus, “meta-” is preferable. Unusual combinations such as meta-risk, meta-level etc. will appear hyphenated, termini technici such as metatheory, metaconcept etc. no. 1
the ranks of the meta-level. The evaluative element is of special importance whenever the
folk-concepts are value concepts themselves. One might object that the notion of a “meta”-concept (-value; -time; etc.) is too lofty or too removed from the folk-concept (value; time); or
that a tendency inherent in any “meta”-concept guiding the concept in the direction of a
certain content reduces the “meta”-concepts to usual concepts of some postulative character.
But again, both objections do not do justice to the variety of modes of thought found in this
world, and this study is intended to include all modes of thought, including the most dogmatic
and intolerant ones, within a conceptual framework which makes comparison possible
(evaluation is a different matter, see c) and 4, infra).

c. This leads to an important distinction between the common denominators on level III:
empirical analysis includes factual concepts and value concepts of all existing and conceivable
modes of thought, including the dogmatist, tyrannical, exclusionary, and totalitarian.
However, synepetic analysis would come to a sudden end if those intolerant modes of
thought were permitted to join in the setting of common values, because they would not
tolerate evaluations other than their own, and thus would end the analysis. Therefore,
empirical investigation and compilation must be followed by an evaluative selection.
Participation in this second process on the level of synepics III can only be permitted to those
modes of thought which are mutually tolerant and “willing to learn”. Hence, on the level of
synepics III there are is-(meta)concepts, and ought-(meta-)concepts. This dichotomical
nature of the meta-concepts raises many issues, not all of which can be tackled and solved in
this book. The most salient ones are discussed, however incompletely, in connection with the
examples under a.. It is by virtue of these ought-concepts that synepics III is able to develop
models for cross-cultural coexistence and cooperation.

*By definition, cultural anthropology - and law us a part of culture – works empirically, that
is, from observation of observable persons and things up to generalizations. It does not work
down from models towards what is called reality. This is the main difference between cultural
anthropology as it is treated in this book and philosophical anthropology. Philosophical
anthropology stands here for any top-down consideration of whether life as it is fits pre-
conceived models, while the models may have been developed from philosophy proper,
theology, pedagogy, (Durkheimian) sociology, or any other normative science. Jerry D. Moore
(2004, 313, and more or less throughout his book on “Visions of Culture”) discusses the issue
of whether anthropology searches for patterns and models of human existence in order to
compare these patterns and models to what ethnography uncovers, or is to build flexible
generalizations from unbiased observation. The point made in the present book is that the
limitations of one’s own experience and the practical dangers of ethnocentrism compel the
anthropologist to opt for the latter view.

The issue is connected with what elsewhere has been called the upper and the lower
hermeneutical points of return (W. Fikentscher 1977 - Methoden, vol. 4 -, 185 – 202, 387 –
389): A model is always preliminary. It is a generalization, a frame. As such it is something to
draw interpolations from. From interpolating a model called the Chemical Chart Mendelejeff
drew the prediction of chemical elements not yet discovered. From the model of compound-
forming, Kekulé inferred the benzole ring and opened the door to organic chemistry. The
existence of planets could be predicted from the model of solar system. Both Mendelejeff and
Kekulé started from empiricism and stepped forward to generalizations and from there to a
model as a frame for solving further issues of detail. Now, can the model be too general for
doing so? Inversely, can empirical observation be too specific? There must be an “upper”
point of return on the way “up” from empiricism to the generality of a model, and a “lower”
point of return on the way from the model “down” to the discoveries of new specifics. A
model lives from setting something “ceteris paribus” (such as the neglect of time in price
theory). If too much is set “ceteris paribus”, the model is too wide, too general, and thus useless. If the findings of new insights in the applicability of a model empirically become too little aware of “paribus”, i.e. of things that ought to be treated alike, the model works but produces unnessary differentiations.*

d. The generalization taking place on the level of synepeics III so as to arrive at metaconcepts comes at a price. A system or order is won, but duality in the sense of synepeics II is lost. Likewise, the openness for topical, serial and intuitive thinking decreases. A system, built on a hypothesis and therefore by definition open (in contrast to the closedness of cybernetic circles) is still always a prison. Its walls are defined by the scope of the hypothesis which is drawn from the inferences from empirical data. Dual, topical, serial, intuitive and possibly more kinds of cognition are of even wider scope, but not usable for metaconcepts. This limitation of comparative thinking should clearly be seen.

4. Synepeical strategies (“Synepeics IV”)

The preceding sections were an exposition of a modern concept of modes of thought going beyond the dichotomical model of “primitive” vs. “modern” mind thus far used in anthropology. It attempts to show the existing and conceivable variety of the modes of thought, their comparability, and their core of common denominators. It follows from the foregoing that ethnocentric thinking is not the proper approach to that variety. It also follows that thought-modal intolerance occurs whenever synepeics I is isolated and cut off from synepeics II and III. Once synepeics II and III are included in the cross-cultural comparison, a specific (and possibly intolerant) mode of thought is reduced to its proper dimension as merely one of many. To examine the intolerant modes of thought within the formats of synepeics I, II and III exposes the irrelevance of their participation in, and their exclusion from contribution to, the common core of denominators which underlies the conceptuality of synepeics III.

This reduction also touches upon issues of policy. Utilizing the mitigating effect of cross-cultural comparison in the field of cultures and their undelying modes of thought means doing something with them. This “doing something” may be called “synepeics IV”: it is a strategy using steps I, II and III of synepeics. Moving to synepeics IV means leaving behind anthropological analyses and creating different responsibilities since practical politics, including legal, economical, social, and “high” politics, are all involved. Synepeics IV is, in the modes of thought, what in general anthropological terms is called “applied anthropology”. Three “applications” of synepeics IV will briefly be discussed: (a) legalistic proposals for a “better world order”, (b) modes of thought and Third World development and conservation, and (c) Western v. Eastern tolerance.

The approach to cross-cultural tolerance competes with other, more formal and legalistic approaches, which exist in great numbers and variance. Some of such approaches advocate plans to reorganize the United Nations Organization, or to create or remodel other international bodies. Using synepeia analysis for political ends (in the widest sense) opens up two different, even opposing, lines of strategy. One line may be called the “development line”, which focuses on possible modification and change of modes of thought in political, economic, legal, and other regards.

Another line of strategy is probably more important: it concerns the opposites of development and conservation. It has already been noted that synepeics call for inalienable rights or protected legal positions for individuals, ethnic groups, peoples, cultures and also for “participants” in modes of thought. With regard to the modes of thought, these rights aim at the conservation of thought-modal plurality and complexity. Shielding the small and “unimportant” one from being “modernized” and “developed” is an issue of synepeics III
which seems to keep her or him in a state of “poverty” and “backwardness” but grants him the benefits of his traditions and accustomed life. Societal antitrust, developmental antitrust (Fikentscher 1984 a, b), and decentralization (in the undistorted, non-Marxist sense) are some key words for this indispensable conservationist elements of “development aid” that has to be weighed against “modernization”.

Every mode of thought has its specific problems and deficiencies which cannot easily be cured by borrowing elements from other modes of thought, just as the “world hypotheses”, described by Stephen C. Pepper, all have their cognitive shortcomings and yet exclude each other to such a degree that they cannot properly be combined. The same way that for the early Christian scholastics the Greek-Roman rational mind was a stumbling block (which Christianity never overcame), Eastern tolerance is an obstacle for modern Christianity. Should Christianity try to integrate Eastern tolerance (which has its roots in the very un-Christian mode of thought of detachment)? Or should Christianity try to overcome Eastern tolerance, which it can do convincingly only in a tolerant manner? But how to overcome tolerance by tolerance? In theory, i.e., on the level of synepeics I, this makes no sense at all. After comparing Eastern and (alleged or intended) Christian tolerance (synepeics II), more “sense” can be found on the level of synepeics III: Christianity may exhort its followers to obey the commands of Christian tolerance, and at the same time to be of service to people believing in other tolerant modes of thought. This then is tolerance in terms of a common denominator (synepeics III). It may considerably change at least Christian attitudes towards Easterners (synepeics IV).

Often the distressing result of synepeics I is that the situation appears seemingly hopeless, that the culture under consideration is simply unable to produce the result which from an economic, political, humanitarian or other point of view appears mandatory. But it would not correspond with the spirit of synepeics to end by saying that a certain culture, or a certain human being, is a hopeless case. There is hope in synepeics III that the problem can be elevated to a metaconceptual treatment, and if this can be done there is always hope for a strategy in terms of the modes of thought; i.e., for a solution within the framework of synepeics IV. Culture change may have a curing effect, and synepeia analysis may open the door to a discussion about the curing or detrimental elements of culture change.

VI. Synepeia analysis compared with other analyses, and a summary

The synepeical method is able to assign to folk-analysis its appropriate place, and to go beyond it in order to compare cultures. In doing so, synepeics avoid the need to call western science the only “analytical” one. For synepeics, western thinking remains “emic”. Thus, synepeics avoid the identification of “Western” = etic = analytical. Instead of distinguishing between emic and etic, synepeics call for consequential thinking in all “emic” situations including the western way of reasoning. Instead of opposing “etic” to “emic”, synepeics call for a comparative treatment of “emics” to be built upon metaconcepts and metathinking. For synepeics, it is not consequential to oppose “emic” and “etic” because both belong to different levels of reasoning, theory and metatheory, and because it is incorrect to measure theory by metatheoretical standards. “Meta-”, instead of “western” (concealed as “etic”), this is all the difference. Of necessity, there is little ethnocentricity in metatheory, because of its source in the comparison of more than one entity. By contrast, “etic” means “analytic” in a western-ethnocentric sense.

Still, “emic – etic” has become a shorthand expression among ethnologists and anthropologists in order to distinguish the inside from the outside view. Synepeics teach that
the outside view requires a meta-conceptuality and a meta-reasoning. If anyone is convinced, with Bohannan, Pospíšil, and the present writer that “etic” as it is used today is in reality “western” and therefore just another “emic”, and that comparison implies a metatheory, one could still use the term “etic”: for the work that is done on the level of synepeics III. This redefinition of “etic” – as a shorthand term – as being identical with synepeics III could save the term and give it a totally new meaning. A complete anthropological analysis should proceed from componential to correlational and from there to synepeical analysis in order to obtain comparative results. When we investigated the common law of Native American tribes, we tried to follow this path (Cooter and Fikentscher 1998a,b; a similar study on Native American code law appears in 2008). For teaching the anthropology of law, the three analyses – applied in the above order – offer invaluable support. Ethnocentrism is given no chance any more to be taken seriously, and still comparative work is possible. A sketch of method in componential, correlational, and synepeia analysis shows:

Ethnocentrism claims that other cultures can only be regarded by using one’s own categories and ways of understanding. This need not be the result of one’s own sense of superiority. It can also be the result of a sense of frustration, of the apparent difficulty of entering the mind of a participant of another culture. Max Gluckman traced the common law concept of “reasonable man” in Barotse legal culture, and in Somalia the UN peace keeping force (vainly) tried to bring the clans to a round table of discussion. Less confident ethnocentrists do not even try to understand a foreign culture by making the point that every attempt at comparison conflicts with the impossibility of one culture understanding the other. The Dutch School of Leyden anthropologists is quoted to this effect (C. van Vollenhoven: het oosterse oosters te zien). Melville Herskovits and Jerome Bruner have expressed similar doubts.

This position generates a restriction of anthropological study in general, that is, to a serious obstacle to learning what Paul Bohannan has called the „folk-ways“ in „folk terms“. It leads in final consequence to cultural relativism (Melville Herskovits). To overcome mere ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, the linguist Kenneth Pike taught that any culture can be viewed from inside - the „emic“ way - and with the tools of scientific analysis from the outside - in the „etic“ manner. A lively inside - outside debate ensued (see the summary by Headland et al.) until Leopold Pospíšil convincingly remarked in 1978 that the „etic“ analysis does not describe an objective, quasi world-wide scientific approach to any culture from the outside, but indicates a Western approach of dichotomizing and systematizing: Etic is just another emic, namely the western way of forming concepts and reasoning with them.

Thus, the debate was thrown back to Herskovits’ „utter relativism“ (Stephen C. Pepper). Pospíšil himself proposed a pragmatic, comparative trial and error step-by-step method. In an earlier book „Modes of Thought“ (1995/2004) I tried to develop a more satisfying method of cross-cultural understanding. This method is called synepeia analysis, derived from Greek „synepeia“= consequence. The gist of synepeia analysis is: Stay in the mode of thought which you happen to have chosen; do not mix up the modes of thought which underlie the cultures; but try to define metatheoretical concepts and value judgments, and again with consequence stay on that metalevel of reasoning. This enables you to analyze modes of thought, and cultures. Synepeia analysis when applied to a chosen mode of thought is able to explain another culture and compare it to other cultures. For example, if one is to examine any cross-cultural issue, such as xenophobia, or tourism, or ebonics, three steps of reasoning are required, and a fourth step may be added if desirable:
Synepeics I: It deals with a specific culture in terms of Kenneth Pike’s “emic”, or Bohannan’s “folk-ways”, and thus attempts to understand that culture, or any of its traits, from within, according to its own terms. Here the classical “Yale Ethnography” of the Sixties (Ward Goodenough, Floyd Lounsbury, Harold Conklin and others) is still the best method. It is called componential analysis, and essentially consists in itself of five propositions:

1. Ascertaining the denotata, that is, learning how a plant, a disease, a member of the family is called in a given cultural setting,
2. Collecting these denotata through simple compilation,
3. Classifying these compilations in folk terms,
4. Specifying the denotata within their folk classes, and
5. looking for the reasons, again in folk terms, for such specifications.

The componential analysis works for cultural traits that are of descriptive nature. It does not work for evaluations (Pospíšil), as in the case of a legal conclusion.

In order to make componential analysis applicable to normative thinking, too, one needs to remember that normative thinking relies on rules. A rule consists of a set of requirements, and a sanction in abstracto. The requirements are being applied to the bits and pieces of real life, if met, the sanction in abstracto follows, and from it the enforceable change in the real world is to be derived. All four constituent parts of rule application - the facts, the requirements, and the sanctions in abstracto and in concreto, need be subjected to componential analysis because they may be culture-specific. This sometimes cumbersome procedure is called correlational analysis because its main factor are the legal correlates of the facts of the case.

Componentional and correlational analyses of the themes of another culture exclusively concern that other culture. This means, every proposition is being made in folks terms, in the emic view of a single, specific culture. Any conclusion to be drawn so far has to stay, in a consequential manner, within that folkway (for example, don’t count on damages for pain and suffering in a Native American tribal court; or: don’t expect interest-taking in Islam, etc.). The same applies to any other culture..

However, comparison of cultures - a prerequisite to any form of their cooperation, or getting along with one another - has to look at more than one culture. Therefore, it is correct to say that the study of one culture with the aid of componential and correlational analysis constitute the first step of such comparison - or synepeics I.

The next step - synepeics II - consists of discovering the other. For every primal society it must have been a shock, or a wondrous and menacing discovery, that there are others who speak differently. Bandelier has described this for the Keresan Pueblo. Discovery of another causes dualist thinking. „Me and the Other“ is the dualist formula, not yet the plural „We All“. Historical linguistics teach us that that the dual is the older form of designating „more than one“, than the plural.

Thirdly, once the plural is discovered, the multitude of different cultures, every such culture finds itself confronted with an important decision: leave it at dualist bilateralism, or start comparison - synepeics III. Not every primal culture engages in comparison, and some who know what comparing means, place it under a taboo, such as most Pueblos. If comparison is accepted, metaconcepts such as time, space, pain and suffering, risk and risk management, color, weather, and family and leadership become conceivable and have to be created. If used, such metaconcepts again may only be used consequentially for meta-reasoning. If one were to mix up folkway and meta-reasoning, costly cultural blunders occur. To illustrate, for
Mostar, and probably also Sarajewo, a city government cannot be based on the concept of organization - it cannot be organized - because it is un-Islamic to have an organization. A metaconcept of ordered society is needed that pays due respect to the horizontality of the Muslimic ummah, to Orthodox verticalism, and Roman-Catholic blend of conciliarism and hierarchy. Humanitarian relief to Somalia requires to stay outside of the segmented society (Evans-Pritchard) of partly primal, partly Muslimic clans.

The examples lead us into synepeics IV, which is the applied anthropology of synepeical analysis. On the search for cross-cultural cooperation, synepeia analysis is a rather skeptical method which, with considerable certainty, teaches what from a point of consequent thinking surely cannot be achieved. On the positive side, it calls for consequential reasoning in folk- and comparative terms respectively. It clearly distinguishes between concluding 1) within a specific culture, and 2) on a metalevel. On both levels, it distinguishes between description and strategy.

VII. Bibliography


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