

On Responsibility and Humanity: Calling a Colleague to Account

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interdependence of logiorational and archetypic thinking is treated in the text.

2. Do I think it possible that "change in the social form of people's life as a result of 'social cooperation' will open to mankind such perspectives as will make Jung's religious therapy look like sorcery"? That is to say, can socialism become an integrative symbolic framework, fully replacing an integrative, archetypic symbolic structure? Definitely not in itself. It cannot be imposed by logiorational means alone. It must come as a result of a new archetypically founded synthesis, as the organic ingredient of a new "culture"—in which case Jung's "religious therapy" is no longer needed, because it has come to pass.

3. Does myth contain the same kind of truth as a scientific thesis? Definitely not. A myth gives an all-encompassing view of the known universe, whereas a scientific truth gives only a quantified description of a detail of the environment.

4. Is there any "basis" for religious belief? Is there no fundamental difference between "truth" and "delusion"? That is to say, in what relation does "religious truth" stand to objective reality, and is the relation the same as for "scientific truth"? These questions cannot be answered without taking refuge in a belief in the absoluteness of scientific or of religious "truth." My paper analysed archetypic symbolic frameworks from the point of view of their origin and biological usefulness (function).

5. Do I consider that my theoretical position is also neutral in reference to its correspondence to the "objective content" of the subject treated? Definitely not. However, I can only express hope that it is closer to "objective truth" than others.

6. What symbols do correspond with environmental phenomena? Only archetypic symbols, which constitute a fusion of engrams with perceptions (projection); see my paper.

7. Is religion still relevant? "Relevance" is not the question. The question is, How does the human nervous system work? Does it still show the phenomenon of religious experience or, in a wider sense, archetypic experience? Of course it does.

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The crisis of anthropology (cf. Hymes 1972) today can hardly arise from any irrelevance of comparative knowledge of cultures and societies to man's contemporary situation. To my understanding, it arises rather from our relative failure to transform anthropology from a rich man's hobby to a concerned human discipline. Anthropology needs the discipline of rigorous intellectual standards and an informed, critical attitude to all aspects of one's own and others' work. It must be human in recognizing the social and cultural construction of reality while yet seeking intercultural translatability and universality in participation. It must be concerned in its striving to transcend complacent tolerance and value-freedom to create deeper understanding of the human condition. Since our steps are still so uncertain in these directions, we cannot allow many serious mistakes in the profession, and must be highly critical of ourselves and others. In our common interest I therefore feel we are justified to demand full accountability of each other. I am moved to react by a recent and highly successful book—*The Mountain People*, by Colin M. Turnbull—since I feel it exhibits a number of anthropological difficulties and failings in such a crass form that it deserves both

to be sanctioned and to be held up as a warning to us all.

Let me make some of my premises more clear. The pursuit of research in social and cultural anthropology entails circumstances of fieldwork and analysis which are rather special, and which therefore require special ethics and competences both of professional and personal kinds.

1. We *impose* ourselves unasked and in many ways incompletely perceived on other people in other countries and societies. There are no standards in those worlds for the intellectual and moral operation of making an anthropological study; and as "marginal natives" we are free of many of the constraints of society—both ours and theirs. This entails that we ourselves set the standards and impose the constraints, and that we carry full responsibility for what happens.

2. We legitimize—and finance—our activity as *research*, perhaps even with a vague promise of applied usefulness. In so doing, we surely commit ourselves to certain standards of intellectual integrity and competence, and objectivity, by which our work should be judged and used by others.

3. We use *ourselves* as a research tool in participant observation: our intuition, our charm, our emotions, and our abilities. For this reason we are particularly dependent on our own self-awareness and understanding, and we can not afford to lose our judgement without noticing.

Turnbull's description of himself and the Ik mountain people of northern Uganda gives the impression of seeking to be self-consciously honest and concerned with most of the difficulties I have mentioned. My judgement is nonetheless that his book fails on all these points. Though presented as a popular account, it reveals itself as poor anthropology in method, in data, and in reasoning. It is emotionally either dishonest or superficial. It is deeply misleading to the public it sets out to inform. Most disturbingly, it is grossly irresponsible and harmful to its unwitting objects of study.

To give a key to some of my indignation, let me illustrate how named Ik are exposed in the anthropologist's text. Their illegal activities are publicized to anyone who bothers to read the book: named persons are accused of cattle theft or fencing stolen cattle (p. 110); the location of corrals for such purposes is given (p. 278); photographs are provided showing named persons forging forbidden spears or engaged in illegal poaching (facing p. 128). Perhaps the anthropologist trusts that the authorities (referred to as "Obote's specially trained thugs," p. 108) will be ineffective in utilizing such information. But what can justify letting an illiterate family live forever in the libraries of the West in the following description (pp. 122–23)?

Atum's family seemed more fly-ridden than most, although he and his brother Yakuma kept themselves reasonably clean and fly-free. Bila was always crawling with them, as was her ill-tempered and mean little daughter, Nialetcha. Nialetcha, being over three, no longer lived in the house, however, so possibly had fewer lice. Yakuma's wife, Matsui, I would probably have liked if I had been able to stand either the sight or the smell. Poor Matsui had eye sores, and the flies were constantly at them and had of course enlarged them and had gradually, in this way, eaten away at the eyebrows and eyelashes. Her eyes offered such a tempting meal to the flies that there was never enough room, and they crawled all over her face. Matsui never seemed to think of brushing them away, and often when she opened her mouth in a smile of welcome the flies would crawl in and explore it. I do not think that Matsui had the least idea that there was anything wrong with her. She was the mother of three sons and three daughters, two of whom were truly beautiful, all the more so, in my eyes, because they were the only people who seemed to share my opinion of their incredible younger brother, Lokwam, and who used to treat him much as he treated Adupa. It was one of the few real pleasures I had, listening to his shrieking

and yelling when they caught him and did whatever they did (for it was always out of sight behind their stockade) and then watching for him to come flying out of the *odok* holding his head and streaming with tears, while Kimimei and Lotukou laughed with happiness.

Ik persons are used in this way to provide material for a truly bizarre picture of a culture and a society. Let it be that they practice that "very early form of marriage, marriage by capture" (p. 126); that they terrify each other with accusations of sorcery (p. 180), although they have no knowledge of such things in their society (p. 202); that children pass through a series of *rites de passage* by which they autonomously organize their social groups (pp. 136–40); that children support themselves from the age of three (p. 135). More staggering, perhaps, this is a society without the institution of the family and one in which "they still insist on living in villages even though the villages have nothing that could be called a truly social structure, for they encompass no social life . . ." (p. 133). And the general public is here informed of an African society which offers us (pp. 236, 237)

an opportunity for testing the cherished notion that love is essential to survival. If it is, the Ik should have it. Whether it makes them or us any different from other animals is a matter of opinion, but I must confess that early during fieldwork I wrote back that I could not believe I was studying a human society; it was rather like looking at a singularly well-ordered community of baboons. This was meant to be insulting neither to the Ik nor to baboons. . . . I searched for evidence of love almost from the beginning. I found more of it in . . . two baby leopards than I did among the Ik.

In all this, Turnbull for some reason sees a spectre of the future of the West, a theme he develops in his last chapter to a level of sophistication where he agonizes in one paragraph about "what has become of the Western family" (p. 291), in the next about the decline of religion and the growth of the state where "the loud-mouthed anti-intellectual blabberings of heads of state and their assistants show as well as anything that we are well along on the Icen road" (p. 292), in the next about "the sorry state of society in the civilized world today" (p. 293). In conclusion (pp. 293–94):

Even supposing we can avert the disaster of nuclear holocaust or that of the almost universal famine that may be expected by the middle of the next century if population keeps expanding and pollution remains unchecked, what will be the cost, if not the same already paid by the Ik? They too were driven by the need to survive against seemingly invincible odds, and they succeeded, at the cost of their humanity.

This is what "the Ik teach us" (p. 294). Judging from the popular reviews, such philosophizing sounds authoritative and sells well to a public that searches for understanding.

What method is used to establish these sensational data and insights? Sometimes it is hard to say, as when we are told that "there is ample evidence in their language that they once held values which they no longer hold, that they understood by 'goodness' and 'happiness' something very different from what those words have come to mean now" (p. 287). But in other cases we can see the steps whereby the picture is built. One procedure is the classical error of imputing thoughts and motives: Describing how mothers handle infants, we learn how a mother "goes about her business, leaving the child [in the bush], almost hoping that some predator will come along and carry it away" (p. 136). We learn about "the splendid pastime of wifebeating, which, surprisingly, among the Ik follows a formal procedure: one of their rare formalities, but observed with diligence and exquisite pleasure" (p. 166). Of the informant who describes traditional custom for punishing adultery

we are told: "I *do* know that Atum enjoyed the vision as he conjured it up, and would doubtless have been first in line to throw his daughter on the fire had I suggested that the custom should be revived" (p. 181). The anthropologist's pathetic "empathy" is clearly exemplified, but not generalized, in the following passage (pp. 111-12):

I had been desperately looking for something that would warm me to these difficult people, some human trait that I could enjoy and share, and I had thought I had found one when I first started living in my house and I saw that every morning men and women spent a lot of time just over the edge of the descent into Kidepo, simply sitting and staring at that great and wonderful stretch of country as the sun came up behind Meraniang. I used to sit outside my stockade and enjoy the view with them until I found that all they were doing was combining their morning toilet with their first hopeful search for signs of food. Then I began noticing the odors, but I did not have the courage to say anything about it. At the same time, I was frustrated because here was one massive toilet on my doorstep. . . .

The indignation when it is apparent that the Ik do not suit Turnbull is pervasive (pp. 129-30):

I had seen no evidence of family life. . . . I had seen no sign of love. . . . I had seen things that made me want to cry, though as yet I had not cried, but I had never seen an Ik anywhere near tears or sorrow. . . . So it was with curious pleasure that I awoke one night to hear a distinct mournful wailing, such as heralds death. . . . I got up feeling better than I had for a long time, hoping that I was actually right that someone was actually crying over someone who had died. . . .

So in his preface he exercises his own compassion against the accepted premise that "most of us are unlikely to admit readily that we can sink as low as the Ik. . ." (p. 12).

How can a reputable anthropologist with previous extensive field experience get himself into such a mess? The book supplies clues in the form of a series of grotesque descriptions of scenes and events during fieldwork. The account we are given is a systematically false record of these events, since it depicts Turnbull alone in the field, handling his relations and judging the situations, whereas he was in fact throughout accompanied by the African medical doctor Joseph Towles,¹ "who shared much of the experience with me. . . . He does not appear in these pages because he has his own story to tell. . ." (p. 12). But I assume it is correct that the anthropologist from the very first let himself be the passive object of competition between self-appointed assistants (pp. 55-66); that his monotonous complaint about the Ik's begging and his continuous gifts to them correctly reflect an extensive use of (reluctant) gifts to buy rapport (e.g., p. 54); that he let himself be tricked into buying extensive supplies, which were immediately stolen from him (p. 57, 64-70); etc.

He then proceeded to hire a considerable number of the population he had come to study to be his workmen—some to build a road up to the point where he wished to have his house, some to build the house. This dislocation of the local work force of a starving population for several months finally resulted in the triumphal entry of the landrover (p. 95):

The car made it all right, with a bit of pushing here and there, though it nearly toppled over twice due to the sideways slant of the track. . . . When I breasted that last ridge up by Kauar's village and drove down to where my *boma* stood waiting for me, I felt that now everything was going to be all right. I drove in and they closed the wide entrance after me, piling thorn scrub up against it so that it was as impregnable as any other part

of the stockade. I could not see the view, of course, but then neither could I see the Ik, and even though they were the people I was meant to be studying and I had been there only three months or less, the privacy gave me intense pleasure.

The car inside its stockade turned out to be useful: "The constant rustling and cracking of twigs as the prier pried got so much on my nerves that I gave up eating outside or doing anything else in the courtyard, and used to shut myself up in the landrover again to cook my meals and eat them there" (p. 95).

Besides such bizarre behaviour, and general gullibility, the face which the anthropologist presented to the Ik seems strongly marked by the Bwana complex. One of the clearest expressions is found in his relationship to Kauar, who emerges from the description (pp. 88-89) as a true Uncle Tom, who

used to volunteer to make the long two-day walk into Kaabong and the even more tiring two-day climb back to get mail for me. . . . He was always pleased with himself when he came back, and asked if he had made the trip more quickly than the last time. . . . Then he used to sit and watch while I read the mail, studying the expression on my face to see if all was well. When we drank tea together he always took exactly the same number of teaspoons of sugar that I took, and helped himself to exactly the same number of biscuits, never more, never less.

When one day Kauar fell dead on his return marathon, Turnbull is indignant at the lack of compassion shown by the Ik, while "I still see his open, laughing face, see him giving precious tidbits to the children, comforting some child who was crying, and watching me read the letters he carried so lovingly for me. And I still think of him probably running up that viciously steep mountainside so that he could break his time record, and falling dead in his pathetic prime because he was starving" (p. 89).

Indeed, it was months before the anthropologist recognized that the population he lived among was in the process of starving to death. His statements about the character and distribution of starvation are characteristically contradictory (e.g., pp. 88-89, 123, 141). What does not seem in doubt is his own egocentric response to the situation: "I liked old Lolim. . . . I also liked his daughter, Nangoli, who was almost as bald as he was, and who was on several occasions a true friend to me. . . . So. . . . I brought him a double ration that evening" (pp. 123-24). "There she lay, day and night, skin and bone, but still trying to flash those wonderful teeth in a smile. She also went on the list for my daily food rounds" (p. 126). With such capricious gifts he apparently expected to endear himself to the Ik. He also seems to feel he has set an example so he can be highly critical of a government relief operation arranged on the contrasting principle of equitable distribution based on census lists, because he "estimated that the records indicated a population about twenty percent in excess of the surviving population" (p. 282) and the scheme was thus "administered in a way that was little short of criminal [and] a waste of good government money" (pp. 281-82).

Naturally, the relationship that developed between the anthropologist and the Ik was as much a creation of the latter as of the former. Turnbull gives tantalizing glimpses only of this other party as partners to human interaction and not only as the objects of ponderous moralizing, ridicule, and defamation. At one point he involved himself very actively in pleading the cause of some Turkana who were illegally pasturing their cattle in Uganda. The Ik reaction to this effort (p. 111) was

laughter, that quite obviously, from the sideways glances and even open looks, was at my expense. I gathered it had something to do with my intervention on behalf of the Turkana. Atum did try to explain once, wiping the tears from his eyes. He asked

¹[This phrase was corrected by Barth to read ". . . he was much of the time accompanied by the young anthropologist Joseph Towles. . ." in a letter dated May 23, after the critique had been sent to Turnbull for possible reply.—EDITOR.]

me if I knew that, to start with, the Turkana had thought I was a government official, and I said yes. That brought laughter. And did I know that when they first led me down to their cattle camps some of them had wanted to kill me? I said I did not think that was so, and this brought lots of laughter. Then he said that I had helped them a lot and talked to the government for them and written letters for them, and what had I got out of that? When I said "nothing" the group just split its sides. "That," said Atum, "is what we are laughing at." And his clear blue eyes sparkled with pleasure.

To this same Atum, who seems to have been his main crutch and source of information, he developed a petty hate relation which blossoms through the text in passages such as "The unpleasantness of returning was somewhat alleviated by Atum's suffering on the way up the stony trail. Several times he slipped, which made Lojieri and me laugh, and he kept stopping to rest, clutching his back with both hands. In spite of the fact that I had already lost both big toenails, it was a pleasure to move rapidly ahead and leave Atum gasping behind . . ." (p. 216). Indeed, this quality in relations to people seems to be rather in tune with Ik culture, except that they practice it with a macabre self-irony in which Turnbull is lacking (pp. 204-5):

Lolim became ill and had to be protected while eating the food I gave him. Once I caught Lomongin stealing out of Lolim's tin mug while Lolim was eating. Lolim was crying, but did not have the strength to pull the mug away; all he could do was to hold on to the mug with one hand and convey as much of the food as possible from mug to mouth with the other. As soon as I appeared Lomongin reversed his actions and pretended he had been feeding Lolim, saying the old man was so blind he could not see where his mouth was to put the food. The old man had enough strength to retort, "At least, I didn't put it in yours!" at which they both rocked with laughter and held on to each other as though they were the closest of friends.

Unable to function in this kind of relationship, Turnbull remained the clumsy outsider till the very last—and blames the Ik for it. On one of his last days of fieldwork he nearly fell off a cliff for reasons which he claims looked contrived (p. 273):

"You took the wrong turning," said Atum, "you could have fallen over." For a moment his face was serious, almost cross, and I was warmed at his concern. Then I heard a muffled snort behind me and found Lojieri doubled up with laughter, at which Atum could control himself no longer, and laughed and slapped his side until his eyes just streamed with tears. "You don't like heights, do you?" he asked and, leaving the question unanswered, continued ahead, now leading the procession, still laughing. It is difficult to tell whether they would have laughed harder if I had fallen or would have felt deprived of future possibilities for fun.

On another occasion that same day they managed to lose me for nearly two hours. . . .

There will be many anthropologists who recognize undercurrents from some of their own emotions during less happy fieldworks in the reactions and attitudes which Turnbull gives free play in this book. What is frightening is how they distort his judgement, erode his integrity, and ultimately must have developed into a paranoid hate towards the people he lived among so that all genuine anthropological ballast is lost. In his own words: "For the individuals one can only feel infinite sorrow at what they have lost; hatred must be reserved for the so-called society they live in. . . . It is that survival machine that is the monster, not the Atums and Lojieris . . ." (p. 285). So, when asked for advice by the Uganda government on relocation of the Ik as a measure against their recurrent

famines, this *Iciebam*, "Friend of the Ik," has his moment of revenge and solemnly develops a final solution, a plan for systematic culturcide (pp. 283-84):

My suggestion was simple enough. It recognized that physical coercion would be necessary to relocate them, for they would never move of their own accord. They would have to be rounded up in something approaching a military operation. The terrain, although difficult, was not spacious, and a well-organized operation could have enclosed them and caught most of them before they could flee. Then they would have to be taken to parts of Uganda sufficiently remote for them not to be able to return to Northern Karimoja, for as long as they were within reach they would always try to return. The territory for relocation would have to be mountainous and capable of being worked productively. All this might have been acceptable except for the use of force, which would have put the government in a bad light if misreported, as it almost certainly would have been by the international press. But my last stipulation was doomed to rejection. In discussing the use of force I said that men, women, and children could be rounded up at random and should be dispersed throughout the country, in its mountainous regions, in small units of about ten. Age, sex, or kinship was immaterial. Such random grouping would do no violence to the family structure, but would, if anything, be beneficial, for it would complete the fragmentation already complete in all but their continued localization, and would compel their integration into the life of the communities to which they would be allocated. If kept in larger units, they might well be able to band together to work their magic around them wherever they went, perpetuating their survival system and perhaps corrupting still others. Whereas if dispersed in small groups, they would be forced to find their own individual ways, which would suit them temperamentally, and would quickly lose their language and with it their last sense of belonging to a world long gone beyond recall.

This culturcide plan, and the vituperation against the Ik, are advanced under the flimsy cover of a representation of present Ik culture and society as a recent, monstrous perversion developed under the stress of starvation. I do not doubt that hunger drove the Ik population to extremities, but very much doubt the conclusions as to future creative capacity which Turnbull draws from this. He himself makes the passing comparison to World War concentration camps (e.g., p. 236), without pursuing the thought either to deepen his compassion or qualify his prognosis. And surely, even had he been right, there would still be *no* justification for such a clandestine program of persecution.

Fortunately "Obote's specially trained thugs" had the humanity not even to take his suggestion seriously; so the powerless intellectual has only been able to use words, and through them in senseless ethnocentricity turn the tragedy of a whole people into a banal parable of himself and his understanding of his own society's problems. Yet in the world of men trafficking in words, surely this must be the ultimate in intellectual imperialism?

In my opening paragraphs I spoke about accountability. Where an anthropologist fails to practice the competences and ethics of our discipline in his relations to other societies and cultures, and evades the sanctions of those most concerned, it must be up to his colleagues to speak and act for those who are not given the right of self-defence. The blurb, however, quotes Desmond Morris ("beautifully observed and beautifully written"), Ashley Montagu ("the parallel with our own society is deadly . . . we would do well to read it"), and Carleton Coon ("a masterpiece . . . a magnificent if ghastly tale"). For the hygiene of our discipline and for our mutual instruction, I call on the Associates of CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY to take a different stand, and help clarify the ethical and practical issues this publication raises.