
Moberg, Mark. 2013. *Engaging Anthropological Theory. A Social and Political History*. London, New York: Routledge. 360 pp. Pb.: £24.99. ISBN: 9780415809160.

From the beginning of *Engaging Anthropological Theory*, Moberg directly addresses an audience of freshman students in a motivating way, conveying a strong sense of identification with the discipline. He gives a great deal of his own background information as well as other anthropologists' private lives, and shows how biographies and socialisations influence 'objective' ideas. As several examples from contemporary daily life in academia allow the reader a look behind the scenes, the reader becomes familiarised with the discipline's founders along the way.

The first chapter deals mainly with the history and philosophy of science. The influence of political forces in the creation of so-called "scientific" knowledge is at the very centre of this chapter. Moberg summarises the different assumptions about knowledge and its production with a focus on the ideas of empiricism advanced by Bacon, Hume, Kuhn, and Popper, while also touching upon linguistic relativity and the fallacy of objectivity. The author argues that knowledge/truth and its pursuit (research) proceeds within a given paradigm and political and emotional commitments to what one believes is important, thus raising questions about the independence of science. The way in which Moberg refers to himself makes for joyful and authentic reading and is a welcome change from the oft-used scientific third person narrative.

In the second chapter, Moberg continues to evaluate claims and critiques of knowledge about and the representation of human beings. He reinforces scepticism about the scientific status of the discipline first raised by the postmodernists and uses ethnographic examples (specifically, the disputes between Redfield and Lewis or Mead and Freeman) to make clear that personal biases, goals, identities, language proficiency and personal values can heavily influence what anthropologists do, see, and write. There are many more difficulties in anthropology than in the natural or laboratory sciences as the subject-object distinction is not strictly possible. Therefore, the author critically engages with several pitfalls and dangers of social research commenting on interviewer effects. He then outlines the dangers of cultural relativism and raises fundamental epistemological questions.

In the third chapter, Moberg turns to anthropology's prehistory, to 'perspectives on human difference that originated well before the formal origins of the discipline.' He begins with classical antiquity, from Xenophon over Pliny the Elder and moves to medieval models of physical difference, Ibn Khaldun in the Arab world, the Atlantic slave trade, and to Pope Paul III's *Sublimis dei*. Trans-oceanic voyages by Polo and Columbus, Christian missions and a growing evidence of cultural diversity that consequently developed are also taken into consideration. The author lays out the assumptions shared by Enlightenment philosophers that remain the basis of today's behavioural sciences. He describes the nature-nurture debate and how evolutionary theories and racial determinism have been changed, to finish with examining at length the founding sociologist Auguste Comte.

The fourth chapter is about Marx's systematic critique of industrial capitalism and social change. It reads like an introductory chapter to Marxist theory with a few examples relating to daily life. Moberg analyses the developments that Marx could not have foreseen and which eventually inhibited the revolution he had predicted. After depicting the social theory of dialectical materialism, he lays out the concept of hegemony heavily influenced by Antonio Gramsci.

In the fifth chapter, Moberg focuses on Durkheim, his "cult of the individual", and his rejection of economic determinism. Durkheim's thoughts on (anomic) suicide in relation to religious orientation are laid out and his ideas regarding society are compared to those of Marx, though Moberg makes clear that he does not believe in their explanatory power. He then turns to Weber and the Protestant work ethic. Moberg points to the danger of using the social theorist's categories and concepts as a motivating force they seek to explain. He argues that materialist and functionalist theories overlook human agency and subsequently discusses the theories of Giddens.

The following chapters address the role evolutionary theories of culture played in 19th century anthropology. Their focus is on the first self-identified anthropologists, Tylor and Morgan, and compares their ideas with those of Spencer and Darwin. Moberg briefly discusses (racist) "armchair theories" about unilinear evolution and Social Darwinism, which he argues, is a misnomer. The author explains why such ethnocentric paradigms were so pervasive in the Anglo-Saxon intellectual landscape. He then retells Boas' biography, his opposition to anthropological generalisations and discrimination of minorities (possibly due to his own background, being a Jew in Bismarck Germany and living as an immigrant in the U.S.) and continues with an account of Boas' students Wissler and Kroeber, Benedict and Mead. Moberg then contemplates Freud's influence on psychological anthropology and differing perspectives on (cultural) evolutionary models.

In the following chapters, the author critically reflects on British functionalism and the feud between the two major thinkers, Radcliff-Brown and Malinowski, then touches on Gluckmann, Goffmann, Bourdieu and Barth.

The twelfth chapter deals with more contemporary materialist and ecological approaches that are consistently linked back to the ideas of Harris and closes with a few words about political ecology. The next chapter is about theories that are related to idealist perspectives from the mid-to-late 20th century, specifically French structuralism (including Lévy-Strauss), symbolic or interpretive anthropology (mainly Geertz and Turner), and ethnoscience or cognitive anthropology.

The following chapter assesses the "project of modernity" and post-structuralism, or rather postmodern epistemologies, with a focus on Harvey and his thoughts on time-space compression.

The final chapter considers approaches from hermeneutics and deconstruction with a focus on the Foucauldian notion of knowledge as power. Moberg brings together postmodern claims about knowledge and the cultural representation of "the other". Postmodern sensitivity to voice, representation and power is a welcome corrective to traditional approaches and has moved cultural anthropologists towards more reflexivity.

The whole book brings the history of anthropological thought to life. It becomes clear from the very first page that this is not a typical theory textbook, as each chapter is peppered with the author's personal anecdotes and experiences. He manages to combine this with ethnographic snapshots from across the world, historical events, and socio-political developments, though mainly from a U.S. perspective. He confidently juggles with the thoughts of the "big thinkers" that have influenced anthropology. It is easy to follow his arguments as the language and structure is very clear and at the end of each chapter, he invites the reader to "quiz yourself" with true or false questions about the previous chapter. While Moberg offers detailed information about the intellectual ancestors of anthropology and most of his way of writing is engaging in fact, some sections are tiring when he gets lost in details, not to mention endnotes and additional digression in grey boxes, as if he wanted to bring in every single detail he knows. Without being condescending to an introductory audience, Moberg clearly and interestingly explains the big names and concepts, and imparts an understanding of fundamental ideas.

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