

# An Anthropology of the Subject

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Holographic Worldview in  
New Guinea and Its Meaning  
and Significance for the World  
of Anthropology

Roy Wagner

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the human constitution is automimetic, imitative of itself in language and representation, or in bodily and transbodily form, that facilitates both our ability to construe a perfect unity of part and whole and our inability to represent it.

In that respect the assertions of the physicist David Bohm, that the universe itself is holographic in its implicate structure, and of Karl Pribram, that the human brain is developed or operative in that way, would both substantiate and obviate one another. For if the universal structure of things were holographic, the brain, as part of it, would have to be as well, whereas a holographic brain would have to grasp the structure of things on its own principles. But if the human *subject* (singular or plural, social or individual) were constituted in this way, it would hardly seem to matter what part the brain or the universe played in it.

An absolute or perfectly realized holography would abolish the distinction between representation and reality, between the subjective thinking or knowing of things and their objective being. But if a rigorous scale invariance of this type, a copying so precise that it is no longer merely imitative, is impossible to replicate in its own terms without losing track of those terms, the limit set in this way serves to define instead the subject that is trying to represent it. The human hologram becomes an inadvertent self-representation of the species in consequence of this, just as the factors in a heuristic or "model" that are only there for the purpose of our understanding or familiarity become part of the "reality" it represents to us.

In this respect a projective hologram—what "holography" means to most people—presents a *mental* image of its subject. The holographic plate, which registers the interference pattern of two beams of coherent (parallel and unidirectional, nonradiating) light reflected from a single source makes parallax displacement an integral function of viewing that source. Seeing "around" it is part of seeing it. Every point on the object is registered at once on every point of the plate, and the imaginary quality of three-dimensional space is represented as a personal focal point existing outside of the observer. If tricks like metaphor provide the best evidence for why "meaning" does not happen in the brain, then the holographic staging of this illusion does the same for the brain's alleged "imaging," or cognition. It shows how a mental facility that could not work in that way might trick itself into thinking it does. The image is "mental," not because it imitates the three-dimensional profile of an object in the mind but because it imitates the impersonation that gives this effect, the three-dimensional profile of mind in the object.

## Where Is the Meaning in a Trope?

The acute problem faced in holography is that of configuring a relational schematic for a subject that is not relational at all. Any form of representation that can be conceived of mentally or projected physically for what an absolute *identity* of part and whole might be or mean results in a perfect scale model of the mistakes made in trying to represent that identity. But it is precisely because the holographic is *pragmatic* to our efforts to ascertain its reality in this way, know *what* we know of it, that it is easily accessible to our understanding. We all know exactly what it is and what it means *because* it is impossible to conceive or represent. It is the identity formed in a trope, whatever the words or conventional figures used to describe it, and whatever the classifications, analytic distinctions, or theories of what a trope is and how it works (e.g., what it "does") might be. So it is also the identity formed in *us*, as *subject*, witness, hearer, or speaker, as the human counterpart of the mistakes made in trying to represent it.

The project of trying to represent it is, for that reason, what I shall call an anthropology of the subject. From that standpoint it would not matter at all whether the representation was conceptualized mentally, "in the head," or graphically and figuratively, "in the world," for clearly each of these loci is dependent upon the other. If, in other words, one would understand the representational exercise in mathematical terms, as a fractal or other experiment with scale retention or self-scaling, the anthropological side of it would come down to a question of how we ourselves are formed as subjects. It would have to be the ways in which

The whole power of a trope of any kind—metaphor, metonym, synecdoche—lies in the identity it states, however it came to be stated. The identity is its own lesson and its own context; to turn it in any way into a *relation* it is necessary to invoke *other* identities and misconstrue them in the same way as one intends to do with the original. This is as much as to say that what the identity *is* and what it means is never recoverable by virtue of the very efforts made to recover it, that the meaning has already happened *as* the identity and that thereafter we “happen” to it as its “interpretation.” A metaphor is born of an attempt to get rid of metaphor, and it survives as the boundary condition of our inability to do so.

The identity formed in the “this is that” of trope is at once smaller than language—a convergent point—and coterminous with it, because it depends upon it. No language, no trope. The potential for meaningfulness expands as language contracts, but the identity so formed is not meaningful in itself. Or one could say that the identity exists where the meaning would be if it were possible to use words so acutely that they would no longer be part of the lexicon.

What we “construct” or imagine as a surrogate for identity is a self-imagined content, an exotic demonstration of what the identity might mean if it had a meaning. The irony (and the contagion) of invention of this sort is that it can only be carried through and completed through the making of identities that continue to exclude themselves from the discourse they motivate.

A verbal simulation of how the very same thing might be said without words, metaphor conceals the fact that this could not happen behind the words it uses to mask itself. I might, for example, state a metaphor of which I assume you will know the meaning, regardless of whether I may know it or not, and you respond with another assuming perhaps that I really knew what I said, without either of us necessarily getting the point of any of them. We could, indeed, exchange tropes in this way all day without either of us being responsible for the meaningful content of any of them, or content ourselves with a mild curiosity as to what the meanings might be like if anyone took the trouble to work them out. “What,” as a friend once archly put it, “if they gave a meaning and nobody came?”<sup>1</sup>

But if identities are the essence of the trope, the meaningfulness, or the exchange, it is difficult to imagine how or why a text or a conversation should take any other form. And it is difficult as well to escape the conclusion that “mind” is a similar postponement of content, a contin-

uation by other means of the contagion of trope, that mind sets up the field of its own abstract possibility just as metaphor does. Though we might think of the brain, with its awesome intricacy of neuroonic pathways and combinations, its divisions, cortices, centers of specialization, as the mind’s organism, the reverse is more nearly true. Mind is the organism of the brain, that which is necessary to build or think organism into it—create and substantiate the myth of neural “mechanism” that draws upon the brain’s complexity for its own credibility. It is as much a part of mind’s function to imagine a brain for itself as it is a part of brain’s functioning to imagine a mind for itself. Each projects the other as its responsible agency, just as with the parties to an exchange of tropes, and without either being the wiser or more responsible. Easily enough parodied (“of all the vital organs the brain is the only one self-conscious enough to believe itself thinking”) the mind-brain “system” provides, like dialogic modeling, a casuistry through which codependency becomes an idiom for self-containment.

Meaning’s indexing of itself, its testamentary self-referencing in the signs and conversations by which it might recognize itself, the organic realities and mental abstractions through which it would know or show itself to be “working,” would lose its whole utility and purpose if it were itself meaningful. There is, for this reason, no meaning in the trope, no thinking in the brain, no demonstration of how the meaningful might originate or operate that fits with the expectations we have set up for its description. The demonstration of meaning to itself is exotic to its own purpose and belongs to a strategy that has nothing else to do with the semiotic, the philosophical, psychological, or literary. It belongs to the *anthropology* of its subject, in a strategy that anthropologists have made familiar in naive understanding and observation.

The secret of the exotic demonstration, which is not exotic unless it is a demonstration and not a demonstration unless it is exotic, is that it must have this character for *all* subjects. It must be strange or foreign, even for those to whom it is most familiar. The facility to elucidate, surprise, educate by estrangement is not a matter of anthropological or indigenous “cultural” authority but a factor in its own right. This is what the analytical study of myth has made a myth of, what that of culture has acculturated, and what the idea of ritual has ritualized.

The classic response to the anthropologist’s query as to the meanings, the purpose, or even the “workings” of ritual is that they have been *forgotten*. “Our fathers died before they could tell us what this means” is what the Daribi people at Tiligi<sup>2</sup> told me about their *lobbu*

rite. The Barok people of New Ireland put the same general response in a different, perhaps more subtle, way: "The meaning cannot be put into words because words trick you; one can only witness the demonstration of the *pidik*." Their "heritage," if that is the word, is not one of remembered meanings, for they are best forgotten, but of remembered demonstrations, a chance to learn from one's mistakes.

The classic anthropological rejoinder to testaments of this sort is that the ritual (or the trope, the myth, the usage) is "performative" or "operative," that its significance or purpose or workings can only be experienced in the act of doing it. The problem with this answer, an "easy" one for all its apparent sophistication, is that doing or acting out something is no more an explanation of it than its experience is an understanding. The performance is not *about* the rite; the rite is about the performance. The performative or operative symbol is based on a confusion of trope with meaning or understanding and the glossing that is necessary to them, but there is no point where the performer is more mystified about these matters than during the performance itself. If the performer could only really *know* the rite in doing it, then what was remembered would be beside the point, and the anthropologist would emerge from the experience in no better shape than the indigenous performers. The same problem would beset *intention* as well; what one could not remember, one could not intend, given that intention and memory share the same description. Perhaps Victor Turner's sage observation about a Ndembu rite, that "we have in Chihamba the local expression of a universal human problem, that of expressing what cannot be thought, in view of thought's subjugation to essences," provides the best delineation of the problem.<sup>2</sup>

So if we take "demonstration" to mean anything an experientialist would intend as *doing* or performing the rite, or a structuralist or semi-otist as signifying it, "exotic" would mean the power of its strangeness. *What* is performed in it or how it operates is precisely the part that is obscure to its actors or witnesses, that belongs to no one. It does not so much belong in culture and theory, custom or its explanation, as it trades on the boundaries or limits that define them or define our interests in them. The "native" is not born to it, and the anthropologist is not foreign to it.

Peoples would not "have" their myths or rituals because the point of them *belonged* to them in some self-definitive way, but precisely because it did not, and rather scared or tested their living and thinking in familiar ways. Why compare or contrast cultures that are their own internal

contrasts and comparisons? Is not the very arbitrariness of a set of symbols or symbolic correspondences, their lack of "fit" with that which they stand for or represent, the thing that makes them memorable or applicable? If so, cultures would be differentiable, even definable as such, through the contrasts of their respective contrasts with one another. And the same would have to be true of languages, given that no language exists in a vacuum. What some have decried as difficulties or impossibilities of translation among languages could also be construed on the same grounds as motivation—the generation of necessary misinterpretations or "working misunderstandings."

As part of the discourse of differences that fuels and provokes them, English would not be a language but an attempt to articulate what French can say but with a drier wit, a cooler, more objective humor. French is not a language but an attempt to say what German does with fewer words, and fewer connections among them. German is not a language but an attempt to make the sentence self-sufficient,<sup>3</sup> to internalize its contrasts with other, exotic ways of saying things. Insofar as "national character traits" depend in an analogous way upon the contrasting of contrasts, and in a direct way upon the languages that articulate them, they develop an evidential basis through a similar generation of misunderstandings.

Just as the main point of a ritual must be forgotten for its exotic demonstration to "work" at all, "getting it by not getting it," so the reverse is true of language. Language must be *remembered*, and remembered whole, even to speak or hear it. It is only when this act of remembering is disguised, subsumed within some putative neurophysiological function ("accessing" language, for instance) that language itself can be treated as functional. It is *mnemonic*, remembered or rememberable on the basis of what is said in it, and which thus forms a part of the totality to which it belongs, just as the point of ritual is forgettable or forgotten on the basis of what is done in it.

But in neither case do we speak, hear, or act ritually in the way that these observations would suggest we do. We do not, in other words, pay attention directly to the "language" part of remembering—the definitions of the words, the structuring of phrases and sentences—any more than we are obliged to act out the wordless and self-effacing aspects of ritual. We hear words crash, or see them crash, in the expectation of other words, phrases, and whole statements yet to follow—words, phrases, and statements that are as yet unuttered or unread, and in fact may never occur in the conversation or text that follows. Yet it is

precisely this anticipatory copy, this imitation "in the head" of what the crashing of discourse *will have meant*, that is responsible for the whole shaping of meaning in it. The *imitation* of memory in meaning (what the words or actions "will have meant" by the time others, which may not be forthcoming, have taken their place) turns the whole ongoing flow of iteration into an inadvertent play of tropic formation, sets up the substitution of unexpected words or phrases for anticipated ones. Like a wheel in motion, at any given time exactly half its mass is moving backward to the direction of its forward movement, and at exactly the same velocity as the other half.

As the wheel is a single object, containing its coming and going, as it were, in a unitary motion, so one might speak of the imitation of memory in words, actions, or understandings that are only as yet anticipated as a trick of its temporal opposite. It "is," also and at the same time, a use of memory in the recollected shaping of words and their interconnections to imitate *anticipation*, what one means or intends to say or do when one has not yet done so. The full ambiguity of "meaning," as noted in the previous chapter, is more useful than it is precise, in that it contains each time—the "before" of as-yet unarticulated intentions and the "afterward" of articulating them—within the other, and as a function of it. Sense and signification, or, if you will, the nonlinear "feeling" of the world and the "linear" focusing that discriminates a temporal "before" and "after," are each encompassed within the other to a degree that makes any analytical separation of them both difficult and unnecessary.

Where the meaning may be in a trope, or in the tropelike ambiguity that language generates automatically in its use, is, like the question of what "trope" might be or when and how meaning happens to it, the function of a movement whose double encompassment eludes that kind of specificity. Both linear and nonlinear in the same movement, meaning incorporates its own pragmatic afterlife: it "means" the way it works and "works" the way it means. So the significance of trope and the ways in which that significance may "operate" or come about—the trope, as it were, of significance itself—are already in "operation" when one begins to think of trope and its consequences. They have nothing else to do with the means by which words might be used to recapture their content or semiotic effects, nor even with the ways in which human beings "interpret" or "construct" meanings. All interpretation is trope, and all trope is interpretation.

So it would only be when the double encompassment of feeling and articulation is most effective, closing its point of insight off from its re-

lations or connections to other things, that the issues of interpretation or exegesis would come into relevance. This form of understanding is always a self-relative and incomplete process, getting the point by not getting it, as in the telling or hearing of a joke. One copies an effect that has just copied one's thoughts, or thinks about an effect that one's thought has just copied in taking account of it, and the whole question of significance and therefore affect is locked into the uncertainty as to which came first. Did one "hear" what one expected to hear with the words for some alternative saying of it already on one's lips, or was one's mind so "taken" by what it was hearing that the intended topic has already become part of it? If uncertainty plays so large a role in the speaking or reading of tropes—given that uncertain "curiosity" carries so much of the interest in conversation or silent reading—then the reader or speaker takes on the personal role of the tropes themselves, and what is heard or printed is mere echo-effect, or perhaps echolocation for the personae lost in it. In that case one must pretend or invent a common ground of meaning or intent in order to fix a role for human agency—"I" and "thou" and therefore of course "I-thou"—in the discourse. Are the individual tropes, provided one might isolate them, only "there" or pretended to be there because of some (imaginable) larger trope that frames them, or is that larger, framing trope itself an unfixed supposition, actually moving in step with the specific examples that are chosen, one after another, in order to establish what the actual subject might be?

In either case it would seem that one is not so much dealing with a text and one's reading of it, or a conversation, as with a kind of immediate part-and-whole comparison, a holography of meaning in which language or rhetoric and personal participation play interchangeable roles. Does actual "language" and the styles and habits of its use actually miss the point every time, creating the need and also the opportunity for a continual shifting into tropes, wholly imaginary sidesteppings of what it would ordinarily mean? Or is it the other way around, so that the tropes "convey" or "represent" what is truly the point of it, and the reworking of "language" made to accommodate them is all the language one would ever know, or even need to know? (Does the beginning speech of small children *start with* tropes in order to elicit or deduce adult speech patterns?)

No wonder that some experts (notably Lakoff and Johnson, in *Metaphors We Live By*) can argue, and quite successfully, that the whole of what we call "language" is a set of congealed or conventionalized tropes, "frozen" into place by common usage or authority.<sup>4</sup> And no wonder the opposite of that might equally and with a similar skill be

shown to be true, that the metaphors that have congealed or "set" in that way are precisely the ones that significant discourse displaces or relocates in order to create its subject matter. It is only because both of these alternatives must be true and equipotential in discourse that either can be demonstrated (at the expense of the other) to be true, so that the holography of personal "subjects" and impersonal conventions is never *simply* linguistic, personal, experiential, subjective, or objective. It could not, therefore, accommodate to some sort of set or static, precognized or precognizable (e.g., "predictable") model at all, for its very holographic potential resides in the fact that it is a *moving* part-whole occlusion. By the same token, however, it is not *recoverable* either, in the sense of being able to recall personal or collective experiences exactly (as "constructions of reality," for instance), for the very effort of trying to remember what took place sets up a new and necessarily quite different version of its subject. Another milestone along the trajectory of the moving holography, and with the "personal" and "collective" components already taking different roles. "Recordings" of events are entirely different events, even though intentionality and memory share the same description, or perhaps because of that fact.

The problem of locating meaning in the trope, or trope itself in the "meaningfulness" of events, has that much in common with the problematic significance of human reincarnation. The problem is not that of the evidence, convincing or dubious as the case may be in either case, but of what that evidence might mean at a later stage of its holographic movement or motivation. The possibility that any of us might have "lived other lives" (disregarding the difficult question of what "parts" of one might have lived them) is so much beside the point of what those earlier lives might mean to us *now*, in *this* life, and according to present motivations (e.g., the standards for determining that one is now "in" a life distinctly different from a "past" one), that the valences of fantasy and reality are only marginally differentiable. In other words, to "reincarnate" oneself by "remembering when things were different" has so much in common with our ordinary twinning of ourselves in that way ("when I was a child," "when I lived in a different city") that the trope of the context (e.g., the "lived" scenario) is indistinguishable from the contextualizing of the tropes. The remembered and the remembering of it live such different lives that they might as well be two different people.

Fixing the personal subject in that way would be an alternative strategy (e.g., "content" versus "form") to the semiotic practice of defining

the sign values, functions, or agentive roles of signs and other conventions. If the cognitive and subjective formation of a world-in-the-person and the objective articulation of that "person" as personality, behavior, relationship in the world are co-dependent and co-relative variables, then the definitive formulation or "fixing" of one of them throws the other open to hazard and mystification. One could be very accurate and precise about the formal means—signs, iterations, and so forth—and then have to wonder about the "persons," their behaviors and perhaps "humanity." Or one could be very exacting, perhaps psychological, biological, biographical, about the "people" involved, even provoke a "humanistic" discourse, and have to wonder about the signs.

So the problem of locating meaning in the trope and tropes themselves in the meaningfulness of the human condition is not merely topical within the social sciences. It is the "contagiousness," the generic issue, of social science itself, inextricably compounded within its own subdivision and articulation of topics, approaches, and subject matters—its own tropes for the sorting out of tropes, its artificial "reincarnation" of other time periods and alternative styles of life and thought as personifications sensed secretly within our own. Once it has been set up in this way, "located" within the generic setting that defines social science inquiry itself, the problem becomes a very narrow one indeed, concerned only with how a very special set of people—the social scientists themselves—think, understand, and perhaps live their lives. When its subject is faced in the broadest possible parameters, in the holistic vision of a perfect scale model of the mistakes made in trying to figure out what it means, the prospect of a definitive understanding, a resolution, is confronted by its own shadow or doppelgänger, the nemesis of a moving holography that paces its every step.

So much for the subject, anthropological or professional, the self-conceived model of how "the natives" conceive of themselves and their worlds. What of the subject matter, the real *anthropology* of the subject, the human knowing of the human in it? How do peoples with no professional investment in science or humanism deal with the scale modeling of the mistakes made in trying to figure themselves out? Or, if objectivity is of any help in this, trying to figure out the world as it takes form within the person and the person as it takes its place socially, among its relations and relationships in the world?

For the Usen Barok people of New Ireland, as they have made clear to me, the location of meaningfulness is not a matter of making a better model of the world in the person or the person in the world. One

might think of their "take" on this as one of trying to extinguish the accumulation of errors that consistently moves the holography out of one's grasp. But they themselves call it the prospect of *irri lolas*, "finished power," "finishing all thought" *in* the person and *of* the person through the occasion of a socially created death. The ambiguity or double meaning of "finishing" (*irri*) as "ending" or "killing" and "perfection" or "completion" plays a single and singular role in this, actually a mutual encompassment of each sense of the term by the other.

For it is *sense* itself in its broadest and most comprehensive meaning (the grounding of rationality in its enabling empirical particulars or accidents, and the "accident" of reason itself) that forms the subject of its double encompassment. Not only the "sensing" of things that makes reason viable, but also the reasoning of things that makes sensing thinkable or tractable:

So possibly Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* might furnish the surest guide to extinguishing the moving holographic potential. Wittgenstein noted that "we picture facts to ourselves" (2.1)<sup>5</sup> and that "a proposition states something only in so far as it is a picture" (4.03).<sup>6</sup> Very wisely, he did not bother to say how or why, to what cognitive means or purpose, but only in effect that no theory or intuition, no general or specific schema or set of equations we might have for *anything at all* is any better than the imageries or other sensible means we might have for picturing, illustrating, or demonstrating its implications or consequences. Sense enables reason. But later in the same work Wittgenstein noted that "to be general means no more than to be accidentally valid for all things" (6.1231),<sup>7</sup> that the explicit articulation necessary for cognition itself (e.g., how we know *what* we know, or *that* we know)—the "sense" that is made of sensing—is itself accidental to the empirical reality it encompasses. Reason enables its own enabling.

So the facts that nothing "counts" as evidence for a subconscious—what it is or how it works—that has not been made conscious first, nothing exemplifies "the exotic" in any conclusive way that does not familiarize it, nothing demonstrates the form or content of a trope that does not literalize and disempower it, all follow from Wittgenstein's "finishing" of thought.

The "sense" that things make, directly and physically as perception or sensation and indirectly as the logical or reasoning sense made of that sensing, always threatens to lead a life of its own. Regardless of whether the threat is real or merely a consequence of our efforts to understand and control it (who could tell?), it is invariably presented in terms of the

"meaningfulness" of its control, knowledge, or redirection. Treating it as "natural," tracing it to biological, chemical, or electrochemical roots, or subdividing it into "modes" of sensing, like the visual, aural, tactile, olfactory, or kinesthetic, is no less a means of controlling it than seeking out its signature in language, logic, and social or cultural forms. Practical inventions and technology, applications of "energy," as well as everyday usages and utensils, aesthetic creations especially, represent overt demonstrations—*pidiks* to the Barok, "cultural rituals" to the anthropologist—of that control.

Hence despite the fact that the control is most often illusory, that we are used—even consumed—by the objects, ideas, and categories we claim to be using, or perhaps because of that fact, one thing is dead certain. That is that the control or articulation of sense emerges itself as an independent variable with a life of its own. It is the *difference* between the spontaneity of sense in vivifying (and threatening) its articulative control, and the life that control or articulation leads in its own right that the Barok "finishing of thought" undercuts, turning sense and reason into one and the same thing. So if meaning holds a kind of self-conscious fascination for Barok as government does for Americans, Will Rogers's astute observation about Americans and their government would apply to the Barok and their "meaningfulness" (and worldview) as well: that they are lucky enough not to get all of it that they pay for.

For it should be clear that the effort to comprehend, realize, and thus control a holographic world perspective is directly motivated (e.g., self-controlled) by the mistakes one must necessarily make in trying to figure out what it is or how it might "work." Given the obvious fact that an absolute identity or perfect mutual occlusion of part and whole is impossible to represent or realize, all the mistakes made, methodically and regularly, in the effort to achieve that unreal condition emerge as a perfect scale model of the schematic, the design or germinal motif, used to control them.

Translated back into the terms of this discussion, this means that the effort to control sense directly in this way, through a near-perfect scale modeling of the sensible features in the world around it, is itself controlled by the "meaningfulness" it generates in the course of so doing. Sense encompasses reason as reason encompasses sense; each of the twin imponderables, the free life of sense as it consumes the consumer, and the *déjà vu* pragmatic of culture, control's control over itself, is doubly encompassed within the other. More to the point of anthropology's subjective possibilities, it would be pointless, indeed "senseless," to at-

tempt to model a people's underdetermination of their own cultural features in terms of some extraneous schema of cultural, logical, or natural description. The moving holography that shadows our every move in locating a meaning in the trope and a trope in the meaningfulness of things is brought to a stillstand in the miniature that is formed in this way. Just try to describe it in other terms, and you will find it describing your efforts better than you can describe its doing so.

For everything that accords with the values of what we call "civilization," its cities and monumental architecture, its social classes and elaborate lifeways, its incredible technologies, mathematics, and self-expression in the control and knowledge of writing and speech, amounts to an overdetermination of the containment of sense by itself. But the Barok "social death," finishing all thought, does not begin with a set of precepts or propositions and develop them, as one might want to do in developing a heuristic for what their "culture" (as an analogue of civilization?) means to them, or how it could have evolved or come about. It *finishes them from the very beginning* and then gradually, like a symphony or a self-revelatory novel, brings participants into the full realization of what has happened to them, into the déjà vu of control's control of itself. Likewise, and by analogy, if there were a "story of Eve," a tale of how humanity was "finished" from the beginning of its days, its human hologram would have to be much simpler than the means we might use to uncover it. We would then *be*, and only gradually come to realize, our own double encompassment of reason by sense, and of sense by reason.

It is no accident that all compelling origin accounts begin with doom, a "big bang" that rips the universe asunder, original sin, sexual anger, or the stupefaction of the human image, entangling it in the Indra-net or worse. It is a necessary part of The Most Original Joke of All, that comes into gradual realization as the shape of human mortality, the design of the mistakes we make about ourselves in time, the desire, or simply and definitively human *wanting* of things that compels use. So the Barok *kaba*, the exotic demonstration of sense's encompassment in meaning and meaning's in sense, for all the fact that it is basic to and definitive of all social value and valuation, has no necessity to it at all. It need not be performed, being implicit in the very holography it encompasses, and when it is, very rarely and at great expense, it is only "because someone *wants* it, and for no other reason."

## A Sociality Reperceived

What would historical transformations—often enough invisible to those caught up in them—be like without the sense of the words used to understand them? Would natural processes like evolution or photosynthesis actually operate "in some other way" than the heuristics or working models used to explain or replicate them would suggest, and, if so, how might that way be described? Such questions lose their naïveté when applied to human social relations, which many anthropologists suppose to operate in *some* relation to the people's understanding of them. Although it is quite possible that this assumption itself may be skewed, that human relations could not possibly operate in the ways in which they are brought to light for the very fact of their being brought to light, the point is much simpler than that. Even when "the natives" are understood to model themselves, provide insights, concepts, and figures to illustrate their own viewpoint, and even when behavioral models are imposed to get the real facts behind the facts of this, all we are likely to get of it is some description of the descriptive process itself. Nature describes science to itself in this way, history explains historians to one another, culture creates its own anthropology in a very original sense.

Social structure or organization and the whole relational set of human interaction is directly meaningful and pragmatically necessary as an unavoidable contagion that affects actor and observer alike. It is real, viable, social, or structural insofar as it imitates interaction itself in its own articulation—the act or art of explaining it—and is therefore