

Continued discussion of Fabian

Compelling arguments

- Arguments given through lens of cultural biases
- Rare to have glimpse of ‘Other side’

- Madness is a social term
- Something inherently contradictory in the explorers’ project: they were trying to create scientific accounts, yet at the same time they were in Africa to serve colonial interests
- *Is it possible to engage in disinterested science?*
- There are always conflicting interests that shape the ways in which knowledge is produced
 - For example, recently in issues with California stem cell research, interests of money, legal issues, profitability shape how the research will be conducted, under what conditions
- Can science be interest-free?
 - MacArthur grant: historically given to projects concerned with defense, raising questions of what purposes the products of research could be used for.
- *Conditions of true knowledge – can there be true, unbiased, absolute knowledge?*
- Paradigm shift – is it possible to absorb 2 different modes of values, thinking in both simultaneously and instantaneously
- Ecstasis is a condition of possibility in order to have the conditions to produce true knowledge
- Objectivity: have to maintain certain distance between researcher and the object of study
- Methodology should be replicable and according to rational, scientific method
- Explorers’ project seen as a project to document natural history

What constitutes knowledge?

- Social Darwinism/social evolutionism: notion that there are levels of civilization as well as levels in capacity of thought
- Europeans used a variety of means to rationalize their claim to colonial projects and keep Europeans at the pinnacle
- Foucault: categorization of individuals constitute biopolitical exertion of power
- Can be seen in 19th and 20th century eugenics projects: a means to control the population
- Ideas that races can degenerate, but can be redeemed through education and selective breeding
- Racism: anthropometric measures used to establish racial and psychic unity of mankind – humans came from same stock
- Racist, racism – ways science and scientific method was used to follow politics and economics
- Symptomatic of how race was becoming more systematized (pg. 233, 219)

- Capacity for rational thought linked to questions of rationality, trying to establish that Africans needed colonial rule
- Cannibalism:
 - Example of cognitive dissonance that explorers felt – it was an onslaught of emotional experience that the explorers could not process
 - *What are the conditions of knowledge in the discourse about cannibals?*
- Issues in Identification and Recognition: Explorers could recognize geographies and topologies, but were not able to conceive of Africans as human (considered part of the land itself). Raises issues about cognition, memory, acknowledgement
 - Shows denial of similarities, retreat to stereotypes and prejudices
- *How much of their reports were efforts to protect their own identities and confirm their own superiority?*
- Objects of knowledge:
 - Vocabular, Objects, People.
 - Explorers considered all of these artifacts that could be collected, displayed
 - These were collected not only for the sake of science, but also as part of a race to create a commodity market for consumer goods
- Much of pre-colonial exploration devoted to establishing the moral right of the European countries to pursue colonial activities
- Victorian sensibilities, emphasis on propriety colored how explorers viewed the ‘Other’
- However, constant contact caused them to redefine their own sense of identity, as individuals and as a society. Ultimately stereotypes and prejudices reaffirmed European national identity
- Recap: role of stereotyping, how stereotypes are created and maintained. How things get more systematic in methodology and practice

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