

INTRODUCTORY THEMES

Theories of Technology and Culture

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1948. *Magic, Science and Religion*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, (pp. 17-35).

Bronislaw Malinowski was a British-trained anthropologist who did his most famous work in the Trobriand Islands, in the South Pacific. "Magic, Science, and Religion," from 1925, concerns his theories about how people think and reason about the world, both in the tribal societies he studied as well as his own.

So, his argument. What is it?

What are Malinowski's definitions of magic, science, and religion?

Magic

The attempt to control the natural world through human action; tradition-based, dependent on rituals, pragmatic.

Science

Empirical observation, based on a body of rules and conceptions and on experience; knowledge derived by logical inference (full definition on p. 34).

Religion

A confession of human impotence in certain matters

Magic and Religion are part of the SACRED, Science the PROFANE

What do you think of Malinowski's arguments? Definitions? What is TECHNOLOGY?

Hugh Gusterson. 1996. *Nuclear Weapons Testing: Scientific Experiment as Political Ritual*. In *Naked Science: Anthropological Inquiry into Boundaries, Power, and Knowledge*. Laura Nader, ed. New York: Routledge, (pp. 131-147).

Hugh Gusterson is an anthropologist who, in the 1980s, studied not a fishing-and-gathering tribe in the South Pacific, but nuclear weapons scientists in Northern California, at Lawrence Livermore Labs.

At the end of his article, he says he is arguing the "complementary converse" of such traditional anthropologists as Malinowski.

What does Gusterson mean?

1. production of nuclear weapons
2. production of weapons scientists
3. social reproduction of ideology of nuclear deterrence

What is technology and what is culture?

“Nuclear tests, as well as being scientific experiments, are cultural processes — [rituals] — that reproduce weapons scientists as persons and enable weapons scientists to play with, maybe even resolve, core issues in their technological world” (p. 138).

Maybe we should get clear on what the ritual IS first. What does Gusterson tell us?

What does the ritual of nuclear testing DO?

What does ritual do for...

Social reproduction of ideology of nuclear deterrence (#3 above)?

life and death; sexual, reproductive, gendered imagery (bombs as babies; potent bombs as “boys”; duds as “girls”). What does this imagery do?

Can you apply this to nuclear weapons scientists?

Is a nuclear weapons test magic, science, religion? How?

Marx, Karl. 1867. The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret. In *Capital*, vol. 1. Translated from the German by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin, 1976, (pp. 163-177).

What is a fetish?

Now, where does this “life” in commodities come from for Marx?

A commodity has a dual value — use-value and exchange-value.

A thing's use-value is what it's good for in human life

A thing's exchange-value is its market or monetary value, its price.

Labor itself has become a commodity, and can be assigned an exchange-value, the WAGE.

The effect of this *mystification*

So, for Marx, commodities have become fetishes because of these social relations of labor.

the capitalist can extract use-value from laborer in a way that is not reciprocal.

Film excerpt: *The Matrix*

Can you analyze this segment of the film using Marx? Use-value? Exchange-value? Alienation? Fetish?

For next time:

Write a paragraph about connections between the arguments of Marx and Martin.