

Foreword

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An Introduction to a Dream

Derek Freeman chose the title *Dilthey's Dream* for this collection of essays and in the first essay of the volume, 'Human Nature and Culture', he explains the significance of this choice of titles. Dilthey's dream offers a vivid metaphor for the fundamental fissure, which had begun to develop in the 19th century, between naturalist and idealist modes of inquiry in the human sciences. Throughout the 20th century, this fissure has become a widening gulf and it was to bridge this gulf that Freeman devoted much of his research career.

In the six elegant essays that comprise this volume, Freeman offers critical arguments for an alternative — 'interactionist' — paradigm for social inquiry. Written at intervals over a period of more than 30 years, these essays — each of which was delivered as a public lecture — mark the progressive articulation of his thinking and his attempt to give an intellectual context to his ideas. The paradigm that he sets forth is intended to constitute a new 'science of human values' firmly grounded in an evolutionary understanding of human nature but recognising individuals' capacities for choice and the consequences of these choices for the adaptive diversity of the human species.

At the time when he began to develop his ideas, Freeman was a lone voice in Australian anthropology arguing for the vigorous engagement of anthropology with the biological sciences. His starting point was a rejection of what he regarded as a dominant 'culturalist' perspective, which he ascribed to Franz Boas's influence on American anthropology. It is important to recognise that the critical first essay in this volume was written in 1969. It contains, in embryo, many of the ideas Freeman was

to develop over the next 30 years. There is thus a remarkable intellectual consistency in the critique of Boas's cultural determinism in the first essay of the volume and his historical analysis of the influence of 'Boasian culturalism' in the final essay.

Those readers who are chiefly familiar with Freeman because of the controversy that arose through his criticism of Margaret Mead's research on Samoa may not fully appreciate that, from the outset, Freeman's primary focus was always directed to the ideas of her teacher, Franz Boas. Freeman saw Mead's first youthful monograph, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, as a key text in support of Boas's cultural perspective and his refutation of its claims was the means of undermining such ideas. The essays in this volume thus make clear the intellectual issues that Freeman saw as central to his critical efforts.

An Intellectual Journey from Samoa to Samoa

It was in 1938, while Freeman was a student at Victoria University College in Wellington, that he became acquainted with Mead's research on Samoa. Ernest Beaglehole, who had studied anthropology at Yale University, recommended that Freeman read *Coming of Age in Samoa*. A year later Freeman applied for a position as a teacher in Western Samoa. His intention, as he has described it, was 'to support Mead's already celebrated findings' with research of his own. He was thus, at an early age, an unquestioning supporter of the Boasian traditions of cultural anthropology.

By April 1940, he had arrived in Apia to take up his assignment and he remained on Samoa until November 1943. As a local schoolteacher, Freeman immersed himself in the study of the Samoan language and, after two years, he decided that he had sufficient fluency to undertake more intensive anthropological research. He chose to do research on the local polity of Sa'anapu, a settlement at the time of some 400 inhabitants.

In 1942, in Sa'anapu, Freeman came to know the senior chief, Lauvi Vainu'u, and his youngest son, Fa'imoto. When Fa'imoto died suddenly, Lauvi made Freeman his adopted son and invited him to reside within

his house. Later in 1943, the chiefs of Sa'anapu conferred upon him one of their titles, Logona-i-Taga, giving him the right to attend all chiefly assemblies.

Less than a year into his local research on Samoan social life, Freeman decided to leave Sa'anapu to join the New Zealand Volunteer Naval Reserve. Although he visited Samoa briefly in 1946, he did not return to resume his anthropological research in Sa'anapu until 1968.

During the intervening 25 years, Freeman established himself as a notable ethnographer and an important figure in social anthropology. In 1948, on the basis of a thesis, *The Social Structure of a Samoan Village Community*, Freeman was awarded a postgraduate Diploma in Anthropology from the University of London and was then given the opportunity to do fieldwork among the Iban of Sarawak. Between 1951 and 1953, based on this research in Sarawak from January 1949 to June 1951, Freeman produced both a major study, *Report on the Iban*, for the Government of Sarawak and his PhD dissertation, *Family and Kin among the Iban of Sarawak*, for Cambridge University. In July 1954, he was appointed a Senior Fellow in Anthropology in the Research School of Pacific Studies at The Australian National University. He remained in the Department of Anthropology throughout his career.

During the 1950s, Freeman's work was preoccupied with issues of kinship and social organisation. His ethnographic researches on the Iban were exceptional for their detail and their insights. *Report on the Iban* was reprinted in 1970 in the London School of Economics Monographs in Social Anthropology as a modern-day classic in social anthropology.

By the early 1960s, however, Freeman had begun to question the narrow basis of the anthropological methods and theory he had been taught and turned from the study of rules and structures to an exploration of psychoanalysis, ethology and evolutionary biology. He became acquainted with the ideas of Karl Popper with whom he established a long correspondence. Following this change in research directions, Freeman took leave from ANU in 1963 to study at the London Institute of Psychoanalysis. He attended seminars at the Tavistock Clinic given by John Bowlby and travelled to Germany to consult with Konrad Lorenz and I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt about his plans for research in human ethology. During this period, Freeman began to envision the possibilities of a new biologically attuned science of human values.

On the return voyage to Australia in 1964 Freeman re-read, after many years, Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* and, with new awareness, recognised the book's relativist premises and its lack of any biological understanding of adolescent behaviour. He resolved to return to Samoa and resume his own researches from his newfound behavioural and philosophical perspectives.

Two years later, Freeman succeeded in obtaining further leave from the University. With his wife and two daughters, he returned to the village of Sa'anapu and lived there for a full two years, from the beginning of 1966 to the end of 1967. During this period, he purposely visited Manu'a, the main location of Mead's research and began his own inquiries which eventually led to his refutation of Mead's earlier work in Samoa.

In 1968, Freeman returned to Canberra and immediately embarked on developing his views of a new 'interactionist' paradigm. He saw two aspects to this task. The first was to set forth his intellectual vision; the second was to demonstrate the inadequacies of Mead's research on Samoa because it represented for him one of the cornerstones of an anthropological edifice that he rejected. The essays in this volume, the first of which appeared in an ANU publication, *Man and the New Biology*, in 1970, document successive stages in this intellectual journey.

Sailing in Deep Waters: The Mead Controversy

Derek Freeman invariably infused his work with personal intensity and single-minded attention. Ideas were of the utmost importance and his intellectual interests provided compelling guidance for the way he lived. For this reason, once he had become engaged in the controversy over Mead's work after the publication of his book *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* in 1983, he could, in no way, abandon his position in response to the outcry in support of Margaret Mead. In the words of the Samoan proverb which he enjoyed quoting: 'The qualities of a canoe are tested in deep waters.'

Again and again, in this testing time, he felt compelled to reply to his critics, even the most minor and the least understanding of them. For 20 years in his retirement, he kept up a steady stream of answers to these critics. Each time he returned to the fray, he refined and extended the scope

of his arguments. His chief response was to write a sequel, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead*, in 1999, which is a meticulous and engagingly sympathetic account of Mead's time in Samoa based mainly on her own diaries and letters held in the Library of Congress.

Even after this second book had appeared, the controversy persisted and Freeman continued to uncover further evidence in support of his views. The final essay in this volume, written in March 2001 just before his death, is his parting statement on the controversy. He concludes this essay with the words: 'The controversy over Margaret Mead's Samoan fieldwork is then, for me, finally at an end.'

Two qualities are evident in all of Freeman's writings: a felicity of expression and a display of erudition. Freeman had an engaging style of writing and he saw no need to separate poetry from biology in arguing for an anthropology of choice or in writing in praise of heresy. In fashioning his arguments, he was as likely to quote Shakespeare or Auden, as he would Darwin, Huxley or Popper. In his scientific and humanist concerns, he invoked the value of Buddhist heedfulness and, like Huxley, was drawn to the practice of Buddhist ethical precepts.

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