

clusive chapter, Palma Behnke observes that the opinion about the Fuegians issued by Charles Darwin (who visited Tierra del Fuego on board of the “Beagle” in 1832), especially his (today) controversial statement: “I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man,” certainly influenced the scientific perception of that group of indigenous peoples of South America as “infrahuman savage” for decades. Nonetheless, through his photographic work Gusinde inverted that Darwinian image by giving it the opposite value of Rousseau’s “noble savage.” On the other hand, the way in which Gusinde arranged his models who posed for the photographs still points to the then dominant Darwinist categories present in his thinking, namely to the opposition between the “tall” and “handsome” Selk’nam and the “small” and “ugly” Yamana (425).

The book by Marisol Palma Behnke is more than a contribution to the ongoing discussion on the content, meaning, and importance of Gusinde’s photographic collection for our understanding of the vanished indigenous cultures of Tierra del Fuego, as well as on the way they were gazed at, described, and interpreted by European ethnographers formed within the evolutionist paradigm. In fact, the book is a veritable compendium of what so far has been said about that archive, including such diverse audiences as the academic world, mass culture consumers, and Native Americans themselves; and this is, I believe, what makes it particularly valuable. On the other hand, a more critical look reveals certain shortcomings, such as the highly specialized language that is perhaps too hermetic for those who are not well-versed in the field of visual anthropology, and the poor quality of the reproduced photographs – a drawback that could nevertheless be easily corrected on the occasion of the next edition of this work.

Darius J. Piwowarczyk

**Paul, Robert A.:** *Mixed Messages. Cultural and Genetic Inheritance in the Constitution of Human Society.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015. 353 pp. ISBN 978-0-226-24086-2. Price: \$ 30.00

The central thesis of this book is that individual development and social life are informed, or rather dictated, by two kinds of messages: “Any human society is composed ... of organisms that, unlike other organisms, are the product of the effects of two separate channels of information transmission, one cultural and one genetic, each necessary for the creation of the finished product, an adequately functioning human being. ... Therefore we may ask what sort of relationship exists between the two kinds of information, and we may further ask what impact this relationship might have on the way human socio-cultural systems are organized” (2). This is the essence of the “dual inheritance theory” advocated, developed, and explored by the author, through his discussion of theoretical works in anthropology, biology, and related fields. The twelve chapters of “Mixed Messages” outline the precursors and key contributors to dual inheritance theory, the differences between the two kinds of messages postulated, the extent to which they diverge or converge in specific

empirical contexts, and their combined impact on various aspects of social life, including social organization, ritual, symbolic reproduction, and gender relations.

This is a remarkable book in many ways. For one thing, it presents a clear take on a central issue in contemporary anthropology, the articulation of the biological and the social and its manifold implications for the practice of anthropology and the understanding of human life. Also, the author skillfully substantiates and qualifies his theoretical take through detailed and wide-ranging discussion of ethnographies (recent and classic) from different parts of the world. This, in itself, is quite an achievement. The analyses are meticulous and often convincing, and overall the discussion is plain, accessible, and readable. Trained in cultural anthropology, the author has set himself the task of “thickening” the standard description of genetics, sociobiology, and developmental psychology, by adding the layer of culture and symbols to that of genes, fitness, and natural selection. Few, if any, previous books manage to strike this balance as meaningfully and satisfactorily as “Mixed Messages,” combining gene talk, social theory, and ethnography. No doubt, the architects and practitioners of gene talk will welcome it. After all, it compliments gene talk rather than challenging it, making it more accessible and appealing to a broader audience.

The mixed-messages framework, however, is a mixed blessing. One of the flaws of the book relates to discussions of human uniqueness. Much of the argument hinges on classic assumption about the human-animal divide. Paul suggests, in his opening statement cited above and several other places, that humans “unlike other organisms” are the effects of two separate channels of information. He does qualify such statements at times through discussion of the sociality and communication of other primates, but he might have gone further, considering growing evidence of social learning and “theory of mind” in the lives of many other non-human animals. While “Mixed Messages” deepens the narratives of gene talk, providing new space for social and cultural analyses in studies of life itself, it is bound by the same limits that have troubled gene talk. Despite the second channel of message transmission, the dominant paradigm of the life sciences remains unshaken; its key assumptions as to how life is to be explored and understood remain intact.

In fact, the standard narrative of gene talk and its preoccupation with the transmission of genetic messages through copulation, a point repeatedly emphasized in “Mixed Messages,” is increasingly being contested. One important recent development in this context is the study of microbiomes. The microbes of our bodies (largely in our guts) are extremely important for development and well-being. In a fundamental sense, it is argued, they are “us” although their genes are typically acquired horizontally, not through copulation. If this is the case, Paul’s statement that “Identical genomes are shared only by identical twins” (78) does not make sense for no two people are identical in genomic terms. This evidence does not leave much space for dual inheritance. Even leaving aside the complications of the microbiome, our “human” genomes seem to be more unstable than previously thought,

changing during the life course. Ironically, gene talk, for long the firm reference point for meme talk, a narrative to imitate as far as possible, is beginning to imitate meme talk, becoming just as messy and multidimensional.

The author acknowledges (14f.), drawing upon works by Evelyn Fox Keller and Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb, that it may be misleading to subsume everything non-genetic under one label, “culture,” assuming “dual” rather than multi-dimensional inheritance. The most serious flaw, however, of “Mixed Messages” and its dual inheritance theory is that it reifies the popular determinism of the notion of “blueprint for life” which has tended to be taken for granted during the last century, particularly since the discovery of the double helix and the mapping of the human genome. Adding one or more dimensions to the blueprint does not undermine determinism, it only strengthens it; now, we are told, genes *and* memes determine who we are. Surprisingly, while the author mentions in passing the “emerging field of epigenesis” which “studies how at the molecular level the genetic code itself can be manipulated by the organism, and indeed, some ‘acquired characteristics’ may be transmitted to a future generation in apparent defiance of evolution’s ‘central dogma’” (15), there is hardly any discussion in his book of theoretical developments in a variety of fields that challenge dual-inheritance determinism and the radical separation of organism and environment.

Focusing on agency, processes of life, biosociality, nature-cultures, relational selves, and developmental systems, a number of scholars – including Georges Canguilhem, Donna Haraway, Tim Ingold, Hans Jonas, Richard Lewontin, Margaret Lock, Susan Oyama, and Paul Rabinow – have contributed to the explosion of central dogmas, pushing both the gene and the meme to the sidelines as “reactive” rather than constitutive phenomena. Had he set himself the task of bursting the limits of the blueprint rather than boosting it, narrowly closing his theoretical horizon in advance, Paul would have written a very different book, even more ambitious and more timely. Unfortunately, silence about fundamental critique and refusal to explore other avenues is symptomatic for dual-inheritance theorists and their intellectual kin more broadly, as they stubbornly seek to maintain anthropology itself as a dual-inheritance discipline, transporting mixed messages along separate tracks, at a time when the theoretical landscape is increasingly moving in other directions. In his closing words, Paul poses the question: “is it merely an accident that we have biological theorists who tend to dismiss the importance of the socio-cultural sphere competing with socio-cultural anthropologists who generally ignore the role of biology and genetics in human social life?” (310). While the question is pertinent, it is somewhat misleading. Perhaps the key point is that both camps need to redefine and realign the “social” and “biological”, rather than take them as given.

Gísli Pálsson

**Peltier, Philippe, Markus Schindlbeck und Christian Kaufmann** (Hrsg.): *Tanz der Ahnen. Kunst vom Sepik in Papua-Neuguinea*. Katalog zur Ausstellung.

München: Hirmer Verlag, 2015. 253 pp., Fotos. ISBN 978-3-7774-2339-5. Preis: € 49,90

L’ouvrage “Sepik. Arts de Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée” (“Tanz der Ahnen. Kunst vom Sepik in Papua-Neuguinea” pour la version germanophone) a été publié en 2015. Il a été édité respectivement par Skira et le Musée du quai Branly pour la version francophone et par Hirmer Verlag pour la version germanophone. Ce catalogue ainsi que son exposition temporaire et itinérante (2015–2016) sont le fruit d’une collaboration entre plusieurs institutions : le Martin-Gropius-Bau (Berlin), le Museum Rietberg (Zurich) et le Musée du quai Branly (Paris). Le livre a été réalisé sous la direction de Philippe Peltier, Markus Schindlbeck et Christian Kaufmann.

Mentionnons tout d’abord que nous avons eu entre les mains l’ouvrage dans sa version germanophone et que nous nous basons sur celle-ci pour les indications (pagination par exemple). Le catalogue se divise en deux parties principales. La première comprend une dizaine d’articles, chacun réalisé par un auteur différent, sur des thèmes concernant la culture matérielle (p. ex., les tambours et les masques), les aspects culturels (p. ex., les rituels), ou encore la religion et les traditions (p. ex., la rencontre avec les ancêtres). La seconde partie est un catalogue raisonné des objets montrés dans l’exposition. Chaque objet est accompagné d’une fiche technique (entre autres : matériaux, taille, lieu de conservation) et d’une brève description.

Le fil conducteur de cet ouvrage est le culte des ancêtres en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, lequel joue un rôle prépondérant pour les groupes ethniques, en particulier pour ceux de la région du Sepik. En culture matérielle, ce culte est concrétisé avant tout sous la forme de statuettes, de crânes surmodelés (231, n° 113) mais aussi d’objets plus rares comme des pierres d’ancêtres (232, n° 114). Il existe également des objets non anthropomorphes (motifs ou sculptures en forme de crocodile). Ces objets du Sepik se distinguent par leur originalité et possèdent de nombreux attributs soulignant leur statut important : cheveux, coquillages, os etc. (masque, p. 254, n° 134).

Long de plus de 1 100 kilomètres, le fleuve Sepik est le cours d’eau le plus important de l’île de Nouvelle-Guinée. De nombreux groupes ethniques vivent sur ses rives, entre autres : les Iatmuls, les Alambklaks et les Watams. Le Sepik constitue un bassin très fertile pour la culture matérielle, nous offrant un art riche en formes et haut en couleurs. De même, les traditions y sont nombreuses : c’est donc un sujet de premier choix et très pertinent qui est pris pour thème de catalogue.

Le lien entre les institutions à l’origine de cette exposition est qu’elles sont toutes axées sur la notion d’anthropologie d’art, sur la culture matérielle et sur la représentation esthétique. Comme on peut donc l’attendre de ces institutions, les objets sont mis en valeur dans leur contexte anthropologique – usage, fonction – mais aussi en tant qu’objets dans leur pleine dimension esthétique. Cette présentation d’exposition extrêmement soignée se reflète également dans la mise en page de cet ouvrage.

L’ouvrage se distingue par son nombre de pages élevé (351), par la quantité et le niveau de ses articles ainsi par ses illustrations nombreuses et très esthétiques. Le tra-