

present danger that they will confuse the two and wind up mistaking their enculturated assumptions for scientific propositions. All social scientific disciplines need a precise, consistent, and explicit set of guidelines to avoid that pitfall. I submit that emics and etics can serve that purpose well.

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## ANTHROPOLOGY, EVANGELIZATION, AND ABORTION: *Applications of Emics and Etics*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

On observing the first public encounter of Pike and Harris with each other, I received the impression that they were courteously airing "surface structure" similarities and differences. In these pages I will attempt to cut through to the bedrock of the epistemological ground that they share and from there trace the highly divergent scientific trajectories that they subsequently took. I wish to examine their work, however, not only in the abstract, but also in the concrete. For though both scholars have proposed abstract paradigms, both are also "applied" thinkers, explicitly interested in the applicability of scientific theory and method to the service of ethical, pragmatic causes.

Though no allusion occurs in the current dialogue to his evangelical commitments, Pike developed the emic/etic distinction while analyzing languages for Bible translation purposes. Going beyond language, he has suggested (Pike, 1962, p. 43) that emic analyses of broader cultural systems could be useful to the Christian missionary cause, a proposal that generally raises anthropological temperatures. Without directly crossing swords with Pike on such matters, Harris in this volume (Chapter 3) steals some emic/etic thunder from the opposition and laments the murders caused and the emic cover-up perpetrated by those withholding abortion from Third World women.

Since one suspects that Pike's enthusiasm for abortions is as strong as Harris's enthusiasm for Bibles, one must admire their discretion in veering away from public confrontation on such sensitive issues. Without in any way

wishing to deconstruct the harmony of their dialogue with each other, however, I nonetheless want to explore whether the use of the same "emic/etic" lexical distinction to support such divergent social causes derives from the scientific power of the constructs or from our power as social scientists to engage in word games. I will therefore enter in where wise angels might fear to tread and, toward the end of this article, discuss the emics and etics of Bibles and abortions.

## 2. THE SEMANTIC EVOLUTION OF EMICS AND ETICS

The Eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not mix thy emics and thy etics in the analysis of human social life," which thundered from the Mount a quarter-century ago, motivated many anthropologists to attend to an easily ignored but scientifically crucial distinction between two radically different strategies for analyzing human culture. In contrast to the volcanic, Sinai-like pyrotechnics that Marvin Harris's raising of the emic/etic issue engendered in anthropology, Pike's earlier transmission of the message to his linguistic colleagues resembled a more gentle Nativity scene, the delivery to a world weary with overspecialization of a hope-filled synthetic insight that had been slowly gestating in tagmemic linguistic circles. The basic insight (and guiding assumption) was that perhaps all of human behavior may in the final analysis be structured as logically and coherently as language and could perhaps be so analyzed. Pike traces the gradual gestation of this insight in the first edition of his path-breaking work *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (1954).

The tranquility of the Nativity of emics and etics was shaken by the sudden decision of cultural materialists to kidnap the neonate from the manger (Harris, 1964; 1968). The intrusion of this somewhat more rowdy group into the emic-etic debate had at least three effects: (a) It raised the decibel level of the conversations; (b) it resulted in a rapid evolution of the semantic content of the distinction (to be discussed below); and (c) it brought the constructs into the service of agendas quite alien to those originally envisioned. That is, whereas the progenitors of the tagmemic paradigm at the Summer Institute of Linguistics had perfected the emic/etic distinction in the context of translating the Hebrew/Greek Good News, Harris and his students were more interested in using emics and etics to expose the Bad News: to unmask the widespread occurrence of oppression, camouflaged exploitation, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, obfuscation, and mystification in human

cultural life around the globe. Tagmemicists were laboring to spread the Kingdom; cultural materialists to expose the Empire.<sup>1</sup>

In comparing and contrasting the work of these two scholars I will treat the emic/etic distinction as a migratory, adaptively radiating scientific construct whose structure and function must, as is true of all migrating organisms, readjust to the demands of new environments if it is to survive and function. It will be useful first to discuss the internal factors that led to the evolution of not two but three quite different usages of the emic/etic distinction: a now-vanished historical "core" usage; a neotagmemic synchronic, mentalized usage; and a materialist causal, diachronic usage.

## 3. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BEDROCK: PHILOSOPHICAL REALISM

There is a deep chasm that separates two groups of thinkers, a division that runs deeper than the emic/etic or materialist/idealist split, but that has received surprisingly little discussion in anthropology. Pike and Harris stand on the same side of this divide. On one side is the epistemology of *nominalism*, the position that emphasizes the arbitrary, constructive nature of human knowledge, asserts that our categories of knowledge are simply labels ("nomina," names), and denies that the concepts in our minds bear any direct relation to realities "out there" in nature, denies even that we can know for sure if there is a world "out there." On the other side is *realism*, the stance that not only assumes the existence of a world independent of our perceptions of it but asserts that our mind can come into objective contact with that reality. A radical nominalist would say that cause/effect relations are fictions of our mental structures and labeling strategies; we *invent* causality. A philosophical realist would say that causality really exists in nature; our minds *discover* causality, they do *not* invent it. Despite their radical differences on so many issues, Pike and Harris can comfortably dialogue on the same podium because they are both radically committed to the propositions that (a) there is a complex and fascinating reality out there independent of our minds; (b) our minds are equipped to *discover* many of the secrets of that reality; (c) scientific procedures are the most effective way of unearthing those secrets that do not yield to common-sense procedures; and (d) human behavior and thought are, *mutatis mutandis*, as amenable to objective scientific analysis as any other real phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

## 4. PHASE ONE: THE VANISHED HISTORICAL CORE

Pike and Harris's agreement on the basic issue of realism makes their subsequent divergence on emics and etics a fascinating study in the "adaptive radiation" of scientific paradigms. I wish to explore a model that posits a three-phase evolution of the emic/etic distinction: (a) the emergence of the prementalist core definition, (b) the tagmemic mentalization of emics and the "emicization" of the research agenda, and (c) the materialist elevation and prioritization of etics. Since Kenneth Pike invented emics and etics, how can I posit a pre-Pike variant? Easily. In Celtic folklore fairies rob beautiful neonates and substitute deformed changelings unbeknownst to the parents. Let us explore the possibility that the emics and etics that Pike delivered to the world may not have been the original child, but a changeling introduced shortly after birth under the influence of the Mean Fairy (mentalism).

Throughout the years Pike has held fast to one principle: Emic systems are what exist out there on the ground. Etic analysis is simply a cluster of rough-draft discovery procedures to help us discover these latent structures. Our emic analysis comes when we have grasped the essential features of the system and, through the discovery of complementary distribution, are able to lump together as equivalents phones or morphs that had been differentiated in our rough-draft etic analysis.

At the risk of inventing a mythical golden age, I would suggest that a careful reading of the earliest chapters of the first edition of *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (Pike, 1954) reveals the possible archaeological remnants of a gloriously clear but now defunct formative phase of the emic/etic distinction that antedated its invasion by mentalism.

In an emic approach, the analyst might describe the structural functioning of a particular car as a whole, and might include charts showing the parts of the whole car as they function in relation one to another; in an etic approach he might describe the elements one at a time as they are found in a stock room, where bolts, screws, rims, fenders and complex parts, such as generators and motors from various models and makes of cars, have been systematically "filed" according to general criteria. (p. 10)

Notice the clarity of the metaphors in this golden age, and the refreshing absence of any beclouding references to the need to guess at purposes, intentions, meanings. Using this "precontamination" version of emics and etics, an anthropologist would simply say that an etic description is a

decontextualized prestructural description and classification of individual cultural traits; an emic (i.e., systemic) description would show how these traits are integrated into a living, coherent, functioning system. In this historical core definition, which I suspect Pike may have entertained before the exposure that he reports to the mentalism of Sapir (1949), "emics" has *absolutely nothing to do with "mental" or "ideational."* It is instead almost a synonym for "systemic." Paradoxically an "emic" description of an integrated ecosystem, showing how all its component parts are integrated, would come close to being what cultural materialists today call an "etic" description—that is, the grasping of a system by an observer irrespective of the opinions of actors in the system. It is safe to say that this sensible, clear use of "emics" has vanished, perhaps unfortunately and irretrievably, from the face of the scholarly world.

I say it is unfortunate, because the now virtually universal notion that an "emic" description is one in which informants "provide the categories" and/or "agree with your analysis" has no bearing on what field linguists actually do. When a linguist analyzing Caribbean Spanish concludes that "a voiceless glottal fricative is the preconsonantal allophone of the voiceless alveolar fricative phoneme in informal discourse" (i.e., [hte mohkito] for /este mosquito/ 'this mosquito'), the analytic categories were emphatically *not* provided by local informants, nor could they possibly agree or disagree with the linguist's conclusion since they would not have the faintest idea of what the conclusion is about. Informant contribution to an emic analysis is precisely what it is to an etic analysis: They have to provide data. Once a sufficiently large and sufficiently well-transcribed corpus of etic data is available, *further informant cooperation is superfluous for the production of an emic analysis.* In fact, even a computer fed with ASCII symbols representing phonetic transcriptions could identify complementary distribution and derive an emic analysis from the input of an etic transcription.

Lest I be misunderstood, I must clarify two points. First, I agree that "checking with informants"—that is, elicitation by the linguist of further text from informants—will be useful to see if hypotheses are valid. So what? The same is true of an etic study of land tenure on a sample of plots in the same community. The heuristic utility of verifying whether informant behavior, be it verbal or nonverbal, goes in the direction predicted by a model is a general principle of all research, not a feature that distinguishes "emic" from "etic" analysis.

Secondly, I am not thereby denying that "informants have their folk models" of social life that may differ from models produced by an analyst. Of course they do. And a goal of cultural materialism is to identify folk-

models for what they are, to transcend them with scientifically more accurate renditions of social life. However, I am simply stating that this distinction has nothing to do with the emic/etic distinction in its original form. In its core linguistic meaning both emic and etic analyses require the categories and methods of scientifically trained observers.

It is often asserted that Marvin Harris radically changed the meaning of emics and etics. Wrong. The jettisoning of the operationally clear and scientifically productive core meaning of "systemic," the imposition of the additional requirement to guess at actor intents and purposes—in short, the mentalization of emics—was done surprisingly with the collaboration, and under the supervision, of the inventor, Kenneth Pike, himself.

### 5. PHASE TWO: THE MENTALIZATION OF EMICS

I will discuss here what I believe to have been the trajectory followed in the mentalization of emics. But first I wish to point out at least three traditions of descriptive linguistics that were faithfully carried over into Pike's attempt to analyze behavior—faithfully, but perhaps to the at least partial detriment of the science of culture. In the first place, tagmemics is totally synchronic in its thrust. Pike is aware of this and has argued, almost as an afterthought, for the potential relevance of his paradigm to diachronic studies. But the complexity of the prerequisites for describing synchronic structures are such as to focus all attention on that task. And if we compare a 1960s version of tagmemics (Cook, 1969) to a 1980s version (Pike & Pike, 1982) the complexity of synchronic description is growing. This focus has some dangers. Linguistic systems and cultural systems, it is true, both embody synchronic and diachronic processes. But whereas the relative systemic stability engendered by the communicative functions of linguistic systems warrant a synchronic emphasis in descriptive linguistics, the premature exportation of this emphasis to the analysis of ever fluctuating cultural systems could produce scientific blinders with respect to what are perhaps the scientifically most important questions raised by those systems. I will elaborate further on this concern below.

In his treatment of social life Pike extrapolates yet a second tradition from descriptive linguistics in his meticulous avoidance of any attempt at causal analysis of the structures described. It is a tradition in linguistics, a most healthy one, to avoid positing genetic, environmental, or any other type of

cause for the presence or absence of clicks or tones, for example, in the language under analysis. I must point out, however, that this makes descriptive linguistics a somewhat maverick science, since a major goal of most scientific analysis is precisely the identification of unseen cause/effect relationships. This extrapolation of an acausal, purely descriptive research agenda into the domain of human social life would remove anthropology from the scientific mainstream, concerned with causes and effects, and relegate it to the marginal role of butterfly collector.

Thirdly, as with descriptive linguistics in general (and as was true of early American anthropology), the tagmemic paradigm provides no categories, constructs, or procedures for evaluatively comparing two systems, or for identifying systems in serious trouble. This makes perfect sense in descriptive linguistics. It would be unwarranted to speculate whether Indo-European languages are "better" than oriental languages, or (in historical linguistics) whether English is evolving adaptively or problematically. But we cannot be as enthusiastic about the imposition of a nonevaluative and noncritical approach to contemporary cultural systems, where the effects of coercion, brutality, poverty, morbidity, and other human ills create the need for empirical criteria *as part of the science itself* for making some kind of evaluative judgments. Though Bible translators often do make judgments about the cultures into whose languages they translate the Bible, there appears to be no component of the tagmemic paradigm that would endow such judgments with scientific support.

If tagmemics failed to break with linguistic tradition in some areas where a break might have been called for, it did create an unfortunate rupture with that tradition in an area where it perhaps *should* have remained faithful. I alluded above to the invasion of mentalism. I would here like to reconstruct the trajectory of the conquest.

Though the chronology is unclear, the invasion took place on three fronts. The first was a maladaptive opening of the floodgates to the meaning of meaning. Instead of proposing an ironclad lexical distinction between the specific phenomenon of the "reference" of morphemes and the more general phenomenon of "inner subjective generalized reactions to life in general," both are frequently lumped (though not necessarily by Pike himself) under the now-vague label "meaning." One unfortunate result is that the methodologically demanding and precise behavior of the field linguist, studying the "meaning of infixes" in language X, is lexically lumped by many with the more-often-than-not confused and methodologically sloppy behavior of an ethnographer speculating on the "meaning of phallic symbols" in culture X.

The second front of the invasion took the form of the intrusion of "purpose" into the descriptive model. We can be fully aware of the manner in which "purpose" completely penetrates, enriches, suffuses, and delightfully confuses human life. But we can still lament, as Harris correctly does, that guessing about actor purposes has been made part of the process of devising a taxonomy of acts. The blurring of the distinction between "meaning" and "purpose" has had catastrophic scientific effects. There are well-developed scientific procedures that would permit a linguist from China to discover the referential meaning of my greeting "Good Morning." There is no way under the sun that he could identify and sift out the multiple *purposes* I may or may not have in issuing the greeting.

To regret the intrusion of purpose into Pike's taxonomy of acts is not to deny the importance of purpose in human life. *The concern is methodological, not philosophical.* The creation of a research strategy in which the observer must not only describe actors' behavior, but also guess at their purposes, will guarantee scientific stagnation by making observer agreement impossible and will put wind in the sails of those opposed to a science of culture, those who glory in the ambiguity and unknowability of social life. Pike and his students fortunately have enough common sense not to include "purpose" in their studies of phonology and morphology. It would bring to an immediate halt the outstanding language analyses produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). If an anthropologist might be permitted a friendly complaint, they insulate the science of linguistics from the methodological murkiness that they would introduce into the science of culture.

But the final step toward the mentalization of tagmemics came with the unfortunate restriction of the scope of "discoverable systems" to "systems as they exist in the mind of actors." An important function of the scientific analysis of our own behavior and thought would be to expand our conscious awareness of systems and hidden processes that govern us without any awareness on our part. But how can we possibly expose these unseen systemic forces with a methodology restricted to eliciting from people their own purposes and meanings? These purposes and meanings are only a small part of the history of our species. There are larger forces and dynamics of which people are only dimly aware, larger plots that are unperceived even by the actors themselves. In its current form the tagmemic paradigm, with its restriction to the study of conscious meanings, appears to offer us no way of recognizing the existence of these unperceived patterns. It is precisely these latent, clandestine forces that cultural materialism wishes to expose.

## 6. PHASE THREE: THE MATERIALIST ELEVATION OF ETICS

When Marvin Harris entered the emic/etic debate, he was already committed to a research strategy that incorporated the three elements that mentalized tagmemics had filtered out: diachronic analysis, causal analysis, and social critique. His interest in emics and etics derived from his commitment to two agendas: the elevation of anthropology to a genuine science and the combatting of "obfuscation" and "mystification"—the exposing of false consciousness.

As indicated above, the model of emics/etics that Harris inherited from Pike was a mentalized one in which the operational and systemic clarity of Pike's earlier cited "automobile parts" metaphor had already been blurred by the imposition on observers of the requirement to identify actor purpose and intentions. Rather than reject Pike's mentalized version of emics, Harris accepted it as a given and responded instead by modifying the concept of etics. As with the mentalization of emics, the elevation of etics took place simultaneously on several fronts.

In the first place, Harris simply ignored Pike's version of etic analysis as merely a preliminary first draft on the road to the discovery by the analyst of a more parsimonious underlying emic system. For Pike etic analyses are less insightful than the final-version emic analyses that will eventually emerge. Harris turned the entire relationship between the two strategies on its head. Though Harris recognizes theoretically that both require systematized procedures, in the day-to-day usage of cultural materialism it is the emic analysis given by informants that tends to be viewed as simple first-draft formulations of what people think is happening pending the completion by the observer of the analysis that reveals what actually is happening. This latter, called the etic analysis, is treated in cultural materialism as being scientifically more insightful and accurate than the emic analysis. In evaluating relative scientific potential, Harris reversed the priority assigned by Pike to each strategy.

Harris's second contribution was to use the concept of etics to explore both cause/effect relations and change through time, uses alien to those in tagmemics. Though aware of the need for descriptive synchronics, a materialist use of etics is more often directed at analysis of the causes and consequences of the growth of populations, the deterioration of ecosystems, the spread of new technologies, the pollution of the habitat, the dissolution of traditional lifeways under the impact of impinging economic systems, the militarization of the planet, or other diachronic processes. The methodologies for dealing

with these diachronic processes are still somewhat seat-of-the-pants. But Harris has elevated etic research from its lowly status as a handmaiden to synchronic emic analysis to the status of principal agent in the uncovering of the hidden causes of diachronic transformations.

In this same light a third contribution of Harris's modification of etics has been to recognize the ontological realness of unseen systems that manipulate and shape conscious human meaning systems. By declaring that only systems of conscious purpose are real for its research purposes, the current tagmemics comes close to repudiating the responsibility to expose and analyze the operation of those forces that have a vested interest in remaining hidden, those systems that manipulate the purposes and intentions of system actors to agendas of whose existence the actors are kept in darkness. Since emic research as defined by Pike cannot expose them, Harris has made it the goal of etics to expose such hidden systems, some of which may not be cognized by any group of actors, not even beneficiary groups.

To sum up: If the model of the evolution of emics and etics that I am proposing has any value, it was Kenneth Pike's brilliant insights into linguistic structure that paved the way for the application of emics and etics to the study of social life. But his deep involvement in linguistics led to the exportation into cultural analysis of a synchronic, acausal, and judgmentally neutral paradigm unable to address some of the scientifically most interesting features of broader cultural systems. For all their methodological shortcomings, materialist researchers have at least attempted to turn the emic/etic distinction into a construct that exposes the causal diachronics of cultural systems.

## 7. EMICS, EVANGELISTS, AND EMBRYOS

When all rhetoric of scientific missions and noble intents is dropped, how reliable and credible is each paradigm in dealing with specific issues? For the remainder of this chapter I will discuss exogenous pressures that I believe can threaten the scientific utility of the emic/etic distinction. These forces may have prevented tagmemics from looking at certain features of human social life. The danger that I perceive for cultural materialism is a semantic degradation of the distinction into a contentious honorific dichotomy in which the honorific "etic" is prematurely applied to "(my) well-founded, sensible, and true opinion" and the epithet "emic" to "(your) unfounded, deluded, false opinion." (See Headland's comments on that in chapter 1 of this volume.)

## 8. SOCIAL SCIENCE AND EVANGELIZATIO POPULORUM

In the opening words to *Text and Tagmeme* (1983, p. 3), the Pikes assert the need to grasp activities in terms of actor intent. If their assessment is correct, then the evolution of tagmemics cannot be fully understood apart from the evangelical missionary context in which it has evolved. This is a sensitive topic where anthropological comment is often more in the nature of pot shot than dialogue. My intent is to forestall or at least minimize the former and simply identify two possible feedback links, one positive and one negative, between a missionary agenda and a scientific agenda.

Some Judeo-Christian traditions classify every statement in the Scriptures as history. Others follow the opinion of modern Biblical scholarship and classify many passages as myth and legend. I will label the first as literalist theologies (the pejorative connotations of *fundamentalist* render the term epithetical), the second as critical theologies. The latter need not deny either the existence of a Creator or the special role attributed to this Creator in shaping Scriptures. They simply assert that special guidance did not take the form of magical interventions but operated through natural biological processes in the emergence of our species, and through natural cultural processes, including mythopoeia, in the evolution of the Scriptures themselves. Literalists tend not only to reject the scientific hypotheses of Scripture scholars but, in some circles, to dismiss their work as being satanically inspired. For them there are no myths in the Bible; it is a divinely dictated literal account of cosmogenic and soteriological history.

The founder of tagmemics had to confront this problem. Pike shares with readers his dilemma on realizing that members of all 200 kinds of Australian kangaroos could not possibly have fit on Noah's Ark (1962, p. 88). His reported adjustment was not to concede the mythical character of the entire Flood account but to concede instead that some minor evolutionary speciation might have taken place, presumably after the parent kangaroo couple exited from Noah's Ark. Without oversimplifying the nuanced positions he took in his book *With Heart and Mind* (1962), Pike's conclusions in that book would place him somewhere on the literalist side of the theological divide.

My question now is: Does a literalist Scriptural paradigm have any impact, positive or negative, on a research paradigm? I believe the evidence from tagmemics is that it most certainly does. It has a highly positive impact in terms of the motivation that it creates for competent linguistic fieldwork. Grammatically correct Bible translations are needed, and missionaries have to learn languages. It has generated the pragmatic energy to sustain an active training program over four decades and to generate studies on more than 600

languages. It has led to a sustained institutionalized insistence on scientific field methods for which there is no institutional counterpart in cultural anthropology.

It is my impression, however, that that same agenda may have a highly deleterious effect in impeding the emergence of a *diachronic* science of human culture, an impression derived from contact with missionaries in Haiti. If Scriptural texts are misunderstood, that is, if origin myths are misclassified as history and shamanistically used as a magico-religious shortcut for understanding the human past, if demonic inspiration rather than sociocultural evolution is invoked as the cause of other religious systems (and divine guidance the cause of our own), and if the very attempt scientifically to explore human biological and cultural evolution is itself attributed to the promptings of the Evil One, we can predict a restriction of scientific energy to theologically safe descriptive tasks and the emergence of a curiously syncretic paradigm in which the synchronics of human language and behavior will be pursued through meticulous scientific fieldwork, but the diachronics handled through the lenses of Genesis and the Apocalypse.

It would be both inaccurate and rude to attribute this fundamentalist *syllabus errorum* either to the heterogeneous membership of SIL or to Kenneth Pike himself, especially in view of the thoughtful synthesis of science and personal faith that he shares with readers in *With Heart and Mind* (Pike, 1962). But even this carefully formulated document contains scientifically problematic stances on the two important issues of diachronic analysis and causality.

On the first issue, diachronic change, Pike writes: "Christianity . . . should operate like a yeast, entering a culture quietly, transforming its institutions, changing their forms . . . [and] capable people are needed for such a delicate task of understanding a culture and carefully guiding it in its acceptance of Christianity and its infusion with Christian principles" (1962, p. 43). Quite apart from anthropologists' prejudices against a certain brand of evangelical yeast (some anthropologists abstain totally; others substitute unleavened wafers or matzos), I must express misgivings that Pike appears to be searching for the engine of social change not in the empirically defensible stress-mediated evolution posited by anthropologists but in operationally elusive mechanisms of yeast-mediated fermentation. He is using a metaphor rather than a scientific construct.

With respect to the scientifically critical matter of cause and effect, Pike makes the astounding statement that "there is really no cause and effect. . . . There is no thing which is 'cause' that will affect us. . . . There is God. He can affect us" (1962, pp. 61-62). He then clarifies: There are natural cause/effect processes that God leaves on "automatic pilot" to affect us in the

normal course of events, but that by prayer we can move him to intervene on directly. The causality that Pike discusses is exclusively moral and individualistic in character: If we are lazy, fearful, or unbelieving, it will have long-term negative impact on our character, effects that can be nullified only by the cleansing power of God. This is consonant with Pike's emphasis on the individual, repeated in this volume. But it is scientifically circular: Bad behavior generates bad character and vice versa. And it does not address the question of the external shapers of individual and collective behavior.

I realize that in these passages Pike is not attempting to talk scientifically but in religious symbolism. But a discussion of these symbols is of high relevance, first, because in this case synchronic linguistics is aimed at the implementation of diachronic change based precisely on such metaphors, and secondly because reliance on such metaphors could impede development of needed diachronic constructs. This may create a situation in which those sent to the field, though trained scientifically for a *linguistic* task, may in fact view their *social change* task in terms of metaphors: to get societies off their downward spiraling automatic pilot course and transform them with yeast. Nor does the tagmemic paradigm in its current form have evaluative constructs to assess local damage if the pilots happen to have been blind or the cooks mad. Though he believes that the images are divinely revealed, Pike would reject a synchronic language analysis couched in Scriptural metaphors—in mustard seeds and wheat sheaves instead of phonemes and morphemes. It is therefore no slur on Biblical texts to insist that such metaphors are no less inappropriate for the scientific understanding of diachronic processes, including our positive and negative impacts as outsiders.

To clarify the thrust of my comments: I have managed projects in Haiti with other anthropologists (Murray, 1984) and am not railing against change or its agents. But in our work we entered with diachronic hypotheses; we listed in advance dozens of possible backfires; and we instituted diachronic monitoring and bailout procedures should our yeast turn suddenly to arsenic. We used anthropology not only to design programs but to assess skeptically their impact as well. Headland (personal communication) has indicated that several in-house evaluations have been done by SIL of missionary activities. Headland's own work in the Philippines has dealt with the diachronic impact of political upheavals (Headland, 1985) and of logging and cash-cropping (1988).

A reading of these analyses, however, reveals that they are done *outside of the tagmemic paradigm*. That is, SIL scholars interested in diachronic change and causality may receive little conceptual assistance from the elaborate theoretical apparatus of tagmemics. In discussing the transformation of foraging lifeways, Headland alludes to the invasion of agriculturists

and the rapid increase of local population from less than 2 people per square kilometer to more than 50 people per square kilometer (Headland, 1988), an analysis that bypasses "emic purposes" and is much more akin to Harris's materialist analyses.

If we focus, therefore, not on the evolving work of SIL scholars but on the tagmemic paradigm of Kenneth Pike, my hypothesis concerning the potential impacts of an evangelical agenda on emics and etics can be repeated. An evangelical agenda produces high motivation for outstanding synchronic description. It is my contention, however, that a theological system mandating a literalist interpretation of Scriptural texts generates a disinclination to submit the human past to scientific scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the distant past will be interpreted through Genesis, the transforming impact sought for through evangelization will be phrased in New Testament metaphors. There is no provision in tagmemics for diachronic or causal analysis as these terms are understood anthropologically. Though applied anthropologists are as involved as missionaries in social change, the core ideological assumptions of the former create a sense of the hypothetical nature of their theories and the potential harm that can come even from well-intentioned interventions, an awareness that leads to the establishment of systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures. In contrast I see no evidence in Pike's scientific writing of any interest in using scientific constructs to explain the origins or to critique the assumptions of the evangelical belief system, or to evaluate the impact of evangelical interventions in the affected societies. SIL scholars interested in this must go to other theoretical pastures.

Other religions seek converts without self-critique or monitoring. Is it fair to impose this task? I believe it is. As a rule, theologians have no aspirations for the development of a science of human behavior. Kenneth Pike the linguist does. The "next step" in the tagmemic paradigm's evolution should therefore perhaps be an immediate removal from the back burner of the tasks of diachronic analysis and causal inference, and a placing of these tasks at the head of the scientific agenda. And these tasks should be done with constructs every bit as rigorous, and as thoroughly purged of metaphors, as the synchronic descriptive constructs used in the analysis of language.

## 9. ABORTION, INFANTICIDE, AND HOMICIDE

My concern with Harris's paradigm has less to do with its theology than with its embryology. Harris's determination to have anthropology go beyond

"mere disputation about epistemological quandaries" (Harris, Chapter 3, Section 5) and to "prevent anthropology from abandoning its etic accountability" (*ibid.*) takes the form in this volume of a discussion of the emics and the etics of infanticide and abortion. "Etic data concerning selective neglect and indirect infanticide (Miller, 1981; Scrimshaw, 1984) have implications for policy decisions that are quite different from those resulting from emic data" (Harris, Section 5, Chapter 3 of this volume). Opposition to abortion is, according to Harris, rooted in culture-bound emics and dogmas. A scientific analysis of the situation, by providing data on the occurrence of infanticide that could have been prevented by earlier abortion, demonstrates the utility of abortion and reduces an antiabortion stance to the status of a "cover-up of unintended consequences that adversely affect the lives of millions of people" (Harris, Chapter 3, Section 5).

Though grateful to science for its unmasking of the true villains in the pro-life/pro-choice debate, before sending in my check to Planned Parenthood I wish to probe a bit. Harris begins (in Section 5, Chapter 3 of this volume) with a report of the findings of Scheper-Hughes (1987), who studied a Brazilian village. Her data suggest that 3 out of every 10 children who died in Alto do Cruzeiro may have been victims of disguised parental neglect. Though the mothers' labeling practices mask what is happening (nobody admits to, and few people may be conscious of, neglecting their children), and though Harris views the mothers as victims of stress and poverty themselves, he etically classifies their behavior as "homicide" and "murder."

Though he has not defined his terms, I presume homicide and murder refer to the killing of one human being by another. By what *etic* criteria does Harris classify neonates and infants as humans? If we take as the etic criteria for human status the performance of species-specific behaviors that no other mammal or primate can perform, such as sustained bipedal locomotion or referential language, then by these operationalized, intersubjectively verifiable criteria neither the neonate nor the young infant would be etically human.

I raise this possibility to reject it. It has been a militantly held tradition in anthropology that human status is not a continuous variable, a rheostat factor of which some cultures or individuals possess more or less than others. It is rather a binary, toggle-switch, yes/no variable with no gradations. Bushmen foragers are not halfway between chimps and college professors with respect to human status. We know through ethnography and history that subgroups targeted for elimination or enslavement are sometimes classed as nonhuman or not-fully-human by those doing the targeting. But such classifications are dismissed by anthropologists as pragmatically motivated fictions. Even



though many cultures around the world pretend that neonates and infants are not yet fully human (cf. Jocano, 1969, p. 15; Hamilton, 1976; Williams, 1969, p. 87), by labeling infanticide as etic homicide Harris in effect treats any such maturationally based exclusionary criteria as no less fictitious than phenotypical criteria in determining human status.

I am therefore puzzled by another part of Harris's argument. He says that "the interdiction of medical abortion frequently has the unintended consequences of promoting the practice of a homicide. . . . From an emic point of view common in the United States, abortion is the murder of a fetus; from an etic point of view the prohibition of abortion often leads to the murder of an infant or child in disadvantaged classes and countries" (Harris, Section 5, Chapter 3 of this volume). If I understand correctly, the termination of the life of an infant or child is etically murder/homicide (two terms that Harris here appears to use synonymously). Brazilian women, according to this version, could be freed from the need to perform homicidal acts on their children if they were able to abort them while still in the womb.

I would like to back up here. The etic classification of an act of life termination as homicidal or nonhomicidal depends completely on the human or nonhuman status of the organism whose life is being terminated. By explicitly proposing a taxonomy of acts that labels infanticide as homicide and abortion as homicide prevention, Harris has destroyed the etic status of his analysis by reintroducing a fictitious maturational criterion into his taxonomy of living beings. We could accept his wording only if we were to classify fetal organisms in a different genus and species from their parents, or if we were to delay taxonomic assignment until we could visually verify that the woman is not carrying a rooster or duck. Harris is fully aware that it is not baptism, circumcision, naming ceremonies, parturition, gestational transformation, or intrauterine ensoulment, but ovulation, insemination, and fertilization that produce a new, genetically complete, and genetically distinct human organism.<sup>4</sup>

Whether life-terminating procedures are performed on the human organism postnatally in a Brazilian village hammock or prenatally in an urban American reproductive health clinic, both the phylogenetic membership of the target organism and the biological effect of the procedures performed on that organism are "etically" identical. I am stating the obvious here because I am genuinely puzzled by Harris's assertion as to the scientific superiority of an analysis that labels the rural Brazilian technology of offspring elimination as homicide and murder but honorifically implies that our own brand of offspring elimination somehow *prevents* homicide. Such a version of events would entail self-serving manipulation of the definition of *human being* to

fit in with the timing of our own technology of death control. And while I am sensitive to the humanitarian impulses of those who wish to prevent the suffering of unwanted children, I see no reason for altering our taxonomic classification of the aborted beneficiaries of our merciful interventions. Though such fictitious dehumanization of fetal life is useful in assuaging the feelings of Americans uncomfortable at the thought of killing their offspring (after all, only savages could do things like that), it must be dismissed by an etic observer as emic camouflage. I respectfully submit that Harris's current wording contributes to, rather than exposes, this camouflage and that the accusation of cover-up may have been hurled at the wrong group.

I trust that it is clear that this discussion focuses less on the ethics of abortion than on the taxonomic status of those aborted. A diploma in anthropology does not determine its owner's stance on the ethics of a broad gamut of controversial life-and-death issues—warfare, capital punishment, euthanasia, eugenics, suicide, infanticide, abortion. If we choose, however, to join the debate on who shall live and who shall die, there is one well-entrenched anthropological tradition to which we can safely adhere: to challenge any conscience soothing emic fiction that a race, nation, class, or age group targeted for selective killing is in any way less human than the race, nation, class, or age group doing the targeting. Because Harris himself has been the most articulate enemy of all such cover-ups in his writings, I request that he either explain or rethink the logic of including infanticide but excluding abortion from the etic category that he himself proposed: homicide. Beyond the specific issue—the correct classification of abortion (yes, even Americans kill their offspring)—lies the more general task of devising a ruthlessly honest scientific taxonomy of acts, no matter how offensive it may be to those performing the acts.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In the course of this article I have discussed some fundamental similarities and some equally fundamental differences between the work of Kenneth Pike and of Marvin Harris. Their basic similarity, as well as the logic of their appearing on the same podium despite all other differences, is to be found in a basic epistemological commitment to philosophical realism and a belief in the efficacy of scientific methods to assist us to discover ontologically real systems and processes. Their basic differences are to be found in terms of the tagmemic commitment to synchronic description and with its focus on the

analysis of emic systems. The commitment of cultural materialism is to diachronic causal analysis and to a redefined variant of etic analysis dedicated to exposing the operation of systems, processes, and forces not necessarily cognized by system actors, as the priority research goal.

Those who criticize Harris for having radically changed the meaning of emics and etics have perhaps missed the point. If the emic/etic distinction was to have any scientific utility outside of synchronic description, it had to be modified. In engineering a coup to challenge the scientific crown prematurely awarded to emic analysis, in reversing the arrangement by which etics was a simple handmaiden to emics, Harris has not "misused" the emic/etic distinction. On the contrary, he should probably be credited with rescuing it and giving it at least a running shot at becoming a useful tool in the scientific analysis of human social life.

It goes without saying that any invidious comparison made here between the two scholars refers only to the ability of their paradigms to handle specific problem sets. In descriptive linguistics the tagmemic paradigm enjoys an unparalleled track record in the analysis of real-life languages. But that is not the task to which most cultural anthropologists find themselves assigned. In my work in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and other similar countries, I have been involved in the analysis not of stable, well-ordered linguistic systems but of rapidly evolving or catastrophically degenerating social, economic, or political systems. The "Harris version" of emics and etics strikes me as being more willing and equipped than the "Pike version" to deal with such systems.

In reality Kenneth Pike and Marvin Harris are in complementary distribution to each other with respect to the needs of a science of culture. Pike has an unparalleled record in field methods and synchronic descriptive achievements. In contrast, though he briefly explored the use of videotaping for etic ethnography, the impact of Harris's prodigious output (e.g., 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1985) has been in the identification of long-range diachronic causality. Both are powerful system builders. If anyone succeeds in bringing these two worlds—so very different in so very many ways—into dynamic union, we can expect a quantum leap in our ability to penetrate to the underlying structures of human culture.

To conclude, I trust that my speculations as to the possible feedback between evangelical commitments and a synchronic tagmemic paradigm are not etically classed as one more cranky manifestation of anthropological missionary bashing. The misgivings that I expressed about certain aspects of Harris's analysis indicate my conviction that both our tribes are living in glass houses as far as the vulnerability of our paradigms to our causes. If I have

misconstrued the position of either scholar on highly sensitive social issues, I am confident of their ability to correct me. And in any case it is debate about these issues, rather than about Breakfast Scenes or Walks Across the Grass, that stands a greater chance of generating an incisive and relevant science of culture.

## NOTES

1. Though Harris has consistently acknowledged his intellectual debt to Pike, anthropologists have not always been as accurate in their own attributions of Harris's contributions. In a recent issue of the journal *Medical Anthropology*, Davis (1989, p. 68) uses the emic/etic distinction with no citation of Harris. In the same volume Lock (1989, p. 60) criticizes Harris's *Cultural Materialism* (1979) for overemphasizing the scientific study of the human body—a topic of which Harris made no mention in that volume. The missing citation of the first author indicates how Harris's constructs have been incorporated matter of factly into contemporary anthropological discourse. The incorrect citation of the second author suggests Harris's ongoing status as a walking anthropological projective test whose very shadow causes twitches in the muscles of colleagues nervous about the possible intrusion of science into anthropology.

2. Harris has occasionally made statements suggesting some ambiguity as to whether our constructs really correspond to reality. When he suggested nearly a quarter-century ago (1964, p. 12) that our conceptual separation of a man from the chair that he is sitting on is an arbitrary fiction of our mind, that neither the man nor the chair are "natural units," that one could just as validly posit a "man/chair" object, he was edging toward a nominalist position. A realist perspective would state firmly that, despite the constructive character of our images and concepts of him, the man is a "natural unit" out there, objectively distinct from the chair. The man is a real entity that our minds discover, not a delusion that we invent. Apart from this passage Harris's formulations are all in a realist tradition.

3. I must hasten to say that the causal linkage posited here between theology and synchronic/descriptive epistemology is accidental, not intrinsic. That is, there have been synchronic paradigms that have arisen in anthropology (such as British Structural Functionalism) without theology as a cause. And conversely there are variants of Christianity, such as the liberation theology of Latin American Catholicism, that seek for diachronic causal explanations in material, rather than preternatural, variables.

4. Prescientific models of gestation generally posit sudden intrauterine leaps into human status or into life itself. The *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (Part 1, q. 76, art. 3) posits a three-phased progression from *anima nutritiva* (plant soul) through *anima sensitiva* (animal soul) to the final infusion of the *anima intellectiva*, the full human soul, at some period later during gestation. A comment by Rashi in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 72b) posits the protrusion of the head beyond the vagina at one point in parturition as the onset of the status of *nefesh chay*, a living soul. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American folk-models of pregnancy assumed that the life of the fetus suddenly began with "quickening," the first perception of fetal movement in the fourth or the fifth month (Mohr, 1978). The onset of the abortion controversy in the United States has triggered feverish maneuvers to find a maturational cutoff point before which legislators, judges, physicians, and parents can be spared the unpleasant

thought that they are authorizing or engaging in the killing of humans. (For a cornucopia of creative circumlocutions, see Bondeson, Engelhardt, Spicker, & Winship, 1984.) "Personhood" and "viability" are the constructs currently being discussed in courtrooms, the former operationally vague and the latter irrelevant to the human or nonhuman status of the targeted organisms.

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