The Institutional Construction of the Self

I. Announcements:
http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/mohr/classes/soc1/
(Note: If you have been using my personal web page as a portal that link will no longer work).

• Plan B--Buy the books.
• Extra Credit Options.
• iClicker.
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III. What is an Institutional Centered Approach?

1. Berger and Berger. What is an institution? (The Case of Language).
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III. What is an Institutional Centered Approach.

2. Examples of Institutions:

- A hospital
- A prison
- A family
- A Marriage
- A handshake
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II. What is an Institution?

3. (Berger & Berger) Language as THE fundamental institution:

A. It has Externality: Experienced as outside of us. (Like trees, tables, & telephones). Speaking is a “throwing out” from inside to outside. English is outside.
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II. What is an Institution?

B. Institutions Objectify Reality (makes things concrete, reduces flux) makes stability.
• correct vs. incorrect English
• seems inevitable
• Piaget “the sun”
II. What is an Institution?

C. Have Coercive Power:
   - Cannot wish it away
   - Transgressions are sanctioned
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II. What is an Institution?

4. Language as THE fundamental institution:

D. Has moral Authority:
   - Right to legitimacy
   - moral indignation is involved

"Now! That should clear up a few things around here!"
II. What is an Institution?

E. Has Historicity:
   - Preceded the individual
   - Will outlast the individual
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III. What is an Institutional Centered Approach.

4. Duranti:
   • Yes, Language is key institution
   • More than this, language fundamentally orders our experience
   • language shapes thought.
   • Cultural Relativism Hypothesis.
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II. What is an Institution?

5. Duranti: Language and Culture

A. Linguistics & Anthropology.

Franz Boas (1858-1942)

Emphasized need to know the language to understand a people
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II. What is an Institution?

Boas: Our Capacity for being “human” is defined by our capacity for abstraction.

Our capacity for abstraction is define by our ability to use language to represent the world.
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II. What is an Institution?

Boas most famous example Eskimo language used to represent snow:

Aput: Snow on ground
Qana: Falling snow
Piqsirpoq: Drifting snow
Qimuqsug: Snowdrift
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II. What is an Institution?

Boas point: Language comes interactively from experiences of the world.

But also, our experience of the world is shaped by our ability to name it, classify it, represent it.
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II. What is an Institution?
   B. Linguistics Relativity Hypothesis aka Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis.

Edward Sapir (1884-1939) student of Boas focused on internal logic of language systems
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II. What is an Institution?

B. Linguistics Relativity Hypothesis aka Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis.

Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941) chemical engineer (interest in language) studied Hopi Language (esp. grammar): Cryptotype (Covert Category) (languages both enable/constrain)
II. What is an Institution?

Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis:

Argued how we experience fundamental physical, material, spiritual, emotional states, conditioned on a linguistically given “world view”

How Time happens.
How Space is experienced, etc.
6. Indeed, some argue the “self” itself is an institution. (Individual Centered vs. Institutional Centered...)

Marcel Mauss (1872-1950):

A. The “Self” a cultural construct — varies....
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Marcel Mauss. 1938. “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self.”

- French Anthropologist (student/nephew) of Emile Durkheim
- Looks at differing concept of the person (or the self (moi))
6. Indeed, some argue the self itself is an institution.
if the self varies — what varies?

Human existence is fundamentally conditioned by our understanding of our existence.
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C. If the self varies — what varies?

- Ideas vary
- (but) Ideas are linked w/ the physical
- Ideas of our selves (as selves)
- sense of ourselves as beings w/ inner depths, that we are ‘selves’
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D. Marcel Mauss.

- “Individuation” always exists
  “In no way do I maintain that there has ever been a tribe, a language, in which the term “I”, “me” has never existed, or that it has not expressed something clearly represented...there has never existed a human being who has not been aware, not only of his body...his individuality, both spiritual & physical.”
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-LINK-
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A. Marcel Mauss (1872-1950)
   — Self as embodied in very strong “role” expectations (Zuni)
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D. Marcel Mauss.

• Zuni (Pueblo Indians)
• Limited # forenames / clan
• An exact role each on the “cast-list” of the clan, expressed by that name
• each name assd. w/ animal totem
• right leg of animal, or left foot
• each has moral, hierarchical value
• never greet as brother, always “elder brother” (etc.) reflect ranking
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D. Marcel Mauss.

• Clan = certain # persons
• Each is to act out the prefigured totality of the clan
• Each acts out not just individuals responsibility, but cosmological meaning of the clan, the totem, etc.
• The “person” totally absorbed into identity vis-a-vis clan
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D. Marcel Mauss.

- What is at stake — very existence of the clan, the animal totem, all all ancestors reincarnated in rightful successors (same forename)
- Role takes precedence over the self
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D. Roman Society ("personae")—
"citizen" changes rights and expectations and begins to change experience of selfhood
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D. Marcel Mauss.

• Romans — The person as citizen
• the person more than organizational fact, or a right to assume a role
• Instead, a basic fact of law “personae” (a mask)
• The person becomes an entity with “Rights”
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D. Marcel Mauss.

• Romans — Earlier organized as clans w/ totems (Romulus/Remus)
• A revolution by plebs was decisive
• All freeman of Rome were citizens (not slaves)
• equal rights before laws
• New logic of naming emerges
• Relation to ancestors changes, as reflecting images and ideals
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II. Mauss:

E. Christian ("personne") — Dualisms of self and a more complex moral calculus
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D. Marcel Mauss.

- Christians (personne)
- from persona ("a man clad in a condition") to personne (the human "person")
- Moral complexity of achievement organized around complex dualism of selfhood
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D. Marcel Mauss.

• Dualism of Self
  Soul/Body
  Sin/Grace
  Life/Death

• An internal Calculus of Action
  Free Will
  Predestination
  Body as Eternal
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II. :

F. Luther & Calvin — More personal relationship with God (even more complex internal moral dilemmas).
II. Max Weber: (1864-1920)

A consequence of Calvinism the conditions lead to the creation of a particular kind of self (a’la Benjamin Franklin).

More and more selves of this type lead to change in overall society (Rational Capitalism).
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1. The Revolution of Martin Luther (1517)
   - “The Calling”
   - Against the Religious Elite (Catholics)
   - Personal Relationship w/ God
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2. John Calvin (Geneva, 1540’s)

- Against “Moral Bank Account”
- Predestination (creates anxiety)
- The “Chosen”
- A “Godly Life”
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3. Traditional vs. Rational Capitalism
   • Puritan Ethic (honesty, deny pleasures of the flesh, long, hard work)
   • Benjamin Franklin
   • “A penny Saved if a Penny earned”
   • “Waste not want not”
   • “Time is Money”
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D. Marcel Mauss.

- From the Person to the Self (Psychological Being)
- Enlightenment Philosophies broke from giveness of the soul, to the free calculus of the cognitive, calculating individual. Mind/body dualism
- Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789)
II. :
G. The Enlightenment
— from moral dilemmas of self to scientific dilemmas of the universe
Cogito Ergo Sum—
I think therefore I am,
(René Descartes, 1596-1650)
II. Review:

H. Mauss: Evolution of The Western Self. Main idea — Society creates conditions according to which room for us to sculpt our own identity.

(Limited —> Extensive)