Cultural Relativism in Relation to Constraints on World View—An Emic Perspective

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World views differ partly, but not completely. Goodman mentions, for philosophy, 'radical relativism under rigorous restraints' (1978). This relates to "emics" and an insider's view of his own culture. Here I use folktales, or other Mixtec (Mexico) texts, with comments on them by a native speaker, to show some kinds of contexts in which they are told: context of class of tale; context of slot in time or place or situation of its telling; context of its role as to why the tale is told in particular circumstances; and context in relation to cohesion of the tale content and usage with the general background of beliefs and social structure of the teller.

I. The Observer Comprises Part of the Data Accessible to Persons

I assume that the search for pattern, in part, defines the search for truth. But—I further assume—pattern is in part discovered in data, and in part is a creation of the observer to help in understanding some relations interesting, to him, relations between parts of data. In the words of Nelson Goodman, philosopher, something like this requires, perhaps, 'a radical relativism under rigorous restraints' (1978. x). Although Goodman feels uncomfortable 'with the windmills of current linguistics' (103), nevertheless I wish to try to use a variety of linguistics which I have helped develop—tagmemics, from Pike 1954 on. And, since Goodman treats symbols, including linguistic ones, so seriously, I hope that this might prove to be appropriate. I agree with him that, in some way, a degree of both relativism and non-relativism are both facts for us—but I feel that through linguistics we might be able to study that relationship a bit further.

Immanuel Kant in his book on the metaphysics of ethics (1785, quoted

here from the translation by Manthey-Zorn [1938] 1966. 70) insists that 'we can attain to a knowledge of *appearances* only, never to the *things in themselves*'; but 'it follows of itself that behind the appearances something else that is not appearance, namely the things in themselves, must after all be admitted and assumed'—and that the appearances 'may be extremely various according as the sensibility of the observer varies, while the latter which is its basis always remains the same.' Goodman (1978. x), in his turn, considers himself in this 'main stream' that began with Kant. Both require a degree of relativity to the observer, in understanding his categorization of the structure of the universe. Both require a stopping place, in that total relativity must not take over. Both give to the observer a place in the universe which makes him a part of the universe as he knows it, and, in part, a creator of his categorization of the items and structures of the universe. Both deal with common knowledge but do not stop with it—or, as Kant says ([1785], in Manthey-Zorn [1938] 1966), he proceeds 'analytically from common knowledge to the determination of its supreme principle and back again... to the common knowledge in which we find it applied.' and here, again, I find comfort in that I, too, start with common knowledge. I begin with knowledge of language, move to tagmemic linguistic theory, then to human nature in general, and back to living in our ordinary world.

Kant, in his ethics, adds a non-relative principle. He looks ([1785] in [1938] 1966. 24) for a principle *'necessary*, not only for man, but for all *rational creatures in general, ...absolutely'*; and (33) 'This imperative is CATEGORICAL' and 'may be called the IMPERATIVE OF MORALITY.' And (38) 'there is only one categorical imperative and it is this: *Act only on that maxim which will enable you at the same time to will that it be a universal law*' (for all persons and all rational beings). Kant treats the will, as acting on this principle, as autonomous-- as (59) 'a law to itself'; and, in turn, (65-68) freedom must be presupposed if there is to be autonomy of the will.

I would myself presuppose, here, that some degree of freedom underlies the possibility of some degree of relativism in differences of world views and cultural behavior patterns. Some freedom, that is, is presupposed in this paper for different "insider" (emic) views to have developed into different patterns as observable by us.

II. The Native Observer Operates Within A System (Pattern) of Structures Relevant to His Particular Culture or Cultures. This Should Be Partly Accessible to the Outside Observer By A Study of Folklore and other texts

All human beings operate in their respective cultures under partial constraints of the expectancies of that culture--its units and patterns as seen by members of that culture. How can we find out how people see such structures, *from their own (i. e. emic) structured point of view?* And how can we see the assumptions underlying a culture, in relation to the variables used by those people in applying them in their daily lives in interacting with each other?

Various approaches have been used to study the question. Haviland found it insightful to listen to gossip between people, where motives and attitudes come to the surface. He says (1977. 56): 'A gossip text necessarily offers an "emic" description of behavior, which goes beyond ordinary observables... gossip frequently aludes to motivation, state of mind, emotion, intent, and so on--"inner states"... [it] consequently alludes to generally inaccessible bodies of native theory and belief.' But in spite of a variety of attempts to study such matters, Kearney as recently as 1984. ix says, concerning 'what a world view might be and how it was formed,' that, surprisingly, 'no comprehensive model of it has been formed prior to this effort' of his; he is interested (207) in universal categories 'for cross-cultural comparison of world views.' But in this paper, I-- Pike-- am focussing not on general behavioral sources, but on the relation of folklore to world view.

And concerning the study of folklore, Dundes stated some years ago (1968. 467) that 'For most of the thousands of song and folktale texts recorded in the ethnographic literature, there is either no interpretation at all or else a passing speculative comment or two provided by the collector, who tells what *he* thinks the song or tale means.' More recently, however, in a foreword to Sparing (1984. xi), he treats her work as an 'important study with its emphasis upon world view' which 'stands as a unique contribution to our knowledge of the folktale' and also(x) includes 'an admirable overview of contemporary folktale and worldview scholarship.' Sparing herself chooses to emphasize 'interpersonal relationships' (47) in seeking to answer questions about methods, genre form, the choice of storytellers, and 'the character, life, beliefs, and world view of the community where it [the tale] circulates' (27).

III. The Search for Emic Units May Be Supplemented By the Study of Their Relationship To Class, Slot, Role, and Cohesion

In the late forties I felt the need of searching for a relation between the then-prominent study of phonemics and the study of grammar. Could there be a unit in grammar, comparable to the unit of the phoneme for pronunciation? By 1949 I was convinced that there was, and later published the terms "emic" and "etic" in the first volume of the first edition of my book Language, in 1954. (See, for example, Chapter 2, on 'Emic and Etic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior,' as well as Chapters 12 and 13 in the third volume, 1960; or see, now, the same chapters in the second edition, 1967.) If 'cat' and 'bat' differ phonemically by the contrast between the phonemes /k/ and /b/, so, also, question and answer differ, in reply to a comment by another person. And if the term 'phonemic' represents the analogous contrastive relation for sounds, and if the 'phon-' part means sound, then by dropping the first part of 'phonemic' we may create the term "emic," and use it in analogous situations of grammar-- or of non-

verbal behavior. Hence the term applies to a broad spectrum of uses (e. g. church services, football games, breakfast scenes, in Chapters 3, 4, 5, of 1954 and 1967).

But one caution: As I use the terms, emic is rather rigid for a particular language once the analysis is made (but with some arguments or differences of opinion among scholars who reach somewhat different conclusions). But the term "etic" functions differently. If one collects lists of the phones of many different languages, and compiles them into some kind of a system useful to and pleasing to the investigator, the units in it are abstracted from the original sources, but are now used as a starting "grid" through which to look at a strange language. Many of the terms, or symbols reflecting those terms, can be used to write the material. But some items will be overlooked, because of the initial bias of the outside investigator; and some symbols may be used for a time which will not be relevant-- they may seem to introduce some contrasts which are not reacted to by the insider. And as the analysis and the analyst's experience grows, his representation of the structure will approximate more closely the structure reacted to by the insider-- and the outsider becomes more of an insider in behavior.

Other scholars may use these terms somewhat differently. For a sample discussion, see Fischer and Werner(1978), where some of the debate centers around differences suggested by Marvin Harris. For Harris (1985. 124-25, fourth edition), 'The test of the adequacy of etic accounts, however, is simply their ability to generate scientific theories about the causes of sociocultural differences and similarities'; and here the data are those seen and interpreted by the analyst, but not necessarily seen or interpreted in the same way by the native. On the other hand, the etic view does not, for him, employ 'concepts that are necessarily real, meaningful, and appropriate from the native point of view' [which would lead to emic units]. So that, for him, (125) structure consists 'of the economic and political etic and

behavioral activites [not at all necessarily conscious ones] by which every society organizes itself into groups that allocate, regulate, and exchange goods and labor'; and, hence, for him (personal communciation 1986), 'this formulation [of emic versus etics] transcends the insider/outsider dichotomy.' And by this approach he discusses economically 'generated' changes which occur over a span of centuries, which I have not tried to handle; synchronic and diachronic approaches need, ultimately, to be integrated (as some scholars in historical linguistics have tried to do).

Nevertheless, in spite of work still needing to be done on the emic-etic relationship, it should continue to make a contribution. I shall attempt one here. I shall discuss, not insider vs. outsider relations, nor long-range historical changes, but folklore or other texts from one partial perspective related to a component of tagmemic theory. In recent treatments by Pike and Pike ([1977] 1982), by Pike (1982), and by Pike and Pike (1983), a four-cell approach has been made to the tagmeme, treated as a unit which includes the context in which emic units occur (since the tagmeme is a 'unit-in-context', Pike 1982). The four components include; (1) a CLASS (or general set) of items (folktales, or texts) in which the particular item occurs (and part of the context of the particular text is its membership in the general set); (2) the particular position, or social situation, or SLOT, in a larger social context within which members of the class are customarily told; (3) the purpose, or ROLE, leading to or justifying or explaining or comprising the function or use of the tale; and (4) the broader general background structure, or belief, or experience, or cultural system, or COHESION, within which the tale takes place, with which it is coherent, and which in part controls the use of the tale or the interpretation of the tale.

IV. One Mixtec Speaker Gives Data, Here, About Class, Slot, Role, and Cohesion As He Sees Them Related to Several Mixtec Folktales or Other Texts

In 1959 Dyk published, along with English translations, 43 texts in the

Mixtec American Indian language of southern Mexico. I had myself studied this language off and on from 1935-1947, and learned to speak it as my second language. One of my friends there I shall refer to as AM, since, in general, he prefers that his name not be mentioned in studies, (even though he himself has submitted a couple of items for publication under his own name). I discussed, in Mixtec, each of these tales with AM, seeking to understand more of their social and philosophical background, usage, and significance. I have selected several of the items from Dyk, with comments which he has made (orally in Mixtec, or written in Spanish), but which I have translated into English. My selection is made from bits which appear to me to illustrate AM's views about class, slot, role, and cohesion in reference to this material. Quotation marks enclose such selected material from AM.

(A note as to what I am *not* giving here: I am not eliciting or presenting material on the levels of the phonological hierarchy, nor levels of the grammatical or referential one, with their units described in terms of the four-cell features of those units. For such phonological material, concerning an English text, see Pike and Pike Chapter 2, 1983; for grammatical and referential tree structure and cell components in an English text, see Evelyn Pike in Pike and Pike 1983 Chapter 1. For the levels of referential structure of a tale in Mixtec about the rabbit and a coyote, see Pike and Pike 1983. 325-34—and cf. also a grammatical tree for its English translation, 250-51.)

A. The Wind (in Dyk 1959. 171—a three-line item):

CLASS (the set): Explanations of natural events as linked to supernatural sources and bad spirits. The particular member of the class (the text or tale itself): The wind is in a house of the devil [spirit/wind], and when the door is opened, the wind scatters, and blows hard.

SLOT: Used in places and at times where it is appropriate 'for instruction.'

ROLE: 'Explained to folks so that they will be cautious, since the wind is bad.' 'The wind is bad—it can destroy everything.' 'In December of 1984 it destroyed many houses in several towns.'

COHESION: 'When there was a whirlwind which destroyed houses and a large quantity of wheat, the ancients said that it was related to a devil.' 'It is bad, since in those times people cannot work.' Now, however, folks think that it 'is not related to the devil,' but natural. In the past, they thought the evidence proving its bad nature was in that it 'destroyed houses, killed animals, tore down trees.' And the ancients 'said that the wind had its house in the mountains, and they believed that a supreme God created the wind; and that a devil took advantage of the situation to be in the wind—thus the ancients believed, but not I.'

B. The Skunks Look for a Godfather (in Dyk 1959. 65-73):

CLASS: Stories about animals. The particular member of the class (the tale itself): The skunk couple look for a godfather to go with them to the priest, to have the child baptised. Finally, they recruited the lion, but, at the feast, the lion refuses to eat worms. Searching for food more appropriate for the lion, the skunk tries to kill an ox, which was lying down, by spraying it; but the skunk gets gored, and dies. They all cry.

SLOT: Used at a feast, or at a lunch for workmen, when there is not enough food.

ROLE: Folks can use the story to put indirect pressure, via shame, 'on someone who doesn't know how to take care of his neighbors.' And it can be used 'as an indirect statement against people who do not know how to take care of their godparents adequately.' Or it can be told for a joke, but 'the joke can fall heavy' when there is not enough food.

COHESION: Within the tale, there is implication of religious beliefs or practices concerning baptism, and the relation of the godfather to society: 'If the child dies, the godfather is responsible for burying the child.' When someone refuses(as did the coyote, before the lion accepted),

'the society criticizes that person'; and if the parents cannot provide food at the fiesta, 'there comes shame.'

C. Sickness Caused from Craving Certain Foods (in Dyk 19549. 80-83):

CLASS: Explanations of natural phenomena, with a subset about 'craving sicknesses.' The specific story: If a child wants certain foods, and does not get them, he has trouble; e. g., if he wants peas, and does not get them, his feet split, like roasting peas. The parents treat the illness by buying and cooking the appropriate food, and rubbing it on the sick parts of the body.

SLOT: Used 'when they don't have money to buy what the children want.'

ROLE: Explanation of causes and cures of children's illnesses.

COHESION: 'The family itself can make the cure; no curer is necessary.' The society itself has 'no sanctions or criticisms against this practice.'

D. How the Spirits Were Deceived (in Dyk 1959. 105-07):

CLASS: Influences of bad supernatural beings. The specific story: A man saw spirits coming, riding on horses. He told a woman to sacrifice a pig and a chicken to protect herself. The demons left, angry. 'It is very different, this story of the spirits, from smaller diseases—this is a supernatural spirit, and different since it rides a horse, talks, and wants to rob a woman.'

SOLT: 'Used when working in the fields; or on a town job, when a lot of talk is going on.' AM 'heard about this when his grandparents were talking together.'

ROLE: People, hearing the story, used it to 'search more carefully to know the reality' about these evil spirits; they 'ask friends if it is true or not—how the house looks, the clothing.' etc.

COHESION: The spirits 'are part of the supernatural which do these things'; and 'the spirits are looking for souls to be their servants in the darkness where they live.' Grandparents say that 'these bad ones live in the

cliffs of the mountains, have good houses underground, rob men, women and children.' 'The demons avoid houses where there are hens, pigs, dogs, since these animals cry out and the demons flee.' And 'when people have accepted money from these demons, the demons [after the people die] dig them from the graves and take them to their [demon] houses, bring them back to life, and use them for servents—people say.' 'Grandparents—including mine—also said that the bad spirits indeed walked,' 'and also talked like natural human beings, and talked just as people to do today.' And 'the story is within our society today,' [so we know that] 'there are people who believe it in our time.'

E. Some Poor People Go to Live with a Rich Man (in Dyk 1959. 139-45):

CLASS: One of numerous dangers [in ancient times] of 'criticizing their gods for not giving good crops, or rain—with failure to see that there are good times and bad times; but at no time did they criticize the one God True and Supreme' for events and situations. Particular member of the class: The wife of a poor man blasphemes, because of poverty. The rich man takes the poor couple to his house, giving them good food. The woman lifts up a bowl, to peek to see what was hidden under it. A mouse from under the bowl escapes, which makes the rich man get angry, so he whips the poor couple, and drives them out to work in the fields again. AM volunteered another story of this class: 'Compare, also, the story of a young girl, who didn't want to marry a man who was poor and colored; she wanted a man lovely, handsome, and rich; the devil heard and turned himself into a natural man, of good height, lovely and handsome, and with much money, and deceived the young lady and took her—and the young lady never showed up again—people say.'

SLOT: Such materials may enter discussions of poverty and riches, and their relationships, e.g. 'the possibility of being born predestined by God to be rich or poor.' 'Used when working in the fields; or on a town job

〔e. g. "tax work, " with many people involved〕, when a lot of talk is going on.'

ROLE: The story may be told to condemn laziness. On the other hand, sometimes the 'rich mistreat the poor, and the poor may unite to oppose the rich—and if it gets difficult, the municipal authorities may intervene.'

COHESION: Both poor and rich are in the village, together. 'The ancient and current grandfathers thought that God castigated the poor and blessed the rich—that the rich were in some sense sons of God, and the poor bastards.' That 'God sent the one to misery, and the other to good living.'

F. The Rainbow (in Dyk 1959. 170-71):

CLASS: Natural phenomena seen as nonphysical. Particular member: The rainbow is a snake. A pregnant woman who looks at the rainbow may lose her child; if the child points her finger at it, her finger may become infected. If she wants to go look where the rainbow is, it moves, since it is a snake.

SOLT: 'Told to pregnant women' when it is raining, and they 'cannot leave the house with the rainbow coming.'

ROLE: For 'telling pregnant women to be careful when there is a rainbow' 'since it can make the baby die, or cause an abortion.'

COHESION: 'The civil authorities have nothing to say about this.' It is not just a "story, " but people say it is a thing 'about nature, ' which causes 'its effects with it's shadow or with the rays of the sun.' On the other hand, 'the ancients thought it was the water snake.' 'They believed it because this snake damaged a pregnant woman, who then had an abortion, and so the ancients believed that it is bad.'

G. Predicting the Weather (in Dyk 175-77):

CLASS: One of the characteristics of relationships between components of time and event in nature. Particular member: The days of January help one to predict the weather for the months of the year to come; the

twelfth day, for example, helps to predict the weather for December. Then by backward count of the months, further information is obtained. 'It is neither a joke, nor about demons, but a social custom that at times does not coincide with the calculations.'

SLOT: In time: Used early in the year.

ROLE: To predict the weather of the months to come that year.

COHESION: AM says that this is neither a joke, nor religious—but useless—'a vain belief' held 'by fifty percent of the people'—who are 'uneducated' ones—now; but AM has tried it, and it does not work; it 'does not help in planting'.

H. The Man Who Went to the Coast to Sell Ashes (in Dyk 1959. 124-31):

CLASS: A teaching tale; simultaneously a member of the class of joking stories. Particular member: A travelling salesman persuaded another man to carry ashes for sale, to the coast; the salesman was lying, saying that the ashes would sell well. The new man ended up unable to sell the ashes, but one person gave him a mask, in pity. Later, he rejoined the first salesman; they went to bed where smoke from the fire was bad. While the salesman and another companion slept, the ash-man put on his mask to protect himself from the smoke. The others awoke, saw the mask, and were frightened by the presumed ghost. They ran away, in fear, fell into a gorge, and died. So the cheated man got their money and animals.

SLOT: Used at teaching times; or at joking times. (See also role, for overlap.)

ROLE: The lying salesman 'was greedy, and didn't want anyone else to bother him in selling.' The teller of the tale may use it 'to show people, who don't know, how to be prepared for trickery.' Or 'to teach children what can happen to them via lying.' Or 'to teach old folks how to buy and sell, so as not to get cheated as Mr. Ashes did.' Or, sometimes, 'there are also people who want to hear, in order to laugh and have a brief

diversion.'

COHESION: 'Some grandfathers, including the present ones [and the ancients], say that the person who cheats has a lying spirit in him; e.g. if a workman does not show up for work when he promises to.' But others reject this explanation. In fact, village 'officials, upon request, punish the lying thief; this I [i.e. AM] have seen.' 'Twenty days of travel would have been lost, and the wife was waiting for money; so the deceived "ashes" man would have been scolded by the society.' [And for such social punishments, see Pike 1986 for a discussion of the loss of social "credit rating, " and ostracism, in this Mixtec area.]

V. Conclusion:

One aspect of an "internal" (emic) perspective on the world view of a culture can be obtained by a study of folklore, or other texts, from the viewpoint of the four-cell component of tagmemic theory applied to texts as wholes, viewed with the help of commentary by a native speaker who serves as an interpreter of the contents of the texts. Each of the four components encourages a search for context of one of several types relevant to the texts: What other texts serve in a comparable way (Class)? At what point or place or time in a specific social activity may the text or text type be used (Slot)? Why do they use the text—to accomplish what covert or overt aims as felt by the users or hearers of the texts (Role)? What metaphysical or epistemological convictions must underlie or control such usage for it to be appropriate for such usage (Cohesion)?

(And, in turn, underlying my own paper here, are my own assumptions. Some of them: That language is an intimate component of the larger belief and behavior patterns of a society; that such patterns, once seen as wholes, comprise a kind of theory about some components of the structure of such a society; that behavior, including language behavior, is hierarchically structured, with levels from small included bits to larger including ones;

that three hieraracies of behavior are relevant here —physical (e. g. phonology); sequential structures (e. g. grammar); and content of understanding (e. g. referential, including one's inner "encyclopedia"); that each unit at each level of each hierarchy can be viewed profitably from the four—cell approach; and that the observer (including me, here), can choose to perceive such items in a static way (as particles), in a dynamic sequential one (as waves), and as a system or pattern (field). Here, however, I have restricted my discussion to the components of the four-cell material applied to the texts as wholes, in relation to their referential structure; further study could treat other phases of those structures.)

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