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Bronisław Malinowski

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Bronisław Kasper Malinowski was born on April 7, 1884, in Krakow (Austria-Hungary, now Poland) and died May 16, 1942, in New Haven (the United States). Malinowski is widely recognized as one of the founders of modern social anthropology. In 1908, Malinowski was awarded a doctorate in philosophy at the Jagiellonian University.

As a young scholar, he was interested in mathematics and the physical sciences. However, after reading James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* he, was inspired to continue his studies under the direction of Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of experimental psychology, at the University of Leipzig. In 1910, he moved to the United Kingdom to take postgraduate studies in social anthropology at the London School of Economics (LSE). He conducted his studies under the direction of Edward Westermarck and Charles Seligman. In 1913, Malinowski published a book *The Family among the Australian Aborigines*, which is an example of his early non-field work.

In 1914, Malinowski received a scholarship to study in New Guinea. In 1914-1915, he worked on the island of Toulon among a Papuan/ Melanesian people and in 1915-1918 on the Trobriand Islands. After returning from these studies, Malinowski spent some time in Australia where he married Elsie Masson in 1919. Their letters represent the background of Malinowski's field research (Wayne 1995). In 1922, his book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* was published, which provided him with international recognition among anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists. In the meantime, Malinowski lectured at many prestigious European universities. In 1927, he began working as a professor and a chair of anthropology at the LSE. In 1939, with the beginning of World War II, he decided to stay in the United States, where he influenced many of the American anthropologists. In 1940-1941, before his sudden death, Malinowski took new fieldwork among the Zapotec Indians in Mexico (Drucker-Brown 1982).

Malinowski is a precursor to the triangulation of research methods and techniques by combining genealogical tables, interviews, statistics, and observation. In his approach, he was trying to capture the natives' view of the world through the prism consisting of a proper way of thinking and emotions. These abilities made it possible to recognize the main views common in the researched community. Malinowski recommended that researchers should live among

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communities for the entire time of observations because it allows empathic entry into their social world. It is also crucial to learn and use the language of the indigenous people because using an interpreter leads to distorted observations. In addition, research methodology should be kept adjusted to the situation. The fundamental duty of the researcher is to respect the laws, rules, and customs in a way that will not disrupt the functioning of the community. At the same time, the insights should be noted whenever possible on an ongoing basis.

Malinowski's anthropological functionalism takes into account even the smallest cultural phenomena that are part of a wider holistic approach to the social system (for example, the Kula ring). Social structure in Malinowski's theory is subordinate to culture. In this approach, all cultures have the same value, as the primary goal of each culture is to meet the needs of the community. Despite the differences, the needs are the driving forces of socio-economic development. Understanding the mechanisms involved in meeting the needs cannot be achieved without the knowledge of the cultural contexts in which the phenomenon occurs. According to Malinowski, the culture is the stimulus for adaptation of the community and is determined by the natural environment. Culture is an indivisible whole, and its parts as things, actions, and attitudes are closely related. Each element assumes the function, which might vary depending on the context.

Thus, he recognized that all institutions contain some universal elements that can be compiled and used as dimensions to compare different institutions. These universal features of the institution include: personnel (who participates); the statute (aim and objectives); standards (which regulate and organize behavior); material equipment (tools and resources); actions (separation of tasks between members); and functions (satisfying the needs through activities).

Symbolic culture through the prism of the functional theory appears to be internally diverse. It consists of three main elements: the practice of magic, mythological dogma, and religious dogma. The magic provides patterns of behavior undertaken within primary institutions when the changes of external conditions paralyze the efficient operation of the mechanism of rewards and punishments. The religion, similarly, to the myth, provides an extensive regulatory framework by tying secondary institutions into a coherent whole. The magic, therefore, creates a pragmatic realm of symbolic culture. Both the myth and religion perform the functions of integration. Malinowski understands magic as a set of practical acts, as a means of achieving the objectives. Religion is an element of social ties. Religious behavior is a goal in itself. According to Malinowski, religion is a combination of social institutions and human mental attitudes, which highlights its external and internal specificity.

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SEE ALSO: Anthropology, Social and Cultural; Ethnography; Evans-Pritchard, E.E.; Functionalism; Religion

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