A.R Radcliffe Brown: Structural-Functional Approach

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Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown
1881-1955

- English Social Anthropologist of the 20th century who developed a systematic framework of concepts and generalizations relating to the social structures of preindustrial societies and their functions.

- He is widely known for his theory of functionalism and his role in the founding of British social anthropology.
Introduction

• Radcliffe-Brown was born in Sparkbrook, Birmingham, England. After studying at Trinity College, Cambridge, he travelled to the Andaman Islands (1906-1908) and Western Australia (1910-1912) to conduct fieldwork into the workings of the societies there, serving as the inspiration for his later books *The Andaman Islanders* (1922) and *The Social Organization of Australian Tribes* (1930). His most famous work *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952) was published posthumously.

• Radcliffe-Brown has often been associated with functionalism, and is considered by some to be the founder of structural functionalism. Nonetheless, Radcliffe-Brown vehemently denied being a functionalist.
Introduction

• The concept structure refers to an arrangements of parts or components related to one another in some sort of larger unity e.g. arrangements of walls, roofs etc.

• In social structure the ultimate components are human beings or persons in relation to one another.

• The most important structural feature in Radcliffe Brown’s opinion is the arrangements of people into dyadic relationships. eg Tribes of Australia, where the whole social structure is based on a network of such person to person relations.

• Under Social structure, the differentiation of individuals and of categories and classes by their roles must also be included.
Social Structure and Social Organization

• Structure refers to the arrangements of persons while organization refers to the arrangement of activities e.g. modern army.
• The organization of the army is the arrangement of activities which can be seen in the allocation of the various activities to the various persons and groups.
Social Structure and Institutions

• Established norms of conduct are referred to as Institutions.
• He states that social Structure has to be described in relation by the Institutions
• Institutions define the proper or expected conduct of persons in their various relationships.
Social Structure and Social Values

- Social relation exists between two or more individual organisms when there is some adjustments of their respective interests.
- He states that social relation does not result from similarity of interests.
- When two or more persons have a common interest in an object, that object can be said to have social value for the persons associated.
Structural Continuity and structural Form

• Social structure is the arrangement of persons. And social continuity is the continuity of such arrangements.
• The social continuity of an organism is thus dynamic in nature. Therefore the structure is being constantly renewed.
• On other hand Structural form is comparatively stable e.g. usages persist though persons come or go.
Conclusion

• Radcliffe brown, thus states that in the study of social structure relations the concrete reality with which we are concerned is the set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time. These link together certain human beings. Social structure therefore, is to be defined as continuing arrangement of reasons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions i.e. socially established norms and patterns of behavior.
THANK YOU