

Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropology

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Anthropologypresents a series of essays from leading anthropologists that
critically reexamine the relevance of holism as a foundational tenet of
anthropology, and its theoretical and methodological potential in today's world.

- Represents the first volume to consider the modern role of holism as a central anthropological concern across a wide range of anthropological traditions
- Critically examines the past and present predicament of holism and its potential for the renewal of future practice
- Features contributions from leading anthropologists which discuss how anthropology should be re-designed in the context of a changing world
- Challenges many of contemporary anthropology's central methods, theory, and functions



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Editorial Review

Review

The term "holism" is shorthand for a central predicament in anthropology: human situations are culturally structured, but individuals, who participate in more than one cultural "whole," can sometimes change the rules. This volume explores the theoretical space between those two aspects of the human condition. *Richard Handler, University of Virginia*

These authors persuasively, even passionately, refocus the analysis of socio-cultural ontology. In showing how the simplistic rejection of past holisms undermined anthropology's fundamental commitments, they instead devise ingeniously critical new perspectives reflecting today's massively reconfigured and variegated understandings of context.

Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University)

In this capacious and brilliantly-edited collection, holism no longer suggests a totalizing project, but rather an indispensable toolkit of world-making strategies. The innovative essays gathered here map a new, multi-scaled landscape of Anthropological research.

James Clifford, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Author of The Predicament of Culture.

'Holism' does its magic again. This is an extraordinarily interesting commentary on the present state of anthropology that would never have come together without the editors' pursuit of an apparently unfashionable idea.

Marilyn Strathern

From the Back Cover

Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropologypresents a series of essays that critically examine the ongoing relevance of holism and its theoretical and methodological potential in today's world. Contributions from a diverse collection of leading anthropologists reveal how recent critiques of the holistic approach have not led to its wholesale rejection, but rather to a panoply of experiments that critically reassess and reemploy holism. The essays focus on aspects of holism including its utilization in current ethnographic research, holistic considerations in cultural anthropology, the French structuralist tradition, the predominantly English tradition of social anthropology, and many others. Collectively, the essays show how holism is simultaneously central to, and problematically a part of, the theory and practice of anthropology. Experiments in Holism reveals how contemporary attempts to rescale and retool anthropology entail new ways of coming to terms with anthropology's heritage of holism, seeking to obviate its current excesses while recapturing its critical potential to meet the challenges of our contemporary world.

About the Author

Ton Otto is Professor of Anthropology and Ethnography at Aarhus University, Denmark, and Professor and Research Leader at The Cairns Institute, James Cook University, Australia. His most recent publications include the co-edited volumes: *Tradition and Agency: Tracing Cultural Continuity and Invention* (2005, with Poul Pedersen) and *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives* (2006, with Henrik Thrane and Helle Vandkilde).

Nils Bubandt is Professor of Anthropology at Aarhus University and co-editor-in-chief of Ethnos. He is the co-author of *Imagining Nature: Practices of Cosmology and Identity* (2003, with Andreas Roepstorff and Kalevi Kull), and has published numerous articles on topics such as forgery, witchcraft, globalization, and conflict.

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