

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal

Ruth Benedict Anthropology and the Abnormal: Exploring Cultural Patterns and Deviance

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal might sound like an unusual pairing at first. After all, Ruth Benedict is primarily known as a pioneering anthropologist who focused on cultural patterns, values, and norms. Yet, her work offers profound insights into how societies define what is "normal" and, by contrast, what is considered "abnormal." This dynamic interplay between culture and deviance remains relevant today for understanding social behavior, psychology, and even morality.

In this article, we'll explore how Ruth Benedict's anthropological theories shed light on the concept of the abnormal, why what counts as deviant varies across cultures, and how this perspective challenges our assumptions about normality.

Ruth Benedict: A Brief Introduction

Ruth Benedict was an influential American anthropologist in the early 20th century, closely associated with the Boasian school of anthropology. She is best known for her groundbreaking book **Patterns of Culture** (1934), where she argued that each culture has its own unique "personality" or configuration of values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Unlike earlier anthropologists who often judged non-Western cultures by Western standards, Benedict emphasized cultural relativism—the idea that one should understand behaviors and beliefs within their cultural contexts rather than imposing external notions of right or wrong. This approach was revolutionary and opened the door for deeper explorations into cultural diversity and human psychology.

Understanding the Abnormal Through Culture

The Cultural Construction of Normality and Abnormality

One of the key insights from Ruth Benedict's work is that what a society labels as "abnormal" or "deviant" is largely a cultural construct. Behaviors that are considered acceptable and normal in one culture might be seen as strange or pathological in another. For example, certain rituals, dress codes, or social roles may seem unusual to outsiders but hold significant meaning within their communities.

This understanding challenges the universalist view that there is a fixed standard for what counts as normal human behavior. Instead, Benedict's anthropology suggests that abnormality is relative and contingent on cultural norms.

Patterns of Culture and Their Impact on Behavior

In *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict describes cultures as coherent patterns that shape the personalities and behaviors of their members. She famously contrasted the Zuni, Dobu, and Kwakiutl cultures, highlighting how each promotes different ideals and social norms.

This framework helps explain why certain behaviors that might be pathologized in one culture are celebrated in another. For example, in a culture that prizes conformity and social harmony, individualistic or eccentric behavior could be seen as abnormal. Conversely, in cultures that value independence and self-expression, the same behaviors might be normalized or even admired.

Ruth Benedict and the Anthropology of Deviance

Challenging Western Notions of Mental Illness

Benedict's perspective is particularly influential in the anthropology of deviance and mental illness. She argued that psychiatric categories are themselves culturally bound and that what one society calls a mental disorder might be understood differently elsewhere.

For instance, some indigenous groups interpret psychological distress through spiritual or religious lenses rather than medical ones. This insight encourages anthropologists and mental health professionals to approach mental illness with cultural sensitivity, recognizing that the abnormal is not a fixed biological fact but a social and cultural label.

The Role of Social Norms in Defining the Abnormal

Social norms play a crucial role in demarcating abnormality. Benedict's work shows that norms are not mere arbitrary rules but are deeply embedded in cultural values and practices. When individuals violate these norms, they may be stigmatized, marginalized, or labeled as deviant.

However, norms themselves evolve over time and across societies. What was once abnormal can become normal and vice versa. For example, attitudes toward gender roles, sexuality, or even mental health have shifted dramatically in many cultures over the last century.

Practical Implications of Benedict's Ideas on Abnormality

Enhancing Cross-Cultural Understanding

One of the most important takeaways from Ruth Benedict's anthropology is the need for empathy and cultural relativism when dealing with behaviors deemed abnormal. Whether in clinical psychology, social work, or international relations, recognizing the cultural context behind behavior can prevent misunderstandings and promote more effective communication.

Informing Modern Psychology and Anthropology

Benedict's work laid the foundation for cultural psychiatry and medical anthropology, fields that examine how culture influences mental health, illness, and healing. Today, practitioners in these fields strive to develop culturally appropriate diagnostic tools and interventions, respecting the diversity in definitions of the abnormal.

Encouraging Self-Reflection on Our Own Cultural Norms

By highlighting how culture shapes our views of normality, Benedict invites us to reflect critically on our own assumptions. Often, we take our cultural norms for granted without questioning their origins or validity. Understanding that abnormality is a relative concept encourages openness and tolerance toward difference.

Key Concepts Related to Ruth Benedict Anthropology and the Abnormal

To deepen our understanding, here are some essential terms and ideas closely tied to Benedict's approach to abnormality:

- **Cultural Relativism:** The principle of evaluating beliefs and behaviors within their own cultural context.
- **Cultural Patterns:** The organized set of values, norms, and practices that characterize a society.
- **Deviance:** Behavior that violates cultural norms or expectations.
- **Ethnocentrism:** Judging other cultures by the standards of one's own culture, often leading to misunderstanding or bias.
- **Cultural Psychiatry:** The study of how cultural factors influence mental health and definitions of mental illness.

The Lasting Legacy of Ruth Benedict on Modern Thought

While Ruth Benedict passed away in 1948, her influence still resonates in anthropology, psychology, and beyond. Her work reminds us that the line between normal and abnormal is neither fixed nor universal but fluid and culturally mediated.

In a world that is increasingly globalized yet culturally diverse, Benedict's insights encourage us to approach difference with curiosity and respect rather than judgment. Whether we are scholars, clinicians, or simply global citizens, understanding the cultural dimensions of abnormality enriches our appreciation of humanity's vast complexity.

By revisiting Ruth Benedict anthropology and the abnormal, we gain valuable tools to decode the rich tapestry of human behavior—recognizing that what may seem strange or abnormal to one person might be perfectly natural and meaningful to another. This perspective is not only intellectually enriching but also essential for fostering empathy in an interconnected world.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Ruth Benedict and what is her significance in anthropology?

Ruth Benedict was an American anthropologist known for her work in cultural patterns and personality theory. She significantly contributed to the understanding of how culture shapes individual behaviors and societal norms.

What is Ruth Benedict's concept of the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' in anthropology?

Ruth Benedict argued that what is considered 'normal' or 'abnormal' behavior is culturally relative. She believed that behaviors labeled as abnormal in one culture might be seen as normal in another, emphasizing the importance of cultural context.

How did Ruth Benedict's work influence the study of abnormal behavior in anthropology?

Benedict's work encouraged anthropologists to analyze abnormal behavior within the framework of cultural norms rather than universal standards, promoting a more relativistic and empathetic approach to understanding human diversity.

Which book by Ruth Benedict explores the themes of culture and personality, including ideas about the abnormal?

Ruth Benedict's book 'Patterns of Culture' (1934) explores how cultures create distinct personality

patterns and challenges the notion of a universal standard for normality and abnormality.

How did Ruth Benedict's ideas challenge traditional Western views on abnormality?

By emphasizing cultural relativity, Benedict challenged the Western notion that abnormality is a fixed or pathological condition, instead showing that definitions of abnormal behavior vary widely across cultures.

What role does cultural context play in Ruth Benedict's anthropology of the abnormal?

Cultural context is central in Benedict's anthropology; she posited that behaviors deemed abnormal must be understood within the specific cultural values and social structures that define normalcy for that society.

Can Ruth Benedict's theories on abnormality be applied in contemporary anthropology and psychology?

Yes, Benedict's emphasis on cultural relativism continues to influence contemporary anthropology and cross-cultural psychology by encouraging professionals to consider cultural backgrounds when assessing behavior and mental health.

Additional Resources

Ruth Benedict Anthropology and the Abnormal: Exploring Cultural Norms and Deviance

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal represents a fascinating intersection in the study of human societies, where cultural norms and perceptions of deviance challenge Western-centric views of normality. Ruth Benedict, a pioneering anthropologist of the early 20th century, revolutionized understanding of cultural relativism by emphasizing the variability of what societies regard as “normal” versus “abnormal.” Her seminal work laid critical groundwork for analyzing how cultures construct their own moral frameworks and categorize behaviors, often redefining the boundaries of acceptability in ways that contrast sharply with other societies.

This article delves into Ruth Benedict’s contributions to anthropology, particularly her insights into the concept of the abnormal, and how her ideas remain relevant in contemporary discussions about cultural diversity, social conformity, and psychological norms.

Ruth Benedict’s Anthropological Framework

Ruth Benedict’s anthropology is rooted in the principle of cultural relativism, a methodological approach that insists on understanding cultures on their own terms rather than through ethnocentric judgments. Her research, most notably presented in works like **Patterns of Culture** (1934), introduced the idea that each society develops a unique “pattern” or configuration of values,

beliefs, and behaviors that define what is considered normal within that context.

Central to Benedict's analysis is the recognition that "abnormality" is not an absolute or universal concept. Instead, it is a relative category shaped by cultural norms and expectations. For instance, behaviors deemed pathological or deviant in one culture may be perfectly acceptable or even revered in another. This relativistic perspective challenged prevailing Western assumptions that labeled non-Western behaviors as primitive or pathological.

Defining the Abnormal in Different Cultural Contexts

Benedict's comparative studies illustrated vividly how the abnormal is culturally constructed. In *Patterns of Culture*, she examines three distinct societies—the Zuni of the American Southwest, the Dobu of Melanesia, and the Kwakiutl of the Pacific Northwest—highlighting how each embodies a coherent cultural personality type. What one culture might interpret as deviant or abnormal behavior is often a normative expression of identity in another.

For example, Benedict described the Dobuans as embodying "paranoia" as a cultural trait, where suspicion and mistrust are normative and integrated into social life. In Western terms, such behavior might be labeled abnormal or pathological. Yet, within Dobu society, these traits serve adaptive social functions and reinforce group cohesion.

Ruth Benedict and the Anthropology of Deviance

One of the enduring contributions of Ruth Benedict anthropology and the abnormal is her nuanced understanding of deviance. Rather than viewing deviance as inherently negative or pathological, Benedict framed it as a culturally defined category that serves to reinforce social order by delineating boundaries.

Cultural Relativism Versus Universalism

Benedict's work sharply contrasts with universalist perspectives in psychology and psychiatry, which often seek to identify fixed criteria for normal and abnormal behavior. Her anthropological lens suggests that many so-called psychological disorders may be culturally specific syndromes or responses to social environments.

Her approach paved the way for cross-cultural psychiatry and medical anthropology, disciplines that investigate how mental health and illness are experienced and treated differently worldwide. This has important implications for global health, as it challenges one-size-fits-all diagnostic models and encourages culturally sensitive care.

Implications for Contemporary Social Sciences

The exploration of abnormality through Benedict's anthropology informs contemporary debates

about social conformity, mental health, and identity politics. By recognizing the fluidity of abnormality, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists can better appreciate the diversity of human experience without imposing stigmatizing labels.

Moreover, Benedict's insights highlight the potential dangers of ethnocentrism in scientific inquiry. When researchers fail to contextualize behaviors within their cultural frameworks, they risk misdiagnosing or misunderstanding social phenomena, thereby perpetuating stereotypes or injustices.

Key Features of Ruth Benedict's Approach to Abnormality

- **Cultural Relativism:** Emphasizes understanding behaviors within their cultural contexts rather than through external value judgments.
- **Pattern Theory:** Views cultures as integrated wholes where "normal" and "abnormal" behaviors fit into a coherent system.
- **Psychological Typologies:** Uses personality theory to describe cultural behaviors, such as the "Apollonian" versus "Dionysian" types.
- **Critique of Ethnocentrism:** Challenges Western-centric definitions of mental health and social norms.
- **Influence on Cross-Cultural Psychiatry:** Encourages culturally informed understandings of mental illness.

Pros and Cons of Benedict's Perspective

While Benedict's anthropology of the abnormal offers profound insights, it is not without critiques:

1. Pros:

- Promotes empathy and cultural sensitivity.
- Expands the understanding of human diversity.
- Challenges rigid pathological classifications.
- Encourages holistic analysis of social behaviors.

2. Cons:

- Risk of cultural relativism leading to moral relativism.
- Potential oversimplification of complex societies by typifying cultures.
- Limited empirical data by today's standards.
- Less emphasis on individual agency within cultural patterns.

The Enduring Legacy of Ruth Benedict's Anthropology and the Abnormal

Ruth Benedict's exploration of abnormality through the lens of anthropology remains a foundational contribution to how scholars understand cultural diversity and human behavior. Her work continues to inspire critical reflection on how societies define normalcy and deviance, encouraging an ongoing dialogue between anthropology, psychology, and psychiatry.

In an increasingly interconnected world, Benedict's insights remind us that what is labeled "abnormal" is often a reflection of cultural perspectives rather than intrinsic human nature. This awareness fosters greater tolerance and adaptability in addressing social and mental health issues across diverse populations. The legacy of Ruth Benedict's anthropology and the abnormal underscores the importance of viewing human behavior through a culturally informed, nuanced lens—one that respects difference and challenges simplistic binaries of normal and abnormal.

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Byron J. Good, 1994 Biomedicine is often thought to provide a scientific account of the human body and of illness. In this view, non-Western and folk medical systems are regarded as systems of 'belief' and subtly discounted. This is an impoverished perspective for understanding illness and healing across cultures, one that neglects many facets of Western medical practice and obscures its kinship with healing in other traditions. Drawing on his research in several American and Middle Eastern medical settings, in this 1993 book Professor Good develops a critical, anthropological account of medical knowledge and practice. He shows how physicians and healers enter and inhabit distinctive

worlds of meaning and experience. He explores how stories or illness narratives are joined with bodily experience in shaping and responding to human suffering and argues that moral and aesthetic considerations are present in routine medical practice as in other forms of healing.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: *Morality and Cultural Differences* John W. Cook, 1999-01-28 The scholars who defend or dispute moral relativism, the idea that a moral principle cannot be applied to people whose culture does not accept it, have concerned themselves with either the philosophical or anthropological aspects of relativism. This study shows that in order to arrive at a definitive appraisal of moral relativism, it is necessary to understand and investigate both its anthropological and philosophical aspects. Carefully examining the arguments for and against moral relativism, Cook exposes not only that anthropologists have failed in their attempt to support relativism with evidence of cultural differences, but that moral absolutists have been equally unsuccessful in their attempts to refute it. He argues that these conflicting positions are both guilty of an artificial and unrealistic view of morality and proposes a more subtle and complex account of morality.

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ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society* Jodi O'Brien, 2009 Provides timely comparative analysis from internationally known contributors.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: *Bioethics* Nancy Ann Silbergeld Jecker, Albert R. Jonsen, Robert A. Pearlman, 2007 Legal/Ethics

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: *An Anthropologist at Work* Ruth Benedict, 2017-09-04 An Anthropologist at Work is the product of a long collaboration between Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. Mead, who was Benedict's student, colleague, and eventually her biographer, here has collected the bulk of Ruth Benedict's writings. This includes letters between these two seminal anthropologists, correspondence with Franz Boas (Benedict's teacher), Edward Sapir's poems, and notes from studies that Benedict had collected throughout her life. Since Benedict wrote little, Mead has fleshed out the narratives by adding background information on Benedict's life, work, and the cultural atmosphere of the time. Ruth Benedict formed her own view of the contribution of anthropology before the first steps were taken in the study of how individual human beings, with their given potentialities, came to embody their culture. In her later work, she came to accept and sometimes to use the work in culture and personality that depended as much upon social psychology as upon cultural anthropology. She came to recognize that society - made up of persons or organized in groups - was as important as a subject of study as the culture of a society. This volume, greatly enhanced by Mead's contributions, is a record of what was important to Benedict in her life and work. It is expertly ordered and assembled in a way that will be accessible to students and professionals alike.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: *Patterns of Culture* Ruth Benedict, 2019-05-23 This book was originally published in 1935. For some years past the scientific study of primitive peoples has experimented in a variety of directions for new methods of investigation. Criticism of the comparative method, of which Sir James Frazer is recognized as the foremost exponent all the world over, has been directed mainly against the fragmentary character of its evidence when torn from its context. In this book Dr Benedict offers an alternative method of approach. The aim of the investigator, she maintains, should be the discovery in the diversity of cultures of the 'configuration' of each - that is the cultural drive in group and individual which determines the characteristic reaction to stimulus in any and every situation in life.

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ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: Nightmare Envy and Other Stories George Blaustein, 2018-01-05 What has it meant to be an Americanist? What did it mean to be an Americanist through fascism, war, and occupation? Nightmare Envy and Other Stories is a study of Americanist writing and institutions in the 20th century. Four chapters trace four routes through the mid-twentieth century. The first chapter is the hidden history of American Studies in the United States, Europe and Japan. The second is the strange career of national character in anthropology. The third is a contest between military occupation and cultural diplomacy in Europe. The fourth is the emergence and fate of the American Renaissance, as the scholar and literary critic F.O. Matthiessen carried a canon of radical literature across the Iron Curtain. Each chapter culminates in the postwar period, when the ruin of postwar Europe led writers and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic to understand America in new ways. Many of our modern myths of the United States and Europe were formed in this moment. Some saw the United States assume the mantle of cultural redeemer. Others saw a stereotypical America, rich in civilization but poor in culture, overtake a stereotypical Europe, rich in culture and equally rich in disaster. Drawing on American and European archives, the book weaves cultural, intellectual, and diplomatic history, with portraits of Matthiessen, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, David Riesman, Alfred Kazin, and Ralph Ellison. It excavates the history of the Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization, where displaced persons, former Nazis, budding Communists, and glad-handing Americans met on the common ground of American culture. Others found keys to their own contexts in American books, reading Moby-Dick in the ruins. Nightmare Envy and Other Stories chronicles American encounters with European disaster, European encounters with American fiction, and the chasms over which culture had to reach.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: Creating Mental Illness Allan V. Horwitz, 2020-04-09 “Filled with insights into the social, historical, and economic forces responsible for the overmedicalization of human unhappiness and distress.” —George Graham, *Metapsychology* In this surprising book, Allan V. Horwitz argues that our current conceptions of mental illness as a disease fit only a small number of serious psychological conditions and that most conditions currently regarded as mental illness are cultural constructions, normal reactions to stressful social circumstances, or simply forms of deviant behavior. “Thought-provoking and important . . . Drawing on and consolidating the ideas of a range of authors, Horwitz challenges the existing use of the term mental illness and the psychiatric ideas and practices on which this usage is based . . . Horwitz enters this controversial territory with confidence, conviction, and clarity.” —Joan Busfield,

American Journal of Sociology “Horwitz properly identifies the financial incentives that urge therapists and drug companies to proliferate psychiatric diagnostic categories. He correctly identifies the stranglehold that psychiatric diagnosis has on research funding in mental health. Above all, he provides a sorely needed counterpoint to the most strident advocates of disease-model psychiatry.” —Mark Sullivan, Journal of the American Medical Association “Horwitz makes at least two major contributions to our understanding of mental disorders. First, he eloquently draws on evidence from the biological and social sciences to create a balanced, integrative approach to the study of mental disorders. Second, in accomplishing the first contribution, he provides a fascinating history of the study and treatment of mental disorders . . . from early asylum work to the rise of modern biological psychiatry.” — Debra Umberson, Quarterly Review of Biology

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ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: Becoming Mary Sully Philip J. Deloria, 2019-04-24 The moment to savor [Mary Sully]. . . has arrived. —New York Times Dakota Sioux artist Mary Sully was the great-granddaughter of respected nineteenth-century portraitist Thomas Sully, who captured the personalities of America’s first generation of celebrities (including the figure of Andrew Jackson immortalized on the twenty-dollar bill). Born on the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota in 1896, she was largely self-taught. Steeped in the visual traditions of beadwork, quilling, and hide painting, she also engaged with the experiments in time, space, symbolism, and representation characteristic of early twentieth-century modernist art. And like her great-grandfather Sully was fascinated by celebrity: over two decades, she produced hundreds of colorful and dynamic abstract triptychs, a series of “personality prints” of American public figures like Amelia Earhart, Babe Ruth, and Gertrude Stein. Sully’s position on the margins of the art world meant that her work was exhibited only a handful of times during her life. In *Becoming Mary Sully*, Philip J. Deloria reclaims that work from obscurity, exploring her stunning portfolio through the lenses of modernism, industrial design, Dakota women’s aesthetics, mental health, ethnography and anthropology, primitivism, and the American Indian politics of the 1930s. Working in a complex territory oscillating between representation, symbolism, and abstraction, Sully evoked multiple and simultaneous perspectives of time and space. With an intimate yet sweeping style, Deloria recovers in Sully’s work a move toward an anti-colonial aesthetic that claimed a critical role for Indigenous women in American Indian futures—within and distinct from American modernity and modernism.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: Sound-Blind Alex Benson, 2023-11-06 In the 1880s, a new medical term flashed briefly into public awareness in the United States. Children who had trouble distinguishing between similar speech sounds were said to suffer from “sound-blindness.” The term is now best remembered through anthropologist Franz Boas, whose work deeply influenced the way we talk about cultural difference. In this fascinating work of literary and cultural history, Alex Benson takes the concept as an opening onto other stories of listening, writing, and power—stories that expand our sense of how a syllable, a word, a gesture, or a song can be put into print, and why it matters. Benson interweaves ethnographies, memoirs, local-color stories, modernist novels, silent film scripts, and more. Taken together, these seemingly disparate

texts—by writers including John M. Oskison, Helen Keller, W. E. B. Du Bois, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Elsie Clews Parsons—show that the act of transcription, never neutral, is conditioned by the histories of race, land, and ability. By carefully tracing these conditions, Benson argues, we can tease out much that has been left off the record in narratives of American nationhood and American literature.

ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: The Loss of Sadness Allan V. Horwitz, Jerome C. Wakefield, 2007-06-18 Depression has become the single most commonly treated mental disorder, amid claims that one out of ten Americans suffer from this disorder every year and 25% succumb at some point in their lives. Warnings that depressive disorder is a leading cause of worldwide disability have been accompanied by a massive upsurge in the consumption of antidepressant medication, widespread screening for depression in clinics and schools, and a push to diagnose depression early, on the basis of just a few symptoms, in order to prevent more severe conditions from developing. In *The Loss of Sadness*, Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield argue that, while depressive disorder certainly exists and can be a devastating condition warranting medical attention, the apparent epidemic in fact reflects the way the psychiatric profession has understood and reclassified normal human sadness as largely an abnormal experience. With the 1980 publication of the landmark third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III), mental health professionals began diagnosing depression based on symptoms—such as depressed mood, loss of appetite, and fatigue—that lasted for at least two weeks. This system is fundamentally flawed, the authors maintain, because it fails to take into account the context in which the symptoms occur. They stress the importance of distinguishing between abnormal reactions due to internal dysfunction and normal sadness brought on by external circumstances. Under the current DSM classification system, however, this distinction is impossible to make, so the expected emotional distress caused by upsetting events—for example, the loss of a job or the end of a relationship—could lead to a mistaken diagnosis of depressive disorder. Indeed, it is this very mistake that lies at the root of the presumed epidemic of major depression in our midst. In telling the story behind this phenomenon, the authors draw on the 2,500-year history of writing about depression, including studies in both the medical and social sciences, to demonstrate why the DSM's diagnosis is so flawed. They also explore why it has achieved almost unshakable currency despite its limitations. Framed within an evolutionary account of human health and disease, *The Loss of Sadness* presents a fascinating dissection of depression as both a normal and disordered human emotion and a sweeping critique of current psychiatric diagnostic practices. The result is a potent challenge to the diagnostic revolution that began almost thirty years ago in psychiatry and a provocative analysis of one of the most significant mental health issues today.

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ruth benedict anthropology and the abnormal: Genealogies of Shamanism Jeroen W Boekhoven, 2011 Cover -- Table of contents -- Acknowledgements -- 1 Approaching shamanism -- 2 Eighteenth and nineteenth-century interpretations -- 3 Early twentieth-century American interpretations -- 4 Twentieth-century European constructions -- 5 The Bollingen connection, 1930s-1960s -- 6 Post-war American visions -- 7 The genesis of a field of shamanism, America 1960s-1990s -- 8 A Case Study: Shamanisms in the Netherlands -- 9 Struggles for power, charisma and authority: a balance -- Bibliography -- Index

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American physician John C. Lilly infamously dosed dolphins (and himself) with LSD in a NASA-funded effort to teach dolphins to talk. A tripping Cary Grant mumbled into a Dictaphone about Hegel as astronaut John Glenn returned to Earth. At the centre of this revolution were the pioneering anthropologists - and star-crossed lovers - Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. Convinced the world was headed toward certain disaster, Mead and Bateson made it their life's mission to reshape humanity through a new science of consciousness expansion, but soon found themselves at odds with the government bodies who funded their work, whose intentions were less than pure. Mead and Bateson's partnership unlocks an untold chapter in the history of the twentieth century, linking drug researchers with CIA agents, outsider sexologists and the founders of the Information Age.

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