

14/VI/73 ✓

Synchronous-Diachronous

From Nisbet, 232-3, a summary of Radcliffe-Brown's synchronous-diachronous division (Natural Science of Society, 1957, esp. 71-89). Quite different from mine. For R-B, synchronic equals stasis or unchanging, diachronic equals change. It is, therefore, a developmental syndrome, not a purely temporal one. If this is the nub of functionalist theory, then the reasons for their flaw is evident: diachronic can mean unchanged over time as well as changed over time--for all it means is over or through time. Synchronic can only mean static, in a way, but if you compare different synchronic descriptions, and come up with major differences, you have the element of change without any connective diachronic explanation offered; in a short, you have made unexplained analytic contrasts, from where one could go on to make diachronic explanations of who the change actually took place. So:

	Synchronic	Diachronic
Static	Functional description of forms by classifying them	Persistence of forms in institutions
Dynamic	Comparison of discreet temporal descriptions showing change as difference	Breakdown old forms, rise of new ones. Change as process.

My innovations

Nisbet says that R-B distinguishes between changes within and changes of the system, but I can't be sure what this means unless it simply means foolishly that a real change, as of a stage of development is of, but that the rest of the time there are changes going all within a given stage. This begs the questions, essentially. Or, it might mean that a change of is due to some external impetus (à la Kroeber, if I recall correctly), while changes within are in the Durkheim model.

Also worth checking sometime is Merton's theory of dynamic change as emerging from dysfunction.