
1. How is symbolism related to fetishism, and how are they unlike?
2. What is the definition of a fetish?
3. Note the instances in which the author links fetishes to deliberately cultivated ignorance, concealment, and deception.
4. In terms of social relations, what do fetishes achieve?
5. What is the essence of commodity fetishism? How would you explain what it means?
6. What is the meaning of a demonic figure who is made half of wood, and half of flesh and bone?
7. Does the presence of fetishism indicate a form of “mass delusion” or is it instead something else? Does the author criticize those holding beliefs in demons as being somehow irrational or mentally deficient?


1. What is the problem that seems to motivate Asad’s lecture?
2. At any point, does Asad define what he means by “ideology”?
3. Is Asad accusing anthropologists of writing ideologically?
4. What does Asad identify as “a very questionable theory of culture”?
5. Why do “political and economic conditions” matter to Asad? What do they seem to determine?
6. How do “culture” and “ideology” differ?
7. What evidence is available in this article that shows Asad’s approach is guided by Marxist theory? Is his approach uncritical of applications of Marxist analysis?
8. Note Asad’s argument, “that social life is not identical with communication”.
9. Does Asad believe that a general theory of ideology is possible?
10. Ultimately, what is absent in anthropology, according to Asad’s critique?
11. What is the problem with reductionism?
12. In Asad’s view, how does social transformation happen? Specifically, is it rooted in changes in meaning, changes in ideologies and the ways that ideas are expressed?


1. What enables myths to be propagated, to be kept alive?
2. Do myths survive by remaining unchanged?
3. What are the consequences of understanding charisma as a shared group
experience?

4. How are charisma and myth alike?
5. What does the author mean by “all charismatic groups institutionalize an antipathy to the individual”? What is the “irony” in this formulation, as the author explains?
6. How are myths “exclusionary”?
7. Do mythical beliefs cause groups to form?
8. Is myth like orthodoxy, heterodoxy, or is it a bit of both?
9. What does symbolism achieve for charismatic movements?
10. What is the relationship between the “routinization” of myth and what we know as dogma?
11. From a (neo)Marxist perspective, such as Roland Barthes’, what do myths seek to do?
12. How can there be instability and novelty in something as traditional as ritual?
13. How can myth and habitus be related?

Optional extra reading:


1. To what extent does Keesing appear to be arguing that myths are outright falsehoods?
2. How does Keesing’s treatment of myth compare with that of Falco above?
3. In arguing that “invented traditions” are ideological mystification, is Keesing adopting a Marxist perspective?
4. What does Keesing mean by “hegemony”?
5. What is Keesing saying when he argues that “culture” has been “fetishized”?
6. Why does Keesing believe that anthropology has been implicated in the construction of political myths? Does he approve?