

# POLIS V12: The Complete Anthropology Series – 12 Giants

Jorge Batista Alves Pereira

Independent Researcher, Sabugal, Guarda, Portugal

[ORCID: 0009-0000-6385-7245](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6385-7245)

May 2026

*This document combines two companion papers:*

*“Tensional Reinterpretation of Six Founders of Modern Anthropology”  
and “Tensional Reinterpretation of Six More Anthropological Pioneers”.*

**DOIs:** Main treatise [10.5281/zenodo.19618276](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19618276) – POLIS Bible  
[10.5281/zenodo.19836226](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19836226)

## Abstract

Within the POLIS V12 tensional ontology, every cultural system is a polis constituted by three meshes (solid, liquid, gaseous) and governed by the closure condition  $\epsilon = \sum K_m(2 + K_m) = 0$ , with  $T = K_{\min}$  as the tensional origin. This paper applies the framework to six foundational figures of anthropology: Edward Burnett Tylor (animism and cultural evolution), Lewis Henry Morgan (kinship and social evolution), Franz Boas (historical particularism), Bronisław Malinowski (functionalism), Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (structural functionalism), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (structuralism). Each classical contribution is reinterpreted as a tensional configuration: Tylor’s animism as low- $K$  explanatory mesh; Morgan’s stages as phases; Boas’s relativism as multiple normalisation domains; Malinowski’s functions as meshes satisfying needs; Radcliffe-Brown’s structure as solid mesh equilibrium; and Lévi-Strauss’s binary oppositions as complementary  $K$  pairs. The universal equations remain unchanged; no free parameters are introduced.

## 1 Introduction

POLIS V12 is a closed, parameter-free tensional conservation theory built on four axioms (Tensional Ontology, Harmonic Ground  $H = 1$ , Tensional Conservation, Data Origin  $T = K_{\min}$ ). The governing equation, after normalisation, is

$$\epsilon = \sum_{m=1}^n K_m(2 + K_m) = 0,$$

with  $K_m = (v_m - T)/(v_{\max} - T) \in [0, 1]$ . The disequilibrium index is  $\text{IDT}^* = \epsilon/(1 + \epsilon)$ . All real anthropological systems reside in Phase 4 ( $\text{IDT}^* \geq 0.70$ ) unless artificially uniform. The Rolling Law  $2\pi r_p = V_{\text{orb}}T_{\text{rot}}$  applies fractally at all scales.

This paper reinterprets six key anthropological contributions within this tensional ontology. No classical primacy is assumed; tension is the primitive.

## 2 Edward Burnett Tylor – Animism and Cultural Evolution

Tylor defined culture as a complex whole and proposed animism (belief in spirits) as the earliest religious form. In POLIS V12, animism is a low- $K$  explanatory mesh: natural events are attributed to spirits because the observers lack the  $K$  to understand physical causation. Tylor’s cultural evolution (savagery  $\rightarrow$  barbarism  $\rightarrow$  civilisation) maps to increasing  $K$  of the collective cultural mesh.

The survival of customs (e.g., throwing salt over the shoulder) is a tensional fossil: a behaviour with  $K$  once high (magical efficacy) that has decayed to near zero but persists

as a ritualised residue. Tylor's method of comparing cultures is a cross-normalisation: each culture is a polis with its own  $T$  and  $v_{\max}$ ; comparison reveals universal  $K$  patterns.

### 3 Lewis Henry Morgan – Kinship and Stages of Society

Morgan studied kinship terminologies and divided social evolution into three stages: savagery, barbarism, civilisation. In POLIS V12, each stage corresponds to a different tensional regime for kinship meshes. The classificatory kinship system (e.g., many people called "father") is a low- $K$  mesh where distinctions are coarse; the descriptive system (e.g., separate terms for father, uncle, etc.) is a higher- $K$  mesh with finer differentiation.

Morgan's discovery that Iroquois kinship resembles that of ancient Greeks showed that cultural meshes evolve independently but converge in form. His "gens" (clan) is a solid mesh of descent; the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal is a Phase 5 reorganisation of the kinship polis.

### 4 Franz Boas – Historical Particularism and Cultural Relativism

Boas rejected universal stages, arguing that each culture has its own unique history. In POLIS V12, historical particularism means that the normalisation parameters  $T$  and  $v_{\max}$  are culture-specific. There is no single scale for measuring all cultures. Cultural relativism is the recognition that a  $K$  value for one culture cannot be compared directly to a  $K$  value for another without first re-normalising.

Boas's study of the Kwakiutl potlatch (ceremonial gift exchange) showed that the event's  $K_{\text{prestige}}$  is not reducible to economic utility. The potlatch raises one's  $K$  by giving away wealth (negative material gain) – a tensional inversion where  $K_{\text{prestige}}$  increases as  $K_{\text{material}}$  decreases. Boas's critique of race is a demonstration that biological  $K$  distributions (skull shape, IQ) are not fixed but vary with environment.

### 5 Bronisław Malinowski – Functionalism and Basic Needs

Malinowski argued that cultural institutions function to satisfy basic human needs (biological, psychological, social). In POLIS V12, each institution is a sub-polis that converts input  $K$  (needs) into output  $K$  (satisfaction). The total  $\epsilon$  of the cultural system is the sum over all institutions.

Malinowski's Trobriand Islands ethnography (kula ring) described a trade network where items (shell necklaces, armbands) circulate in opposite directions. The kula ring is a tensional circuit: each exchange maintains a certain  $K_{\text{prestige}}$ , and the cycle must continue to prevent  $\epsilon$  from rising. Magic (formula, rite, performance) is a low- $K$  intervention that

boosts confidence ( $K_{\text{success}}$ ) when rational techniques are insufficient.

## 6 Alfred Radcliffe-Brown – Structural Functionalism

Radcliffe-Brown focused on social structure (the pattern of relationships) and its contribution to social order. In POLIS V12, social structure is the solid mesh (positions, roles) and the liquid mesh (interactions). His "comparative method" compares forms of kinship, marriage, etc., across societies to identify universal structural patterns.

Radcliffe-Brown's concept of the "joking relationship" (allowed disrespect between certain kin) is a tensional release valve: two individuals have a permanently high  $K$  (familiarity) but express it as teasing instead of conflict, reducing  $\epsilon$ . His "avoidance relationships" (e.g., mother-in-law) create a tensional gap: high potential  $K$  but zero actual contact, minimising friction.

## 7 Claude Lévi-Strauss – Structuralism and Binary Oppositions

Lévi-Strauss analysed myths, kinship, and totemism as systems of binary oppositions (e.g., raw/cooked, nature/culture, life/death). In POLIS V12, a binary opposition is a pair of complementary  $K$  values:  $K_1 + K_2 = 1$ . The transformation of one into the other (cooking raw food) is a Phase 5 reorganisation.

The "canonical formula" of myth (a function that transforms terms) is a tensional invariant:  $\epsilon_{\text{myth}}$  remains constant across variants. Lévi-Strauss's structural study of the Oedipus myth showed that the same underlying  $K$  structure (overvaluation vs undervaluation of kinship) appears in different versions. His analysis of totemism (animal species as emblems of clans) is a tensional mapping: each animal has a characteristic  $K_{\text{nature}}$  that is paired with a clan's  $K_{\text{society}}$ .

## 8 Conclusion

The six foundational contributions to anthropology are coherently reinterpreted within the POLIS V12 tensional ontology. Cultural evolution, kinship, cultural relativism, functionalism, structural functionalism, and structuralism all become natural consequences of the closure condition  $\epsilon = \sum K_m(2 + K_m) = 0$  and the fractal hierarchy of anthropological polises. No free parameters are added.

## Zenodo references

- Main treatise: [10.5281/zenodo.19618276](https://zenodo.org/record/19618276)
- POLIS Bible: [10.5281/zenodo.19836226](https://zenodo.org/record/19836226)

### Abstract

This paper extends the POLIS V12 tensional reinterpretation to six additional anthropological giants: Marcel Mauss (gift exchange), Ruth Benedict (patterns of culture), Margaret Mead (coming of age), Gregory Bateson (cybernetics and ecology), Mary Douglas (purity and danger), and Clifford Geertz (thick description). Each is re-read as a tensional configuration: Mauss's gift as triple obligation (giving, receiving, returning) as three phases; Benedict's patterns as characteristic  $K$  distributions; Mead's cultural variation as different normalisation regimes; Bateson's schismogenesis as tensional feedback; Douglas's grid/group as two-dimensional  $K$ ; and Geertz's thick description as multi-layer  $K$  interpretation. The universal equations remain unchanged; no free parameters are introduced.

## 9 Introduction

As in the companion paper, POLIS V12 rests on four axioms. After normalisation the mother equation is

$$\epsilon = \sum_{m=1}^n K_m(2 + K_m) = 0,$$

with  $\text{IDT}^* = \epsilon/(1 + \epsilon)$ . All real anthropological systems are in Phase 4 ( $\text{IDT}^* \geq 0.70$ ) unless artificially uniform. The Rolling Law  $2\pi r_p = V_{\text{orb}}T_{\text{rot}}$  applies fractally.

This paper reinterprets six more foundational contributions to anthropology.

## 10 Marcel Mauss – The Gift and the Potlatch

Mauss argued that gifts are never free; they create a three-fold obligation: to give, to receive, and to repay. In POLIS V12, each obligation is a phase in a tensional cycle: - **\*\*Give\*\***: donor reduces  $K_{\text{possession}}$  and increases  $K_{\text{prestige}}$ . - **\*\*Receive\*\***: recipient increases  $K_{\text{debt}}$ , must eventually restore balance. - **\*\*Repay\*\***: closes the loop, returning  $\epsilon$  to near zero.

The potlatch (competitive gift giving) is a tensional escalation: each party tries to raise their  $K_{\text{prestige}}$  higher than the other by giving away more. This continues until one cannot repay, collapsing into Phase 4 (loss of status). Mauss's famous question "What power resides in the gift?" is answered: the power is the tensional residual  $x$  that must be extinguished by a return gift.

## 11 Ruth Benedict – Patterns of Culture

Benedict described cultures as integrated wholes with dominant patterns (e.g., Apollonian (Pueblo, sober, ceremonial) vs Dionysian (Plains Indians, ecstatic, individualist)). In

POLIS V12, each pattern is a characteristic distribution of  $K$  across the cultural meshes. A Dionysian pattern has high  $K_{\text{individual}}$  and low  $K_{\text{collective}}$ ; an Apollonian pattern has low  $K_{\text{individual}}$  and high  $K_{\text{collective}}$ .

Benedict's "cultural relativism" (no single standard of normal) is the claim that  $K$  values are only meaningful relative to a culture's own  $T$  and  $v_{\text{max}}$ . Her concept of "normality" in one culture is "abnormality" in another – i.e., the same behaviour maps to different  $K$  after normalisation.

## 12 Margaret Mead – Coming of Age in Samoa

Mead studied adolescence in Samoa, finding it less stressful than in Western societies. In POLIS V12, the Samoan adolescent polis has lower  $K_{\text{stress}}$  because the cultural mesh provides smoother transitions (e.g., permissive attitudes toward sexuality). Mead's work showed that developmental  $K$  trajectories are not universal but are shaped by culture.

Her later research on male and female temperament in New Guinea found that tribes could have reversed gender roles (e.g., men emotional, women aggressive). Those are different  $K$  assignments to the male and female sub-polises. Mead's "sex and temperament" is a tensional demonstration that biological sex does not fix  $K$  – culture does.

## 13 Gregory Bateson – Cybernetics, Schismogenesis, and Ecology

Bateson applied cybernetics to anthropology, introducing schismogenesis (process where behaviour patterns diverge). In POLIS V12, complementary schismogenesis occurs when two sub-polises (e.g., rivals) mutually increase each other's  $K$  (e.g., one boasts, the other boasts more). Symmetrical schismogenesis is when both mirror each other's increase (arms race). The process continues until Phase 4 explosion (conflict) or Phase 5 reorganisation (peaceful differentiation).

Bateson's "double bind" (contradictory messages that create no-win situations) is a tensional paradox: the receiver's  $K$  cannot satisfy both demands simultaneously, so  $\epsilon$  becomes large. His work on schizophrenia suggested that the patient is trapped in a double-bind family polis. Later, Bateson's ecology of mind argued that the environment is part of the cognitive polis – the boundaries of the self are not fixed.

## 14 Mary Douglas – Purity and Danger

Douglas analysed classification systems of purity and impurity, and their role in maintaining social order. In POLIS V12, "pure" is a state where  $K$  is well-normalised (categories are separate); "impure" is a state where  $K$  is ambiguous (matter out of place). The Levitical dietary laws (abomination) are rules that keep animal  $K$  categories distinct (e.g., scales vs no scales).

The "body as a natural symbol" means that attitudes toward bodily margins (pollution)

reflect attitudes toward social margins. Social groups with high  $\epsilon$  (anxiety about boundaries) will have many purity rules. Douglas's "grid/group" scheme maps onto two axes: grid = strength of role differentiation ( $K_{\text{role}}$ ), group = strength of group attachment ( $K_{\text{group}}$ ). The four quadrants (hierarchical, individualist, eccentric, sectarian) correspond to different ( $K_{\text{grid}}, K_{\text{group}}$ ) regions.

## 15 Clifford Geertz – Thick Description and Interpretive Anthropology

Geertz advocated "thick description" – interpreting cultural phenomena as layered texts (e.g., a wink, a twitch, a parody). In POLIS V12, a behaviour has multiple  $K$  levels: the physical act (lowest  $K$ ), the conventional meaning (medium  $K$ ), the contextual meaning (high  $K$ ). Thick description disentangles these layers.

Geertz's study of the Balinese cockfight revealed that it is not about gambling but about status: the cockfight is a dramatisation of the cultural  $K_{\text{status}}$  distribution. His definition of culture as "webs of significance" that humans themselves spin is a tensional mesh (solid = symbols, liquid = practices, gaseous = meanings). The "cultural system" is a polis where each element's  $K$  is defined relative to the others.

## 16 Conclusion

Six additional anthropological pioneers are reinterpreted within the POLIS V12 tensional ontology. Gift exchange, cultural patterns, adolescence studies, cybernetics, pollution rules, and thick description all become natural consequences of the closure condition  $\epsilon = \sum K_m(2+K_m) = 0$  and the fractal hierarchy of anthropological polises. No free parameters are added; the same equations that describe a physical system or a psychological process also describe the diversity of human cultures.

## Zenodo references

- Main treatise: [10.5281/zenodo.19618276](https://zenodo.org/record/19618276)
- POLIS Bible: [10.5281/zenodo.19836226](https://zenodo.org/record/19836226)

## References for the twelve anthropologists

- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive Culture*. London: John Murray.
- Morgan, L. H. (1877). *Ancient Society*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Boas, F. (1911). *The Mind of Primitive Man*. New York: Macmillan.
- Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1922). *The Andaman Islanders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1949). *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Paris: PUF.
- Mauss, M. (1925). *The Gift*. Paris: Alcan.
- Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: Morrow.
- Bateson, G. (1936). *Naven*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.