

Tim Ingold - *Anthropological Affordances*

Where to place culture in the nexus of human-environmental relations has long been a problem for ecological anthropology. The theory of affordances offers a possible resolution. It shows how the meanings of things, far from being assigned to them by human minds equipped with the concepts and categories of a tradition, can be discovered directly through immediate perceptual exploration. Cultural difference, then, lies in variations in skills of perception and action, developed through prior experience. Yet while the theory accords an active role to the perceiver, who lives, learns and moves around, it treats the environment as already built. To rebalance the ecological equation, we need to acknowledge that environments, too, are always in-formation. Thus, the world is not ready and waiting for the perceiver; the perceiver also has to wait on the world. These correspond to two sides of attention: attunement and exposure. Their alternation is fundamental to life. Situating perceivers as participants in a worlding world offers a way to reconnect perception and imagination, and opens affordance to pure possibility.

Tim Ingold is Emeritus professor at the University of Aberdeen. He was appointed to a Chair at the University of Manchester in 1990, and in 1995 he became Max Gluckman Professor of Social Anthropology. He was Editor of 'Man' (the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute) from 1990 to 1992, and edited the Routledge 'Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology', published in 1994. In 1988 he founded the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory, and edited a volume of the first six annual debates ('Key Debates in Anthropology', 1996). He was elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1997, and of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2000. In 1999 he was President of the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.