Some Aspects of the Nature of Culture

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IT SEEMS BEST on an occasion like this to present some ideas from a general field rather than to give an account of my own research, which occupied enough of my time but in retrospect looks quite meagre. I will make use of some of my own researches here as examples only because I can speak more satisfactorily of them than of the work of other men.

I have chosen as my topic the nature of culture, and have done so not only because it is a subject interesting in itself, but because it will permit me to present some part of the range of investigations in anthropology. Neither I nor anyone else knows all about the nature of culture. If we did, then we could call off all research at once. This subject is the core concern of anthropologists, though professing anthropologists have not always seemed aware that it is fundamental to their widely varied inquiries. I shall call attention to problems and fields of inquiry rather than offer a series of basic tenets.

We could at this point offer a sufficient definition of "culture," but an inquiry such as this into the nature of culture implies that all that is to follow here will constitute an expanding definition of the concept.

It would seem best to begin, rather, with some illustrations. Most of us, even the self-analytical, are rarely culture-conscious. We hold our own behavior to be natural, inevitable, and universal, though paradoxically, if it feeds our vanity we insist on our individual uniqueness. Even the most discerning is far from completely aware of the extent to which culture permeates his every thought and action.

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Let me make an over-dramatic statement—your culture may save your life many times a day. When you drive your car hurtling down the road and an on-coming juggernaut looms before you, your life and limb are saved from catastrophe not only by your own quick appraisal of the situation, your judgment and split-second reaction, but basically by the well-grounded assumption that both you and your opponent will abide by the rule of the road, staying on the right. When you are worming your way through downtown traffic, you gauge the position of your car, its speed and impetus, and the placement and speed of all the other cars around you—and guess at the intentions of their drivers—all in a series of spontaneous reactions. For most of us the judgments and reactions in shifting gears, accelerating, braking, and signalling are largely automatic—as automatic as steering our feet with confidence that they will take us where we want to go. All of us involved in this congested traffic are confidently following the same fundamental pattern of learned behavior.

What each individual brings to the situation is some element of choice—to drive in front or behind another car—and inevitably a variant in capacity for judgment and in speed of reaction. But we are able to proceed through the snarl because our judgments are based on implicit faith that we and the other fellows will follow the rule of the road. The individual choices and the individual responses run like an epicyclic ripple on the socially, that is culturally, determined habits of driving on the right or yielding the right of way. This is brought home most emphatically when we are confronted by traffic at an intersection where there are no control lights or policemen to direct us. Anarchy is not then with us except in the person of the occasional road-hog: on the contrary we are such creatures of habit that we follow a confirmed pattern of behavior without even pausing to recognize that we might be free to do as we please.

If at this point you say that of course we follow the rule of the
road, we make the further and more fundamental point that the carriers of a culture implicitly believe in the naturalness and inevitability of their way of life. I would stress the ingrained, largely unconscious character of much of the behavior that is the common coin of life in our society. When we are reminded that the rule of the road is the opposite in some countries abroad, or that in an Egyptian bazaar there is only a jumble of traffic with no pattern discernible, we become aware of the nature of our behavior and understand that there has been a somewhat arbitrary selection from among possible choices for action.

A fundamental of anthropological inquiry lies right here. By comparison of parallel situations in one culture after another we obtain insight into the character and role of these behavior elements, and the more varying cultures we can bring within our scrutiny the more we can specify with respect to each of them.

Cars, planes, machinery, churches, colleges, literature, and even our customary meals are all obvious parts of our particular culture, or more properly, obvious counterparts of our knowledge, craft abilities, aims, and attitudes. But what is not so obvious is the multitude of informal or unformulated aspects of our culture of which we are normally unaware. Here are such things as a system of gestures that accompany speech. Each social setting has its appropriate kind: the rhetorical gesture of the declaiming orator is very different from the table-pounding of a business conference, to say nothing of the seemingly casual flip of the hand that runs with conversation. But we also gesticulate with the muscles of the face in equally symbolic fashion: the grimace, the pout, frown, smile, the significant wink, the slight raising of the eyebrows or nod that goes with the perfunctory “Yes, yes” response to our vis-a-vis in a conversation, when in fact our minds may be off on our own concerns. (Such extensive facial gesticulation, I should add, is peculiar to Euro-American communities: it is absent or minor among East Asians and North American In-
Posture, bearing, standing and sitting positions, walking gait—all follow stereotypes appropriate to the occasion, and significantly carry symbolic value in social relations.

Other motor habits are equally fixed. Our manner of handling knife and fork is different from that of the British and utterly so from the kind of manipulative dexterity shown by the Chinese with his chopsticks. For us the cutting stroke of a sharp-edged tool is away from the body, and our cutting tools—saws, chisels, and the like—are devised to fit this habituated hand and arm movement. In the Far East, the cutting stroke is the reverse, with saws, knives, planes, cutting on the pull-stroke. Many machine tools perpetuate these hand movements, for other craft operations were often derived from and dependent on them.

The number of such unformulated and largely unconscious elements in our behavior could be expanded indefinitely. What we must recognize is that there are direct analogies in every culture and that they are as much a part of the whole man as his philosophic system, his social and industrial activities, his religion and language.

The total of such regulated forms of behavior fixes an individual in his social relations. It is rather amusing to see the embryo lawyer take on courtroom mannerisms, the young physician develop a bedside manner, the fledgling reporter grow world-weary and tough-talking. These are the accepted symbols of the role he intends to play, and by them he is judged. We each present a social front, behind which we preserve our private inner lives, and we adjust this front to each new social group configuration. How a man speaks—the subject of his verbiage, the acuteness of his judgments, his choice of words, the manner of their delivery, his careful or slovenly bearing, his manners and mannerisms, his dress, its cut, materials, and its carriage—in short a thousand details he displays are involved in fixing a man's social position at every moment. Collectively a multitude of just such minor circumstances produce a total impression by which he is judged.
spontaneously and largely unconsciously. These are all qualify­
ing factors placing him in our esteem. But we are ordinarily little
aware of the cultural basis of both the characteristics he displays
and of our judgments of them. Of course no man is solely a bun­
dle of the common habits of his kind, but displays his individuali­
ty, his personal ideals and aims, his imagination or ingenuity. It
is on these that we focus our attention when face to face. But the
fact remains that the great body of underlying factors, both in the
other man and in our reactions to him, have been culture-
determined.

Cultural circumstancing drives even deeper. Physiological
functions are affected by it, influenced as they are by our mode of
life. Respiration rate may be temporarily changed in the hurry of
our everyday activities, and this rate may even take on a long-time
character when adjusted to deep or shallow breathing in certain
occupations. It has been amply demonstrated that the basal me­
tabolism of entire populations has been altered by a change in the
pace of life, and the pace of life, we know, is an essential aspect of
a culture as a whole.

Culture rules even our most intimate, private, and cherished
activities—those within our minds, which seemingly go on with­
out reference to the outer world, Culture invades the privacy of
our dreams and fantasies, for “the stuff that dreams are made of”
is compounded of the experiences of everyday life, and these, we
must maintain, are deeply tinged by the cultural routine of our
kind. Even those emotionally rich and peculiarly private affairs,
the religious conversion experiences, have been shown to have
both their incidence and formulaic character given by the culture
in which they occur. The warrant for their validity is, in fact,
found in those evidences which the group accepts.

Much more important are those hidden factors which channel
thought in fixed directions, and which, rarely rising into con­
sciousness, are taken for granted, taken as immutable laws of the
nature of things and relations.
For example, we in this culture are creatures of an all-consuming concern with time. Our habits, almost our every action through the day, are fitted to the clock. So much are we the victims of the pressure of time, of the necessity of speed to accomplish things, that we have an almost hysterical attitude toward time. This is a peculiarity of our civilization in the present age. Many other cultures are timeless—timeless not only in the sense that they remain more or less static from generation to generation, but, more important at this point, devoid of pressures fixed by fleeting time. So much are we the victims of time, so ingrained is our conception of it, that we realize with a shock that time is a man-made concept projected on the universe. Nature knows only change. I am speaking not alone of time-reckoning, which is obviously an artificial construct, as its history so clearly shows, but time as a conceptualization of the flow of change. Its construction character is inevitable in that any expression of time must have some selected starting point and must indicate departure from that point by other selected units. We have constantly the problem of expressing an action in conjunction with a point in the continuum of change.

Such indications of temporal position are embedded in our language, and every language, so far as I am aware, has a mechanism in its formal structure, i.e. its grammar, for indicating the time of an action in an absolute sense or relative to some other action. That is, tense is one of the fundamental language concepts; but the manner in which tense is expressed, and the stress given it as less or more basic, varies widely from language to language. It is not implied here that time and tense are synonymous. What I am asserting is that a basic conceptualization of time is habitually expressed in every sentence uttered. In English grammatical structure, time is expressed as a continuum, with the present as a shifting locus separating past and future in an absolute sense. But in some other languages the corresponding segregation of experiences is in terms of completeness or incompleteness.
ness of action, and in Dakota (Sioux) the temporal sequence is
given, not in an absolute sense, but only in the time relations of
the several clauses of the sentence.

There are comparable classifications of experience in all other
parts of language. The concept of possession expressed in English,
as Capell has pointed out, makes no distinction between separa­
ble and inseparable ownership, though "my head" and "my hat"
are not possessed in the same way. But in languages of the Pacific
there is a great nicety of discrimination of many differing kinds of
possession; in some there are a score of distinctive grammatical
devices for precise designation. Again, in the phrase "a black hat"
we treat "hat" as a substantive and "black" as its attribute. But in
other languages this may be reversed, since blackness can occur
only in specific forms such as a hat.

We cannot but believe that an English speaker and speakers of
these other tongues must inevitably approach a problem with,
quite different, and these subconscious, premises. I am not main­
taining that the groupings of experience implicit in grammatical
structure are the same as those of thought, but that thinking is
unconsciously constrained and directed by such linguistic usages
—which is no news to the philosophers. The unvoiced concepts of
our language—provided as part of our culture—rule our every ac­
tion of the day: we are unwitting slaves to predetermined pat­
terns of logic, of ideals, and of aims, to an extent that we do not
even begin to comprehend.

I believe that some of our anthropologists and psychologists do
not fully realize what a subtle and permeating thing culture is.
Tests are sometimes given which are warranted free of the influ­
ence of differing cultural backgrounds. But Goodenough and
others have remarked on the unexpectedly different connotations
of seemingly simple verbal directions for such tests. I have myself
seen untutored natives, otherwise dexterous with their fingers,
mangle attempts to wield the unfamiliar pencil when asked to il­
lustrate by simple-outline drawing what they were describing in
words. A pencil is a real tool whose control must be acquired, as anyone who has taught young children to write will testify. And again, you and I are accustomed to taking tests or to answer concisely and promptly to questions, and to formulate our answers. We are thoroughly conditioned by cultural habits to the tasks set by tests, but to the native even the approach to a test may prove a bewildering process, the motivation of which lies beyond his experience and desires.

There is nothing new in these observations, but it is surprising how often psychologists overlook cultural subtleties in test situations, and how field ethnologists fail to see the fundamentally different approaches of persons steeped in other cultures. Indians commonly play their gambling games so that one wins only in the sense that the other loses. It comes to the same thing in the end as our own result, but the attitude is certainly reversed. When partisans of a group of Maricopa footraces quickly draw a line across the path of the opposing runners, which becomes for the latter an impassable chasm only to be healed by a magical erasure, we find difficulty in comprehending what their attitude may be and wonder if some psycho-motor block may not be involved. When we come to so subtle a thing as their concepts of the soul of vital force, or the essence of individuality as they see it, a field investigator must be doubly cautious and self-analytical to guard against unwittingly projecting into the situation attitudes and sentiments unconsciously channeling his own thoughts.

Culture may be looked on as an extension of the body's capacities. To cite most obvious illustrations: a crowbar lends greater leverage than the hand alone can achieve; a rifle gives striking power at a distance. Culture, in short, is partly a kind of adaptive mechanism for one's body in its contacts with the outside world.

But culture also has to do with mental and social, as well as
physical, survival. Knowledge transmitted through speech, picture, or print extends the range of an individual's solitary attempt to solve his problems of "living." Accepted social forms channel the relations one man must assume to another. These devices and procedures are all ready-formed tools for extending the capacities of the individual. Culture, in short, is a sort of adaptive mechanism for one's body in its contacts with the outside world, both physical and social. But a good deal of cultural, as well as purely personal, behavior is a surplus above the necessities for biological survival. Herein we differ, apparently, from the lower animals. Much of culture is nothing more nor less than an embroidery of life—play activity to satisfy esthetic urges or just plain insatiable curiosity, or, to be a bit cynical, rules and regulations just to annoy ourselves and give us something to do. I am not trying to be facetious, for I fully believe that much of culture is nothing more than a partly rationalized, derived form of the endless, random, apparently unmotivated "monkeying" of the monkey, that very characteristic which sets him apart from the lower animals with their responses specifically aroused by particular stimuli.

Culture may be described as the socially moulded forms of innate capacities, and as such always has specific form. It is its forms, rather than their organic basis, that is the subject of most of our inquiries. I cannot conceive of a man without culture: I cannot imagine what nascent, uncanalized human behavior would be like. Deprive me of English speech, tell me to use language, but not any known tongue, and you have asked an impossibility. It would be possible for me to sit or stand without assuming our prescribed, socially-accepted positions, to articulate sounds, or to eat in some fashion different from the prevailing mode. But beyond such limited activities, we cannot envisage what uncultivated human behavior would be. Our activities are
not sharply fixed by instinct: our bodies are capable of a wide variety of functions; human behavior is not set organically in defined patterns—yet behavior is always in the forms of set patterns whether these be personal or socially given.

I have commented earlier on the specific forms taken by bodily activities—gestures, posture, and other muscular habits. Let me offer a few examples from other segments of culture. In Moslem lands there is an infinite prescription of all the acts of everyday behavior, all given the warrant of religion. It is curious how much of the Koran is given to specifying these regulations. There are standards of esteem in each society which are fixed in stereotypes. Among Plains Indians there was a carefully graded system of war honors providing degrees of social achievement, and which, from our point of view, involve a curiously arbitrary set of values. In northwest California the social status of each person was fixed by the bride-price paid for his mother. An affront to another person or a breach of customary rights had a standard assessment value in "money" based on this status, so that a nice series of adjustments between the statuses of complainant and offender had to be made—all without any central political machinery.

The relation of cultural behavior to hereditary constitution—that is, to race—is obscure. Culture is operative within the limits and potentials of man’s framework—his anatomical, physiological, and neural equipment. Although we know that there are differences among individuals, neither anthropologists nor psychologists have reached definite conclusions that average differences in bodily equipment between groups have appreciable effect on their behavior patterns. The reason this is still uncertain is that the functioning of the various parts and organs of the body is so variable. The tasks imposed by one culture are thus feasible to persons of another community. I can learn to speak

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Hottentot, and a Hottentot English, to the manner born were he or I brought up to it. Whether I manipulate my fingers to run a trill on a piano, to repair the delicate mechanism of a watch, or to achieve the perfection of some native basketry technique, is a matter of indifference so far as the structure and potentialities of my bodily make-up go. And it is our common knowledge that persons of other races successfully perform these tasks as well, given that training which we ourselves have had. We have come to the conclusion that probably there are minor differences in the averages of racial groups with respect to their sensory and neural equipment—in such things as visual or auditory acuity—but it must be underscored that even these differences have never been proven. Such minor differences might cumulatively have an effect on the culture constructs of groups; but again, this has never been demonstrated. Variability in functioning will forever obscure unassailable evidence that hereditary constitution, as between racial groups, is a determinant of specific modes of thought and action.

**Cultures** as a whole take form by accretion and internal adjustment of their parts. Doubtless many people see the building of a particular culture primarily as the result of internally developed inventions, whether material or in the realm of ideas. But this is not so: the growth and complexity results for the greater part from imitation of traits of adjacent but differing cultures (a process labelled "diffusion") and from an endless repetition of patterns.

The consequences of diffusion are most obvious. In our own day there has been rapid transmission of technology and ideas throughout the world. Other than the speed and the devices for transmission there is nothing unique about this mechanism of culture accretion. In the Bronze Age of some three to four thousand years ago, for instance, the basic arts of metal working, the
arch, cart and wheel, the plow, the important cereal crops, calendric systems, and writing, spread from Near Eastern sources throughout Europe and Asia to form the foundation on which the historic civilizations rose. There is not a single culture—our own included—in which it cannot be demonstrated that the overwhelming mass of traits, or their historic bases, have been accreted by diffusion.

Years ago, having drawn up a reasonably rounded general ethnography of the Havasupai of Arizona, I set to isolating separable elements to find those peculiar to these people. Though there were hundreds of items, there was not a single one that was wholly unique; but the important fact remained that the particular assemblage of traits and their manner of integration was duplicated in no other cultural community. Wissler has shown precisely the same phenomenon for the Blackfoot of Canada and Birket-Smith for the Eyak of Alaska, to name but two of the many surveys of this kind.

This is eminently characteristic of all cultures: basic elements and details are shared with others over lesser or wider areas—indicative of historic relations among them—but the integrating principles (while they too have commonly been diffused) are never quite the same. Hence the uniqueness of a culture appears on inspection rather an illusion; for the most part it is the final kaleidoscopic assemblage that is unique.

As a consequence of long ages of diffusion, there is not an infinite variety of cultures in the world. Rather, at any moment in history we find a somewhat limited number of fundamental forms. These do not occur at random, either in time or space. It is thus possible to define both a cultural tradition and the spatial distribution of a common culture pattern. Native Africa contains half a dozen such large areas of distinctive culture; the 750 local cultural communities of native North America fall into nine major types, each occupying its sector of the continent.

It is a regularity of such areas of characterization (culture
areas) that there is a nuclear group of peoples having a highly distinctive culture surrounded in systematic fashion by variant forms. In the central plains of North America were the buffalo-hunting, horse-mounted, semi-nomadic Indians familiar to us all. But the mode of life depicted in these terms is that of the central western plains; it was balanced by a group of tribes in the eastern sector with a more sedentary existence conditioned by agricultural pursuits. West, north, and south there were comparable variations. There were differences in every phase of life throughout the region, but at bottom these variations were built on a basis of common cultural behavior. Their basic identity is best seen in the perspective of the continent as a whole: for all that they differ among themselves, collectively they stand apart from the other cultures of the continent. Analogous systematic variation can be demonstrated in the Chinese sphere or in that of Europe in the days of classic Rome.

Equally potent as a prime factor in the growth of cultures is the repetitive pattern. There are several concepts involved in our term “pattern”: the total culture as a pattern for the behavior of all participant individuals; a daily pattern, the diurnal round of activities; a repetitive pattern which makes for culture elaboration merely by the duplication of units; and an associative or assimilative pattern by which elements of foreign origin are amalgamated and assimilated into the whole culture complex.

The repetitive pattern is well illustrated in the proliferation of fraternal orders, religious cults, and Greek-letter societies among ourselves. To know the secrets and rituals of one is to know them all.

Academic classes, commencement exercises, and even faculty meetings are all closely set forms. Clichés of speech, wise saws,
proverbs, are endlessly repetitive of formal patterns. State constitutions in this country (other than in the colonial settlements) follow a single form with a high degree of specification of governmental units and their functions. The bicameral legislatures follow the pattern of the two houses of Congress, which in turn was patterned in part on the British Parliament.

Other cultures show the same type of repetition by patterning. Years ago Rivers published a volume on the Todas of southern India, a large part of which was given over to detailed description of rituals connected with the dairy herds. If he had noted that there were only two fundamental patterns—the rituals of the private and of the community herds—he could have condensed his several hundred pages into very few. Thirty years ago I recorded the songs of the Klamath Indians of Oregon. Song-text invention was a lively art among them, but instead of a large number of discrete forms, I found I could sum up the majority in five song formulas.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that much of the seeming richness and complexity of cultures is simply the consequence of repeated applications of a pattern for behavior. And reflection on this leads one again to remark on the paucity of imagination and inventiveness and the strong tendency to let precedents prevail.

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shown that there are patterns for cultural assimilation, that is, configurations of association groups. The acquisition of elements from other cultures is not merely mechanical accretion. The new traits are adapted, revalued, and integrated into the existing corpus of traits. This is, of course, more than the normal assimilation in mental association group in the individual. These patterns or integrating principles may be most easily factored out where the cultures are sharply structured. But in most cultures such principles seem to be diffuse, an
hence elusive and difficult to define. DuBois has given an excellent example in the wealth concept as an integrating principle among those northwest Californian Indians to whom I previously referred. Much of the coherence of behavior in these groups can be explained in terms of this factor; but the author very properly cautions against assuming that this single concept explains the whole of their culture or even all facets of their social life.

Phrased somewhat differently, the search for these integrating principles becomes an attempt to appraise the character and kind of cultures as wholes. By far the most objective of such attempts has been Opler's delineation of themes, the nucleating or integrating concepts threading through the specific items of a culture. Such a procedure has far more validity than the purported conceptualization of a people's ethos which attempts to give a simple formulation in one swoop. The latter turns out to be essentially evaluating schemes. Not only are they far from objective as a rule, but they put emphasis on only one facet, seemingly selected—perhaps subconsciously—by the proponent's social philosophy.

We have also more or less precise knowledge of other elements conditioning culture forms. Such are the categories of experience embedded in a language, which provide a world-philosophy; the clustering of non-logical elements by random association, as in totemism; the transmission of trait complexes with differential selection.

The bulk of investigations in cultural anthropology have lain in two fields. One is essentially historical: here belongs the whole body of archaeology, together with the inferential reconstructions from ethnographic evidence. The other inquiries are primarily descriptive and comparative observations of existing cultures. Very little of this research (including my own) bears directly on our core subject, the nature of culture. But this is understandable since the data we must use can only be assembled
by long, laborious, and costly excavations or field inquiries. We can envy the chemist who can call on a supply house for his reagents and who has only the rarer compounds to concoct for himself, or the psychologist who, assuming all men are equivalent, can pluck a sample from the population about him.

Anthropology is a non-experimental field. It is not given to us to manipulate whole bodies of people. And if we could form them to a new cultural mold, we could never restore them to their pre-experimental condition. Nor is there such a thing as a cultureless group, save newborn infants, with whom we might experiment. The situation is analogous to much of astronomy, geology, and phylogenetic studies where the final products are given and which are also the result of specific historic circumstances which must be factored out. The procedures open to us are of two kinds: we may find situations where whole populations have been moved to new social or physical surroundings; or where a new industrial or social regime has been imposed from the outside. Ordinarily our procedure for seeking uniformities of culture-conditioned behavior and its manner of change must rely on comparison. We may make such "experiments in thought," as Lowie calls them, by choosing cases, which are historically linked, but which have common elements, and the observe the concomitant variations. Or, for those more interested in processes of change rather than functional interrelations, we can compare the variants at two successive points in the development of culture forms. We are confronted throughout with seeming paradox. Our unit of discourse has to be the culture group, yet our attention must gravitate constantly from group to individual since our concern is with behavior as manifested in individuals—but individuals as members of groups.

There have been attempts to quantify culture data and hand them by statistical devices with the aim of establishing systemat resemblances and interrelations. I believe this is not only because some individuals become enamoured of statistical tools—the u
of which is not justified here, given the uncertain character of the original units—but because there is a feeling that there is a necessary superiority in quantifying. But quantifying, let me remind you, tends to wipe out those qualities which give individuality to the units, qualities which may be more significant than the substratum of characters common to a group of traits. We must be very much on our guard against spurious imitation of procedures legitimate enough in the physical sciences. A statement of common occurrence of disparate traits—a first-order association—is about all that gives valid results. And such results are not open to the challenge that interpretation has entered at some state in the calculations. At best calculations can be performed only on an as if basis, ignoring incompatible elements in the units.

The individual constantly has the problem of finding his place and role within the framework of behavior patterns fixed in his society. Reversely this may be phrased as the varying expression of culture forms as found in various individuals. There are few serious studies in this direction. Some attention has been given to innovators and leaders, particularly religious innovators, but the bulk of these inquiries has gone into back-handed studies of personality. On the one hand they have not been disengaged very far from the particular cultural and social circumstances; on the other, lacking in stringency and self-criticism, the investigators leave many of us with the uneasy feeling that little more has been done than provide illustration of the gospel according to Freud, Jung, or some more modern prophet.

I had always supposed that personality had something to do with individuality, but it seems not if we are to judge by what some anthropologists formulate in their studies of personality. There has been some success in outlining the modal personality of the carriers of a particular culture, portraying, as Kroeber has
done for the Walapai of western Arizona, a generalized individual, his customary habit patterns, his seeming motives and ideals. But all too frequently these modal personalities as depicted for us seem very much like equivalents of the stock characters of stage and novel—the stage Irishman, the lovesick maiden, and so on. Although such normative characterizations may prove of some value to the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, it does not appear to me that the study of personality is a field for the anthropologist.

A quite fictitious kind of culturally-determined personality was presented to us years ago by Benedict. From ethnographic accounts of norms of cultural behavior she drew up pictures of individuals who, as average persons, acted throughout according to these standard forms. This was done without any investigation of the actual deeds and thought of people living in these cultural milieus. These constructs are as fictitious as the "economic man" of the economists: there may be no individuals in these communities who actually behave as the normative picture would have it. Add to this that these concoctions were then interpreted in psychological terms, and it was assumed that then we knew the psychic character of all persons living in one or the other of these culture groups. These pictures of Zuñi, Plains, and Northwest Coast Indians were so intriguing that they beguiled many non-anthropologists, but I must add that they were greeted with great scepticism by my professional brethren.

Undoubtedly one of the fertile fields for investigation would be the relative roles of consciousness and the unconscious in the various parts of culture. I do not believe it is necessary to involve oneself in any of the fashionable theories of the unconscious, but rather that sober progress is to be made by a first-level inquiry—simply, which items of thought and action operate with consciousness and which relatively subconsciously.

Where there is an objective expression of thought patterns—a machine, a table—consciousness is maximal, and correspondingly
purposeful changes are made for efficiency or embellishment. The object itself serves as a repository of new ideas put into concrete form. This undoubtedly accounts for the way in which tangible culture—contrivances and the like—have accumulated at an accelerated rate through the centuries, far outstripping developments in the social and moral world.

On the other hand, the flow of speech is about as unconscious as progression by walking. Only the aim or purpose of the phrase is directed by a flickering consciousness: the points of articulation are cared for mechanically by fixed motor habits of the mouth parts. Only when there is a momentary pause for the right word, or a musing of the tongue so that there is a mistake of pronunciation, does consciousness momentarily light the scene.

It is largely in connection with the unconscious segments of behavior that emotions reign and that there is greatest stability in culture. Witness the tenacity with which some of our most cherished views are held—views which are rarely subjected to thoroughgoing analysis by most of us. To be sure there have been changes in our religions from the more formulaic and ritualized to rationalization in terms of ethical ideals. But in many parts of culture there are irrational elements heavily charged with emotion. Through the ages there has been re-evaluation: as a young novelist (Winifred Holtbie) put it, "If the growth of civilization means anything, it means the gradual reduction of the areas ruled by chance," ruled by the illogical and the unproven. And Boas long ago remarked that while there has been a progressive elimination of irrational elements, the emotional charging of culture is not less.

Cultures are ever changing: emphases shift, aims and attitudes acquire new meanings and values. The changes are by no means always toward the more rational—we have witnessed some strange political and economic developments in recent dec-
ades. But while there are diverse directions of cultural change, we have every reason to expect an orderly growth of cultures, orderly in the sense that new forms unfold from antecedent states without discontinuity. So constant are the fundamentals of cultural behavior in all those cases we have analyzed that we can permit ourselves to forecast—in a modest way—what new forms, or heretofore undiscovered forms, there will be.

There are many fields in which prediction is taken as an index of the extent to which uniformities are known. But it must be remembered that the order of prediction varies from field to field as well as within a field. In every case, from physics to anthropology, we are dealing with probabilities, not with certainties.

We can predict, within limits, the behavior of members of this audience tomorrow because we are certain of the fixity of their habits. I do not think that overnight they will speak in other tongues or cease to follow their customary pursuits in their habitual fashion. Again, it is quite possible to forecast the kind of nonlogical elements that will cluster in our religious or economic complexes, but their exact phrasing is much more difficult to state.

Prediction of the expectable in cultures is one of the most valuable tools of the anthropologist. For instance, there are many gaps in our world-coverage of culture types, but we can interpolate and predict the behavior patterns of an uninvestigated group. Here we rest not only on a universal pattern for all cultures—all have a basic subsistence economy, social form, language, etc.—but we know too the type of interrelations to be found in the area distribution of culture forms. And quite obviously, the more we know of the adjacent peoples the more precisely we can predict what is likely to occur within the gap and can determine, in field inquiries, the subtle variations of these local forms.

It is our knowledge of points of tension, the fixity of thought patterns, the selectivity and integration that govern the acquisition of novelties, that has made it possible for anthropologists to
assist in directing the aid now provided for undeveloped nations. But it should be clear that prediction is more uncertain with respect to those unusual social experiments than it is where developments have followed traditional trends.

I have tried to make it clear that the vast body of experiences with divergent types of cultural behavior makes the anthropologist acutely aware of the force and quality of even the most trivial-seeming social habit. If our reasoning is correct it should have appeared that all generic, fundamental human capacities are always moulded into fixed forms and can occur in no other way. And it is these forms which provide the basis of our personal behavior, which we prize so highly because it is ours and ours alone. And yet to the man from Mars that science-fiction tells us of, these individualized ways would seem but minor deviations of common patterns. It would be preposterous, of course, to ignore the uniqueness of the individual, but equally we cannot ignore the forms into which cultures shape our natures.