The Nature of Culture
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I PROPOSE to discuss the concept of culture—its origin and validity, its use and limitations. Like every concept, this one is a tool; and as a tool the concept of culture is two-edged. It ties some phenomena and interpretations together; it dissimilates and distinguishes others—about which more later.

Like all important ideas, that of culture was the realization of many minds, and it developed gradually. There are still great civilized nations—the French, for instance—who refuse to admit the word "culture" into their intellectual vocabulary. On the other hand, the ancients knew, and modern primitives are aware of, some of the phenomena of culture—as, for instance, distinctive customs. "We don't do that way, we do like this"—such a statement, which every human being is likely to make at some time, is a recognition of a cultural phenomenon.

Phenomena have a way of occurring composite in nature, intricately blended. Their qualities, still more their conceptualized general aspects, can be extricated only gradually from the welter of appearances. Until well into the nineteenth century and in certain situations and contexts until today, the concept of culture has remained unextricated from that of society. When Comte founded sociology and coined its name more than a century ago, he stamped on it the impress of the social. But his famous three stages of mythology, metaphysics, and positivism are stages primarily of ideology, and therefore of culture. Only incidentally are they stages of specifically social or interpersonal relations. Still more does this essential reference to culture instead of society hold of Comte's differentiating characterizations of Catholicism and Protestantism and hundreds of other special dicta.

When so original and penetrating a thinker as Durkheim hypostasized society as that by which early groups were impressed, which they worshiped, and thus originated religion, he put forth a view which has generally seemed far-fetched and, to many, mystical. But as soon as we substitute for his nondifferentium of "society" the customs and beliefs which hold together primitive societies and seem to help them to survive—in another word, their "culture"—then the Durkheim interpretation begins to assume reasonableness. It seems fair to assume that that is what Durkheim "meant," what he would say today.

That nondifferentiation of the two aspects should continue up to a certain point is expectable, since culture by definition includes, or at least presupposes, society. As something shared and supra-individual, culture can exist only when a society exists; and conversely every human society is accompanied by a culture. This converse, to be sure, is not complete: it applies only to *human* societies. In principle, however, the limitation is extremely important. The existence of cultureless or essentially cultureless subhuman societies, especially the highly elaborate ones of the social insects, serves as an irrefutable touch-

stone for the significant discrimination of the concepts of the social and the cultural: they *can* exist separately. At any rate, one of them does exist separately.

The word "social" is itself a relatively late appellation. The Roman term was *civilis*, *civitas*, from *civis*, a "citizen," corresponding to Aristotle's definition of man as a *zoon politicon* or "political animal"—a civil animal to the Romans, a social animal to us. Of course, institutions were implied in the term "political animal," and therewith culture was implied, but not as a segregated, coagulated concept. These ancient Mediterranean terms are illuminative of how abstract ideas originate in a matrix of the concrete. When Aristotle wanted to talk generically of what we call "society" and "culture," he used the word *polis*, which still carried full implication and imagery of citadel and city wall, of free citizens entitled to vote and to fight.

The word "culture" in its modern scientific sense, as, for instance, any anthropologist would use it with assurance that every other anthropologist would know what he meant, and not something else—this modern meaning of "culture" is still more recent. The first definition of "culture" in this broad but definite sense of its current social science usage—as distinct from cultivation and refinement, from nurture, from agriculture and pearl culture and test-tube cultures—the first definition I have found in an English dictionary dates from the late twenties. The first deliberate usage in a book was by Tylor when in 1871 he published *Primitive Culture* and formulated that most-quoted of definitions of culture which begins: "that complex whole which includes. . . ." It is clear that Tylor was conscious of establishing the term, just as he was aware of using "culture" and "civilization" as synonyms in his discourse. To be exact, he already had used the word "culture" a few times as a hesitant alternative for "civilization," and in the same sense but without definition, six years earlier in his *Researches*, as if trying it out on the British public. He may have got it from the German ethnographer, Klemm, whom he read and cited. Klemm spells the word with a *C*—*Cultur*—in his 1843 as well as his 1854 book. The word appears to have been in general German usage at that period with its modern meaning, and was in no sense handled then like a new coinage. I do not know precisely how far back the German word *Cultur* goes with its modern scientific meaning. Kant uses it repeatedly in his *Anthropologie*, but it is mostly difficult to say whether he is thinking of culture in our sense or of "becoming more cultured." Arciniegas quotes Paul Hazard as saying that the word first appears in the German dictionary of 1793.

Let us take a long step back from both culture and its undifferentiated immediate matrix, which we would today call "sociocultural"—a step back to the psychosomatic. Just as culture presupposes society, so society presupposes persons. It is an assemblage of individuals—plus something additional—that something which we and termite societies share. Well, here, then, are three elements or sets of factors: culture, society, persons, each resting upon, or preconditioned by, the next. In fact, we can immediately go one step further and separate persons into bodies and minds as two aspects which in some situations at least it is profitable to deal with separately—in all strictly psychological situations, for instance. That the separation is warranted, when it is useful, is clear not only from the current distinction of biological science from psychology but also from the fact that plants, though possessing somas, are generally conceded as showing no evidence of having psyches.

So now we are already facing four

superposed aspects—four "levels," let us call them: body, psyche, society, culture. By now it is obvious where the line of thought is leading us; the next step prefaces the inorganic as underlying the somatic, the psychic, the social, and the cultural.

De facto, phenomena of the inorganic level can also be split up, when, as, and if useful—and in many situations, perhaps most, it is useful—into physical and chemical. Indeed, we can split finer and laminate off a subatomic level and perhaps another for supermolecular virus phenomena or for crystal manifestations. All these segregations, however, fall within the larger inorganic or suborganic end of the scale; and, as our particular concern here is with the ultraorganic, with the most superorganic at the opposite end, it would be digressive and distracting to enter here into these finer distinctions at the bottom of the hierarchy.

It has become customary of late to designate these hierarchical planes as "levels of organization" and, alternatively, as "dimensions." The latter term is appropriate in certain contexts, as when it is said that every human situation has environmental, organic, social, and cultural dimensions. The word "dimension" here is equivalent to "aspects" or to "class of impinging factors." It definitely avoids even implication of hierarchy. Dimensions cross-cut one another, levels imply parallelism. In a so-called "field approach" to a limited phenomenal area, such as a personality, where emphasis is on the interaction of factors converging at a single point, it is natural to see cultural, social, organic, and physical factors as so many dimensions "radiating" out from the point under observation. By contrast, as the approach is macroscopic, or even telescopic, as in the tracing of large historic patterns or their interrelations, the dimensions automatically segregate themselves into parallel and superposed layers, and the term "levels" is more appropriate.

However, it is necessary not to confound "levels of organization" with "levels of abstraction." It is true that, while we are focusing on cultural aspects, we are in a technical sense "abstracting" from the organic and physical aspects pertaining to the same phenomena. "Abstracting" here means removing our consideration from, ignoring; it is temporary, shifting, reversible. But cultural phenomena are *not* more abstract than physical or organic phenomena in the sense of being more abstruse, rarefied, unconcrete, or conceptualized. The surge of anger is as concrete a phenomenon as is a contracted eyebrow or a constricted blood vessel. The custom of headhunting or of catching the bride's bouquet is certainly thoroughly concrete. It is only culture as a generalized concept that is abstract; but so are society, psyche, body, matter, and energy abstract. What is much more significant than abstractness is that cultural phenomena occur organized on different principles from social phenomena, social phenomena from psychic, and so on down the series.

What is clearest about the levels is that certain properties or qualities of the phenomena of each are peculiar to it. Presumably this is due to a difference in arrangement or organization. That which is specifically characteristic and distinctively significant of phenomena of a level is intelligible only in terms of the other phenomena, qualities, or regularities of that same level. The most characteristic qualities or phenomena are never explained by what we know of another level: they are not really reached by other-level knowledge, especially when the levels are well separated. The findings of a study of lower-level phenomena do indeed *apply* to those of higher level, but they apply with decreasing significance.

Thus gravitation, electrical conduc-

tivity, and element valence apply to organic bodies as well as to inorganic ones. But principles or laws such as these are the only ones which apply to inorganic bodies; and yet they do not to any serious degree explain the specific organic phenomena of hereditary repetition, of conception and death, of adaptability. These specifically organic processes *conform* to established physicochemical processes; they cannot be *derived* from them. Laws of a lower level set the frame within which phenomena of a higher level operate; they do not per se produce those phenomena. The lower-level laws will explain the constants, universals, and uniformities of phenomena on an upper level. They will explain or describe those qualities or properties which an upper level shares with a lower—that an organic body has mass or conductivity, for instance. They fail to explain or even describe those properties that are specific of a level, distinctive of it—as how an organic body repeats itself in its offspring.

In short, it appears that the total work of science must be done on a series of levels which the experience of science gradually discovers. To reduce everything in the universe to a monistic set of principles, mechanical or otherwise, may be a legitimate philosophy—or may not be; it is certainly not an adequate operational method of science. It involves using the hard-won earnings of physics for verbal extensions into biology or sociology, and thereby short-circuiting genuine problem solution in those very domains. Apparently, true progress is made when every science is autonomous in its procedures, while also realizing its relation of dependence on the subjacent ones and of support to the independent overlying ones. It is investigation on autonomous levels that is a precondition of most extensions of our understanding of the world. After enough such extensions have been made, it is valid reductionism that gradually integrates and consolidates them. Premature reductionism is just verbal forcing.

This does not mean that a new entity is hypostasized as the unique substance of each level. Life, mind, society, and culture are not outside matter and energy, not outside space and time and free of them. They are in and of nature with matter and energy. They are different organizations of matter and energy, if one will, which physicists and chemists cannot, in virtue of their physical and chemical methods, deal with fruitfully; and similarly all the way up the scale.

This is where the modern level-approach differs from the older segregation of spirit from matter, of soul from body. In this the higher substance was reserved from the operations of nature, was excluded from its sphere. The body perished, but the soul went on; matter was subject to mechanical laws, but the spirit was free of them—it stood outside nature. On the contrary, the scientific point of view is that every phenomenon is in nature and part of it. The levels represent empirically found segmentations of the total field of nature, in each of which somewhat distinctive intellectual procedures or operations seem to be most productive. The whole recognition of levels is, in one sense, an affair of scientific methodology, is wholly internal to science. It does not portend the reintroduction of vitalism, mentalism, spirit, or *Geisteswissenschaften.*

Philosophically, cognizance of a system of levels seems to have been recent and rather perfunctory. Bergson has been reckoned a proponent of the view of emergence of the new; but, so far as his *élan vital* is extra-natural, his emergents would be something more than levels. Alexander's *Space, Time, and Deity* (1920) is often credited with being the fullest exposition in English of the point of view by a professional philosopher. Alexander works from

space and time successively through matter, life, and mind toward God. This view may stem partly from scientific experience but is used to transcend science and nature. C. Lloyd Morgan's *Emergent Evolution*, three years later, is perhaps the most-cited work on the subject. "There is more in the events that occur in the living organism," he says (p. 20), "than can adequately be interpreted in terms of physics and chemistry, though physico-chemical events are always involved." Vital relatedness—organization on the organic level—is effective because changes occur under it "the like of which do not occur when life is absent." Morgan credits Lewes with the word "emergent," and Wundt with the term "principle of creative resultants," namely, that psychical products are more than a mere summation of elements and represent a new formation. J. Needham and William Morton Wheeler have expressed similar views, which Koestler's second *Yogi and Commissar* essay also sets forth with charm and originality.

Two things hold about most of these formulations. First, they concentrate on biological and psychological autonomy from the physicochemical and fail to pursue the principle onto the social and cultural level, at any rate explicitly so. (Wheeler does go on up to the social level but not to the cultural. Warden in 1936 did explicitly recognize culture as an emergent.) Second, the stress is on an evolving universe and on emergences in the course of this. Evolution is therefore a primary postulate, and emphasis is on emergences within this—in other words, on innovating changes. Logically, however, a hierarchical series of levels of phenomena could exist in a static world. How they successively emerged to become graded as they are is a separate problem, which logically need not obtrude. My point is not to combat or deny that there may have been cosmic evolution but to assert that the concept of evolution and the concept of levels are not necessarily involved or implied with each other. Emergence is no longer contained in the idea of levels as soon as levels are separated from evolution. New levels leap into appearance only if one has already assumed an evolutionary and progressive process. I would contend that the whole linkage with evolution has happened because our generation silently takes evolution for granted, as most former generations assumed deity: evolution is a compulsion culturally and emotionally difficult for us to escape from. A scientific methodology based as purely as possible on scientific experience is perhaps really better off without emergence, because unencumbered.

More fruitful is Koestler's metaphor and diagram of a staircase. Viewed from above, from the angle of strictly scientific exploration, this staircase looks like a plane surface, like a flat continuum to which everything is already reduced and in which everything therefore appears explainable. Viewed from the front, however, by phenomenal contemplation, it is the rise of the series of steps, and the nonpredictabilities between them, that are impressive. In short, primary organizing relations are operative within levels rather than translevel.

There is another aspect of the levels which scientists have generally not noted and philosophers have fumbled when they did note. This is a fact which is not yet fully explained, but nevertheless it is indubitable on the basis of the overwhelming run of empirical experience to date. This fact is that the more basic a level is in the hierarchy, the more successfully do its phenomena lend themselves to manipulation by the methods of science in the strict sense—methods resulting in uniformities, repetitive regularities, and therefore predictability. But, on the contrary, the higher the level, the more recalcitrant are its

phenomena to treatment by methods homologous or perhaps even analogous to those of physics and chemistry; whereas they yield readily—and with significance, though of a somewhat different kind—to intellectual treatment similar in principle to that which historians follow. The neo-Kantian philosophers have long since pointed out that, while a strictly scientific approach is generalizing and nomothetic, a historical approach is idiographic, in that it remains much more attached to the particular phenomena per se. Instead of dissolving them away into laws or generalizations, the historical approach preserves its phenomena, on whatever level it happens to be operating, and finds its intellectual satisfaction in putting each preserved phenomenon into a relation of ever widening context with the phenomenal cosmos.

From here, however, the neo-Kantians have not gone on to take the next steps which would seem compelled by a judicial inspection of the actual practices obtaining in the entire study of nature. These further steps are two. First, the contextual relations which a historical approach determines involve relations of absolute space equally with absolute time—not of time alone or primarily, as is so often asserted for history. Also, context involves relations of form, including function but perhaps excluding cause; and therewith it involves relations of value. The question of cause has its complexities, in part because scientists proper are also beginning to challenge and repudiate causality, especially in prestige-laden ultraphysics. However, it is notorious that, in the three uppermost levels of mind, society, and culture, specific causality is extremely difficult to determine. Presumably, this is because the phenomena of these levels are at least in part epiphenomena to phenomena of lower levels. It is therefore probably by trans-level reductionism that the complex causes of upper-level phenomena will be found, if at all. However, relations of absolute space and time, of form, structure, and function, and of value do remain characteristic of the historical approach.

Second, while it is obvious that the great triumphs of strictly scientific method have been won on the lower levels and the ready development of the historical approach has taken place on the levels of man's mind, society, and culture, nevertheless it does not follow that a dichotomy of levels corresponds in a one-to-one manner to the dichotomy of intellectual procedures. Rather should it be assumed, on trial at least, that the correspondence is only partial and that the historical approach is applicable also on the basal levels—though with certain considerable difficulties—and the strictly scientific approach on the upper levels—again with difficulties. Such a view is not strange, nor is it paradoxical, when one remembers that astronomers admit astronomy to be a historical science; that much of geology is on its very face avowedly historical; and that evolutionary biology, from palaeontology through comparative morphology to systematics, professes to be the grand history of life on earth. Until this situation has been met by explicit and straightforward counterargument—which it has not been, so far as my knowledge goes—we must then assume that both the fundamental methods of intellectual understanding—the scientific and the historical—are applicable to all levels of phenomena, though with a sliding degree of fruitfulness.

After brilliantly showing that the *Geisteswissenschaften*, as so called in nineteenth-century Germany, were really disciplines dealing not with spirit or soul as such but with culture and that their *de facto* approach was essentially historical, the neo-Kantian Rickert blocked his farther progress with a simplistic dichotomy, to wit: Culture,

historically intelligible, versus Nature, scientifically intelligible. Here the antithesis, culture : nature, is a relic of the older idealistic antithesis, spirit : nature, as this in its turn had been a softening modernization of theological soul : body opposition. And it is the same sharp antithesis which led Rickert to misappraise thoroughly the genuinely historical component in the sciences of astronomy, geology, and biology.

In any event, it is cultural phenomena —or, let us say, phenomena organizable in cultural terms and relations—that constitute the very top level of our hierarchy. If it seem rash to affirm this when the concept of culture is of as recent emergence into consciousness as we have seen it to be, we can modify the statement to say: culture is the top level recognized to date. Personally, I would not have the glimmering of a suspicion as to what a level of organization higher than that of culture might be like. Yet a future generation may see more clearly. For the present, however, let us examine the consequences of this top-level position of our subject matter.

First of all, while culture is underlain and preconditioned by social and psychosomatic factors, the enormous influence of culture on the behavior and activity of individual men and of men in groups has become fully recognized. So heavy is this overlay that "human nature," as that which is biologically given before culture begins to operate, has receded into a remote background in the social sciences and is maintained by biologists as a citadel of principle rather than with specific effectiveness. Now, in general, it is the lower levels that condition the upper: life conforms to physicochemical laws, not the reverse, and so on. There is, accordingly, something anomalous to the general scheme of things in the degree to which the human hereditary organism, individually and in groups, conforms to the sway of the culture to which it happens to be exposed. It is doubtful whether there is another instance of factors on a higher level influencing events on a lower to so great a degree as this. Even the physical world is not immune from the agency of the restless human beavers operating with their cultural activities and artifacts: canals, dams, bridges; river diversions and soil erosion; deforestation and reforestation; pilfering of coal, gas, and other resources of the earth's crust; even attempts at artificial weather.

However, it is only the degree of the influencing and its special manipulative quality that are new as regards culture. There is at best only a trend in nature, not a rigorous law, making lower-level factors the prevailingly influencing ones on upper. A moment's reflection reveals that purely organic agents also have perceptibly modified the surface and outer shell of this physical planet: coral reefs, limestones, coal beds, domes of hydrocarbon oil and gas are among their residues.

Second, it is reasonable to assume that the findings of the top level will differ considerably in kind from those of the bottom levels. All our experience to date corroborates this. The revolutionary extension of physicochemical science by speculation and devised trial during the last fifty years centers around subatomic particles. In the same half-century we have also become much more aware and informed of the domain of culture. But this better understanding of culture has given no sign, until now, of including anything corresponding to the subatomic particles or the geneticists' genes. There is nothing in sight which suggests that we shall discover in culture any invariable elemental units, or even definite relations of integral number or fixed association.

Reflection confirms this negative appraisal. Context, significant of the historical approach which is dominant in the apprehension of culture, concerns external relations viewed as widely as

possible—ultimately, in total relations. By contrast, the primary problem of physics, as of genetics and physiology, is to isolate or extricate valid simplicities, recurrent regularities, from the amorphous confusion of nature's phenomena. We may be reasonably confident that nothing corresponding to allelomorphic unit-characters or genes, to protons or neutrons, even to atoms or molecules, is likely to be discovered on the level of culture. Whatever such elemental units may be operative on culture—if any—we may expect to be elements of a lower level.

Indeed, such more or less recurrent near-regularities of form or process as have to date been formulated for culture are actually mainly subcultural in nature. They are limits set to culture by physical or organic factors. The so-called "cultural constants" of family, religion, war, communications, and the like appear to be biopsychological frames variably filled with cultural content, so far as they are more than categories reflecting the compartmenting of our own Occidental logicoverbal culture. Of processes, diffusion and socialization are both only psychological learning, imitation, and suggestion under special conditions. Custom is psychobiological habit on a social scale and carrying cultural values. And so on.

What evidently takes the place of the formulation of law, in intellectual operations on the cultural level, is the recognition of significances, including values. At any rate this holds in the degree that the approach to consideration of the phenomena is historical in kind, in the sense in which a historical approach has already been referred to as distinct from (though complementary to) the more narrowly scientific or nomothetic one. This becomes clear on consideration of history in its specific sense, the history studied by historians. This is indeed mixed as to its content: a jumble of pieces of individual biographies, more or less dramatic events, social contacts and clashes, definition of or implicit reference to institutions, that is, cultural forms and their succession, with perhaps occasional recognition of dashes of influence from inanimate nature or organic race. Now the recognized failure of history to discover laws may perhaps be due partly to the fact that it operates with its materials nearly as mixed as they come to hand, without consistently selecting them according to one or another aspect or principle. But the notorious weakness of historians in successfully assigning causes—they can ordinarily deal best with minute and immediate ones: why the Bastille fell on July 14 and not 15, as against the causes of the French Revolution—this failure of the historians is compensated for by their ability to express significances. And both the failure and the ability seem to be due to the considerable upper-level, sociocultural component in the materials of intellectual history which attempts more than representational dramatization.

That this is so becomes more evident as soon as consideration is given to bodies of sociocultural and especially cultural materials least contaminated by admixture with individual personalities and particular events. In the study of English as a language it does not matter whether "Give me Liberty" was uttered by Patrick Henry or by any other Anglo-Saxon speaker; whether in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century; or whether the occasion was historically momentous or not. (Note the term "historically momentous": that is, historically effective or significant—significant to a larger pattern of events, to a context of currents of events and of institutional forms.) To the linguist all this is irrelevant. What he sees in the phrase "Give me Liberty" is data bearing on the form, structure, and relations of certain sounds and meanings. And these sounds and meanings, as well as

their form and structure, are constant and repetitive, thoroughly social, and yet anonymous—are therefore anonymous, we might say. The phrase is always uttered by an individual; but by which individual and from what motivation and with what consequences in which circumstances are irrelevant to the linguist.

We have here a clear-cut instance of the selective extrication of upper-level phenomena—in this case linguistic phenomena—from the welter of events in which they occur, and of their intellectual treatment purely as phenomena of that level. What eventuates in such a case is, in popular phraseology, an English grammar. Such a grammar is an organized analysis and resynthesized description of the phenomenal appearance, the structure, and the internal relations and functioning of a language. Such a synthesized description makes sense precisely because it is self-contained and self-sufficient. It deals with superindividual forms and relations; and therefore, while it does not deny the necessary participation of individuals in the phenomena, linguistic science normally and basically suppresses the individual, "holds him constant," "abstracts from him." Why this is so needs no elaborate proof.

It is clear that to operate successfully as a linguist one does not have either to personify or reify languages or to endow them with a substance of their own. One analyzes and synthesizes, so long as results are forthcoming, *as if* one's data constituted a self-contained system. That ultimately they are not wholly self-contained is obvious. But it is a truism that the scientist's concern as scientist is not with ultimates—certainly not to begin with.

It is also clear that linguistic science is consistently backward and weak in ascertaining causality but that its particular selective concentration is what enables it to determine significant relations of form and structure—patterns and their interrelations. The causes of linguistic phenomena such as changes of form or meaning of words—the causes of these in the ordinary sense of "efficient" causes—evidently lie below the linguistic-cultural level itself and presumably are numerous, obscure, conflicting, and determined by still more remote causes. But it will be noted that the linguistic phenomena which result from these sublinguistic causes come highly regularized, formalized, patterned, and definitely interrelated, as soon as we look for the forms contained in them. The phenomena even contain a great deal of predictability, which we are ordinarily neglectful of because it is so commonplace in experience. For instance, the next Anglo-Saxon uttering Henry's sentiment would also say "Give me Liberty" and not "Gave mine liberting." In short, intellectual order and intellectual significance are most readily and successfully attained on the linguistic level by directing attention to form-patterns and form-relations and not toward causal relations.

Finally, as regards approach being "historic" in the larger sense in which the word has been used here, the linguist can operate synchronically and descriptively, or again he can operate diachronically and historically in the narrower, conventional sense. This, however, is a detail and an incident. In both cases the linguist deals with forms and form-relations which have significance to him; and he deals with them to an equal degree in the two cases. In both instances his material remains essentially superindividual, anonymous, patterned, predictive as to its repetitiveness, and almost unconcerned with cause. What this likeness of method of synchronic descriptive linguistics and of diachronic linguistics imports is this: The differentiation into synchronic and diachronic treatment being secondary, the approach which I call the "historic" one,

in contrast with the nomothetic approach, is thereby shown to be characterized primarily not by accentuation of the time element and succession in time, as is still so often supposed, but is characterized rather by its other properties that have been enumerated. It is these other properties—superindividuality, patterning, relative nonconcern with cause—that are fundamental to the generic historic approach.

Language has been chosen here as illustration because it is somewhat narrower, somewhat more set off and self-contained, than the rest of culture and therefore somewhat more clear cut. But the difference is only of degree. To understand cultural manifestations, we must also seek for idiosyncratic and physiognomic forms and seek for their significances first within a coherent, largely self-sufficient system of forms such as a particular civilization; and beyond that in a great context of total forms achieved in human history. We must also expect to discover in our material little of causality in the sense of the physicist's causality. We must be ready, where we get further by it, to ignore and suppress the individual, who from the angle of the understanding of culture is perhaps more often irrelevant and distracting than helpful. The ordering or relating which yields understanding in the study of culture is basically best defined, perhaps, as a process of perceiving significant interrelations of forms as forms.

It is evident that the ultimate relating of cultural forms to their largest possible context, in order to bring out their fullest significance, carries in it an element of weighting of the large relation, of the long-range view. And this, in turn, is akin to diachronic interest, to unwillingness to remain restricted to the moment. The moment is sufficient in interest when it is typical of repetitive totality, when it contains totality, as it were, as it does in physics. When the moment or spot is not containing or representative of a larger whole, as when it is uniquely idiosyncratic, then intellectual interest pushes on from it to the whole. Therewith the view tends to become diachronic, and the approach is characterizable as historic in nature, whether or not it succeeeds in becoming actually chronological.

In the entire realm of style the superpersonal flow of form is obviously strong. The word itself—*stylus*, the "pencil"—originally had anthropomorphic reference to the particular quality or manner of writing of an individual. The word "style" tends nowadays to be used for a group similarity, for what is the manner common to a school or series of writers or artists, for a superindividual quality. We can still speak of Shakespeare's "style": we more often speak of "Elizabethan style." And we successfully trace and analyze styles which we cannot, for lack of knowledge, segregate into the contributions of individuals. This holds, for instance, of much of Greek vase painting and of much of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, not to mention the beginnings of most arts and all primitive ones.

Allied to styles are the courses of dress fashion or mode—that which to the unsophisticated the word "style" is in fact most likely to denote. Names of individuals—Prince Albert, Empress Eugénie—are now and then applied to such fashions, but secondarily and arbitrarily, as picturesque handles. Actually, dress fashions arise obscurely, are due to undetermined causes, and are almost wholly shaped and executed, as well as accepted and used anonymously, by the great nameless throng—superindividually, in short.

Even in the fine arts it is only when these become a self-conscious cult that real interest in the individual artist arises and that he is sought after and his work prized as peculiarly his, as Chambers has set forth in *Cycles of Taste*. In most

of human history, and to most men, it is objects and styles that are meaningful; the artist is only a personal exemplification and a passing incident.

It is much the same with inventions. Today we think in terms of inventors. But the discoveries and inventions of other lands, of the past, of our own Middle Ages, are anonymous. Metalworking, blacksmithing; plows, screws, shears; stirrups, horseshoes, harness, wheels, axles; clocks, levels, lamps, candles; glass and pots; fertilizing, irrigating, castrating, riding—the whole basis of mechanical civilization has no personally known authors. They were never recorded or have been long forgotten, because they did not matter.

When finally this condition changes and legend or history gives us, first, imagined inventors and then documentarily authenticated ones, a strange persistence of the ancient condition nevertheless continues. The inventors now come in contemporary pairs or triplets or teams of competitors. Wallace synchronizes with Darwin, Leverrier with Adams, DeVries with Correns and Tschermak; Langley's flight with Wright's; Bell anticipated Gray by a day; Fulton contests with Symington, Fitch, Rumsey, and Stevens. That the making of inventions is normally multiple and simultaneous is by now a fairly well-established fact. From the angle of the individual, the inventors operate independently. From that of the culture, it is the trend, the antecedents, the moment, that unite to force the invention; within its setting it has become, as it were, inevitable; which person is the vehicle of discovery matters little to the society and to the growth of the culture.

Another long-noted phenomenon points the same way, if one will see it so. This is the clustering of great men in certain epochs of certain civilizations and their rarity elsewhere. Nothing now known in biological heredity, nothing in the laws of chance, can account for these tremendous variations in the frequency and intensity of genius. The only explanation yet advanced which is not wholly speculative or arbitrary sees a correlation between realized genius and opportunity given by stage of a civilization's development—the stage where its productive cultural patterns are defined and mature but where their inherent potentialities have not yet begun to be exhausted. By this view, it is the phase of developing culture patterns that is primarily determinative of greatness and fineness of human achievement; geniuses are the index of such development of pattern. What we are wont to call "great men" are those among many more individuals of above-average ability who happen to get born in a time and place and society the patterns of whose culture have formed with sufficient potential value and have developed to sufficient ripeness to allow the full capacities of these individuals to be realized and expressed. This is not really a revolutionary view. It should not even be disturbing to anyone who has apprehended the strength and fulness with which culture holds us all. It ought certainly not upset him who has read and absorbed Sumner's *Folkways* of more than forty years ago and has made the inevitable short extrapolation from the folk to the sophisticates and has realized that we are all in the grip of our ways and our mores—in the grip of our culture.

I have just spoken of greatness and fineness, of potential and realized achievements. Therewith we are plumb in the field of that which the scientist has long said is not for him to touch: values—human values which are cultural values, whether moral, aesthetic, sensory, intellectual, or what not.

One must grant that human cultural values have nothing to do with physics, have no place in it or in any science that models itself on the plan and rules of

physics. But how is it possible, without the most sterile stultification, to make intellectual study of social man who is cultural man, and yet permanently to leave out of consideration his product, culture, and that essence of culture, its forms and its values?

This is not to affirm that all study which has man for its subject need take cognizance of values. It is possible to investigate responses or learning or the mechanism of propagandizing or the structure and size of social groupings and never tread on a value. But that it is possible to skirt values and yet not touch them is not per se a moral mandate to do only that. It is evident that we shall have to admit two nonconcurrent plans or ways of investigation into what are called "social phenomena." One approach tries to follow as best it may the methods of the physicist or to find near-surrogates for them, to measure and experiment, and to dispense with consideration of values. The second approach accepts values as inherent in culture and characteristic of it, as thus being part of nature and therefore susceptible of study like any other set of phenomena in nature, and of study by methods analogous to those used in the study of the other parts of nature, though not necessarily identical with those of physics. Values, along with the culture forms to which they attach, can obviously be described; their differential qualities as well as common characteristics can be compared; their developmental phases, sequential relations, and connections can be investigated. This has, in fact, been done in every study of the history of an art, in every attempt to present a religion, in all ethnographic accounts that rise above mechanical itemization, in all writings on culture history that are more than atomistic.

It is true that it is customary to relegate many such studies to what are named the "humanities" and therewith to read them out of the so-called "social sciences." But what of that—provided that the phenomena considered and the forces in them are regarded as natural, as part of the rest of nature and in no sense supernatural? And provided also that they are subjected to dissection, recombination, and inference according to the basic rules of evidence followed in the investigation of other parts or realms of nature, without admittance of bias, personal advantage, self-superiority or ethnocentricity.

In the past the trouble has been that values were claimed and regarded as direct products of deity, which stood outside nature and above it, or as emanating from the soul, whose spirituality, first protected by separation from the body, was further preserved by exclusion from the domain of nature and nature's matter and energy. But surely those days are over. It is difficult to imagine a ground on which contemporary natural scientists would deny validity to any endeavor to understand any set of manifestations occuring in nature, provided that the endeavor is free of reservations, overt or concealed, as to exclusions from nature.

Cultural values, along with cultural forms and cultural content, surely exist only through men and reside in men. As the products of human bodies and minds and their functionings and as a specialized extension of them, cultural values thus form a wholly "natural" part of nature. Here the concept of the hierarchy of levels helps. Not only are the levels separated into steps; their superposition one on the other also ties them together, though not into an undifferentiated unity.

Values, like all sociocultural manifestations, are largely superpersonal. That is, far more of any individual's values are instilled into him from outside, directly or indirectly from his society, than he produces within and by himself. Hence values participate in what used to be called the "collective" or "mass"

origin—what I prefer to call the "essential anonymity" of origin—of phenomena like customs, morals, ideologies, fashions, and speech. Sumner's "folkways" excellently conveys this same quality except for its false implication that there also exists a social intelligentsia exempt from being folk. It is possible to exalt collectivity into something self-containedly mystical, as shown by the example of Jung and perhaps of Durkheim. But it is not necessary to be mystical in dealing with collectivity, and we shall therefore assume that we are concerned with the collective only as something completely in relation with the remainder of nature.

Now the collective or anonymous, being everybody's, is also nobody's: there is a quality of the impersonal about it. The things that are everyone's enter individuality more diffusely than those which a person has sweated out for or by himself. These latter he is likely to prize, almost certain to be well aware of, and to have a conscious history and highlighted reasons for, whether these reasons be true or false. But what he shares with the collectivity is more massive and extensive, often more firmly rooted, and also more obscure; it tends to be less in the focus of consciousness. Hence what has been called the "covertness" of many patterns of culture; they have been set aside from the overt patterns as "configurations" by Kluckhohn. "Covertness" here does not imply intent of concealment, as it does so often in interpersonal motivations, rather only lack of awareness. It is probably a case of cultural forms being relatively more and less in focus of awareness along a sliding scale partly of occasion and partly of generic situation. Thus rules of conduct, which serve as protections to personality, are likely to be formulated with awareness and explicitness, though also subject to attempted warpings by self-interest. At the other end of the scale, rules of grammar in speech, which normally serves to connect personalities when they feel relaxed and in least need of protection, are unformulated, except as a result of the highly sophisticated curiosity of linguists, and can properly be described as having grown up both anonymously and unconsciously. Breaches of grammatical rule, though instantly observed, are ordinarily not resented, because they invade nothing particular to the individual, but are accepted with tolerance, amusement, or contempt.

Allied to this unawareness or unconsciousness of cultural form and organization is the irrationality of much of the collective in culture. "Irrationality" is what it is sometimes called. I have used the term myself. It covers a variety of happenings in culture which have in common a factor of inconsistency. The totality of a situation or way of doing comes out less regular and less coherent than it might have been under rational planning. Daylight saving; the letter *Double-U* after *U* and *V;* mannered mediaeval instead of classic Roman script; ideographs when an alphabet is available; the spellings "ought" and "eight"; the plural "oxen" instead of "oxes," will serve as examples. The point, of course, is that such irregularities and inefficiencies *were* not thought out but are the result of long and complex histories, with quite different factors often impinging successively. Established individual habits, prestige values, change in one part of a system with lag in another, actual economic cost, mere inertia or nostalgia—all sorts of reasons, mostly rational enough in the concrete situation, have been at work; and the resulting system shows the effect of compromises and patches. Any fool could devise a more consistent system than exists, but even a despot rarely can institute one. In one sense the outcome is "irrational" indeed, in that the institution lacks the full reasonableness

which its defenders claim for it. Actually, it rather is nonrational, and only partly that. Most strictly, it is that the institutional pattern is irregular, not wholly consistent.

These considerations rather foreshadow what might be said of the integratedness of the cultures of particular societies. Cultures tend toward integration and, in the main, largely achieve some degree of it, though never total integration. This latter is an ideal condition invented by a few anthropologists not well versed in history. It is hard to imagine any historian—other than a propagandist—bringing himself to advance such a claim as the complete integration of any culture, in the face of his professional experience.

That values constitute an essential element of cultures leads to another consideration. A first account of a new culture, having necessarily to seize and portray the values which help to give it organization and orientation, is likely to emerge as a somewhat idealized account, since the values of the culture are reflected in the society's ideals. Of course, no society is ideal in its behavior. The society aims to conform to the value standards; but we are all more or less lazy, mean, self-centered, cowardly, spiteful, motivated by personal interest. There is thus an unavoidable gap between the ideal or "pure" picture of the culture and the actuality of how this ideal is lived out by the average adherent of the culture. The psychologically minded analyst of behavior, the student of personality and culture, for whom culture is less an end than a take-off of interest, will accentuate the actuality; and between personality stresses and strains, traumas and frustrations, the ideal values of conduct which the "culturologist" has built up into such gleaming, streamlined patterns will emerge tarnished and battered or even cracked. This is a difference to be aware of without worrying too much over it. He who is really interested in the phenomena of culture knows that their ideal values always suffer in actual human living of them. But, at the same time, he knows that in apprehending cultures the most essential thing to apprehend is their values, because without these he will not know either toward what the cultures are slanted or around what they are organized.

Incidentally, it seems to be with reference to this value-ideal content that the full study of culture has sometimes been called "normative" and "humanistic." Not that we should study cultures merely in order to learn proper conduct in life but that, without cognizance of their norms, we are studying only their shells.

Its extraordinary variability or plasticity is one of the most marked properties of culture. Living organisms are also adaptable and modifiable but do repeat their basic plan of structure closely in successive generations of individuals. There is almost nothing in culture to correspond to this organic repetitiveness. Allegations of regular recurrences in culture refer to shadowy, large resemblances which are only dubiously substantiable because they are not precisely definable. Itemized bits of culture content may persist with tenacity for long periods. Functioning organizations of cultural material apparently always change, even if they persist, until it is often difficult to say whether we are still within the original complex, form, or pattern or have slid into a new one. This inherent plasticity is evident as soon as one is in position to follow any one institution in detail through the centuries; or, equally, to follow an institution or custom through its provincial or regional variants, or through its appearances among a series of nonliterate tribes that are geographically contiguous.

The reason for this strong propensity of culture to vary seems to lie in the fol-

lowing fact: All cultural phenomena are invariably related to certain other cultural phenomena to which they are similar and which precede or succeed them or occur near them contemporaneously; and their fullest understanding can be attained only through cognizance of these relations. While these relations are indisputable, they are relations of form, value, and significance. They are not, directly, relations of cause in the ordinary sense of efficient cause. The efficient causes of cultural phenomena are the actions or behavior of men—of psychosomatic individual human beings. A denial of this proposition seems to leave no alternative but admission of a set of insulated, self-contained cultural forces operating in and on a self-sufficient cultural substance. This would be a large assumption and would immediately incur the charge, from scientists, of being a mystical tenet aiming to exclude a particular domain of phenomena from the sway of the remainder of the cosmos as studied by total science.

Now, as soon as the efficient causality of culture is admitted to lie essentially on the psychobiological level, it is evident that cultural phenomena are, in the strict sense, only by-products of organic activities, epiphenomena of primary organic phenomena. This conclusion, in turn, would seem to explain the irregularity, unpredictability, variability, and "plasticity" of cultural phenomena. They may once be the large cultural products of inconsequential subcultural forces or, again, the relatively insignificant side-effects of organic causes whose primary expression is in organic consequences. It cannot be doubted that single individuals occasionally affect the stream of culture perceptibly: Napoleon with his Code, Caesar on the Calendar, Shi Hwang-ti with the Burning of the Books, Copernicus with his revolution—not to mention religious leaders. Even suborganic influence on culture must be admitted: catastrophes that wipe out one society, obliterating its culture, but spare another, leaving its culture intact; changes in climate favorable to prosperity and increase of particular populations, with consequent dominance of their cultures over those of disadvantaged peoples. It is evident that the greater the number and variety of these subcultural causes, the greater the variability or "plasticity" of cultural phenomena is likely to be.

Of course, the total outcome is not utter cultural randomness but only a high degree of what may properly be called plasticity; and this for the following reason.

Predominantly it will be the psychosomatic actions of human beings that contain the immediate causality of cultural phenomena. But human beings, with their extraordinarily high symbolizing faculties, which means cultural faculties, are always culturalized. That is, they are culturally determined—and heavily determined—by the time they reach the age at which they become potential causes of culture. What is therefore operative is a powerful system of circular causality. The human beings who influence culture and make new culture are themselves molded; and they are molded through the intervention of other men who are culturalized and thus products of previous culture. So it is clear that, while human beings are always the *immediate* causes of cultural events, these human causes are themselves the result of antecedent culture situations, having been fitted to the existing cultural forms which they encounter. There is thus a continuity of indirect causation from culture event to culture event through the medium of human intermediaries. These intermediaries are concerned, first of all, with relieving their own tensions and achieving their personal gratification; but in so doing they also transmit, and to some degree modify, the culture which they

carry because they have been conditioned to it. In a sense, accordingly, a kind of cultural causality is also operative. However, compared with the immediate efficient causality of men on culture, the causation of culture on culture is indirect, remote, and largely a functional relation of form to form. At any rate, as long as one's interest is in what happens in culture, it is the cultural antecedents that become significant. The human transmitters and carriers and modifiers are likely to average pretty much alike. As causes they tend to average uniform and constant, except so far as cultural exposure has differentiated them.

The inquirer, if his interest is really in culture, tends therefore to omit the human agents. He operates *as if* individual personalities did not have a hand in cultural events. In the main he is justified in this procedure. He is certainly justified in proportion as his view is long-range. On telescopic inspection of the greater cultural currents, even the greatest and most influential personalities shrink to minuteness.

As the range contracts and the segment of culture examined begins to be minute, the role of individuals, under the microscopic dissection being carried on, looms correspondingly larger. Here is an equally legitimate method of study; but, of course, it yields results of a quite different order. It gives insight into the interaction of persons and culture: on how individuals get caught in the net of their culture; of how some kinds of them stretch the net or tear rents in it; how others, meanwhile, are weaving new ranges of mesh. The value of such studies is as examples of the close-up mechanism of the change which culture is always tending to undergo. An additional value is in the illumination thrown on the reactions of human beings, viewed as integral personalities, to their enveloping culture. These are certainly important fields of knowledge. But they are obviously different from straight culture history or from the analytic comparison of cultural forms and values as such.

What "culture and personality" as a field of study seems to be, in its purest form, is what has just been described as the interaction of persons and their enveloping culture. Really to pursue this study, it is obviously first necessary to understand pretty well what the culture is and what the persons are like. It would be vain to hope that worth-while results will eventuate from operating with an indeterminately variable *X* matched against an indeterminately variable *Y*. Kluckhohn, prominently identified with the "culture-and-personality" movement, has recently proposed shifting its focus from the mutual interaction of the two factors, as just described, to a focus within personality, as this is affected by hereditary constitution, by social environment, by society, and by culture. This would make personality the real subject of investigation, and culture only one of several factors impinging on it. This is less, and rather more one-sided, than a true culture-and-personality field as it has just been envisaged. But such an evenly balanced field is an especially difficult one to investigate until both the contributing fields or levels, whose relation is being investigated, are fairly thoroughly understood. And that can as yet hardly be affirmed of either culture or personality. The danger is therefore of a Scylla of inconclusiveness faced by a Charybdis of forced verbalistic conclusions. Nevertheless, whichever approach is used, the entire legitimacy of the translevel subject of culture-personality interaction is unquestionable.

Of course, some personality study and attempted culture-and-personality study is motivated primarily by a lack of interest in culture or understanding of it—in short, by a desire to escape from dealing with it. There is no valid quarrel

with this attitude, only with the non-avowal of its motivation.

Allied are productions like Chapple and Coon's *Principles of Anthropology*, from which even the word "culture" has been expunged except for a few oversights. This is a seemingly conscious attempt, at any rate a *de facto* one, to explain culture away into phenomena and factors of lower level. In short, the purpose is outright reductionist.

The problem remains unresolved of how far general forms, therefore recurrent forms, can be demonstrated in culture. The difficulty has been that the recurrent forms are lax and ill defined. With strict analysis, the stable content of concepts like feudalism, clan, mana, soul, and taboo shrinks increasingly. This seems to be because the actual cultural content of such general concepts has been acquired by them during their historical development, which is always complex and always tending toward the unique, as historians have long ago learned to take for granted. The general or recurrent remnant in these seemingly recurrent phenomena is usually not cultural but of lower level, especially psychological. What is common to clans is that they function as associations of people felt to be kindred, toward whom one has or develops kinsman attitudes. This is essentially a finding in social psychology. More specific recurrences show this even more clearly. The tendency of writing systems to devise or revert to symbols for syllables is quite evidently the result of a psychosomatic inclination to syllabify when speech is being rendered very distinctly or analytically. Psychologists are generally not concerned with any finding so concrete and specific as this one, so they have not announced it. But, so far as it is a little "law," it is a psychosomatic one explanative of cultural phenomena.

Another feature of these partial recurrences or resemblances is that they cut across resemblances due to historical connection and are therefore left without benefit of explanation of similarity as due to community of origin. If, then, the recurrence is due to some deeper-seated, generic factor, the question arises why the results of this are not universal, as they almost always fail to be. The situation is like one familiar in botany. Trees have quite evidently been independently developed in a whole series of families, even orders, of plants. Likewise vines; likewise herbs; and so on. The botanist does not therefore put all trees into one order, all vines into another. Neither does he discard the common-knowledge concepts or categories of tree, vine, bush, herb, altogether; he uses them as a more or less useful adjunct or supplement in description. It would seem that this would turn out to be about the proper function of the corresponding categories of recurrences in culture, such as feudalism, caste, shaman, taboo, totem.

There is also no agreement as yet as to the most general forms among which the totality of culture could be distributed, so far as recurrences or regularities do hold water. The earliest such attempts took the shape of stages and suffered from intellectual naïveté. There was the hunting-herding-farming stage sequence; the mythologic-religious-positive one; even the chipped stone–polished stone-bronze-iron classification.

Of more promise is the concept of recurrent functional nexuses of internal relations: say, of feudalism, piety, and mediaevalistic economy. This Weberian approach is still rather inadequately explored.

Finally, there is the question of how far the maximum nexuses or totalities which we call "civilizations" show recurrences in their developmental phases —in other words, show a recurrent pattern of growth. If they do, empirically, show such a recurrent pattern, civili-

zations would provide an actual and natural segmentation which would help us to organize intellectually the otherwise variably tossing and endlessly stretching sea of the variable continuum of culture as a whole. There is a growing recognition of the probable reality of such segmentation, as well as of its specific limits and inclusions—in other words, of what each civilization takes in.

As to what is at work in the formation of these great units, however, there is wide divergence. Spengler sees immanent predestination, Toynbee moral free will, Sorokin a pendulum beat between sensate and ideational proclivities. This area of inquiry will unquestionably undergo considerable further cultivation, if for no other reason than that our thinking of history has until recently been too ethnocentrically weighted, too "auto-culturo-centric," for the large problems in this area to be effectively conceived or framed.

The question remains whether the concept of culture will serve as a mechanism for integrating more closely the several social sciences. The answer is both Yes and No. There is no doubt that cultural aspects can be recognized and followed through all human areas commonly recognized as social. Economics and government *are* only segments of culture. The data of formal sociology are so intertwined with cultural ones that subjects like family, kinship, associations, the state, are claimed and treated equally by sociologists and by cultural anthropologists. Formal history, even at its most biographical, cannot wholly avoid institutional implications; and, at the opposite end of its range, history is institutional, and thus *de facto* cultural. Psychology can pretty much eliminate cultural factors by narrowing its analysis and by holding the cultural factors constant in selective experiment. Yet, as soon as it rewidens its activity to take in total personalities, a flood of cultural considerations inevitably pours in on it.

However, what all this means is that, if one is interested in cultural manifestations, one can recognize them and deal with them selectively in every scientific study that has man for its subject. And such a selective pursuit will yield certain understandings unattainable by any other and less differentiated method. But it *is* selective; that is a fact that must not be forgotten. There are other bases of selection, and each has its own kind of fruitfulness. Economic theory, though validated by empirical techniques rather than derived from them, seems reasonably to satisfy economists and is not likely to be given up by them for any more generalized theory of culture. Historians presumably will continue to prefer their accustomed mixed diet of events, persons, and institutional forms, with its maximum of adherence to raw phenomena, opportunities for stirring dramatic representation in narrative, and minimum necessity of generalization—and then generalization merely as incidental commentary. We have already considered the translevel or interlevel studies of fields like personality in culture, which, though still groping and unsure of method and occasionally confusing hope with fulfilment, are certainly legitimate and to be counted on to grow.

In summary, it is evident that the cultural approach, now that it is well isolated and developed, will continue to be used because it yields distinctive results. Yet it is equally clear that the cultural approach is not exclusively valid within the area of superorganic phenomena; nor, of course, is it a panacea. It is a selective approach, fruitful because of its selectiveness, but, for the same reason, not unlimited in its scope.