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THE UNCONSCIOUS

A SYMPOSIUM

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KURT KOFFKA
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EDWARD SAPIR
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MARION E. KENWORTHY
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With an Introduction by

ETHEL S. DUMMER



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V

THE UNCONSCIOUS PATTERNING OF
BEHAVIOR IN SOCIETY

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We may seem to be guilty of a paradox when we speak of the unconscious in reference to social activity. Doubtful as is the usefulness of this concept when we confine ourselves to the behavior of the individual, it may seem to be worse than doubtful when we leave the kinds of behavior that are strictly individual and deal with those more complex kinds of activity which, rightly or wrongly, are supposed to be carried on, not by individuals as such, but by the associations of human beings that constitute society. It may be argued that society has no more of an unconscious than it has hands or legs.

I propose to show, however, that the paradox is a real one only if the term "social behavior" is understood in the very literal sense of behavior referred to groups of human beings which act as such, regardless of the mentalities of the individuals which compose the groups. To such a mystical group alone can a mysterious "social unconsciousness" be ascribed. But as we are very far from believing that such groups

really exist, we may be able to persuade ourselves that no more especial kind of unconsciousness need be imputed to social behavior than is needed to understand the behavior of the individual himself. We shall be on much safer ground if we take it for granted that all human behavior involves essentially the same types of mental functioning, as well conscious as unconscious, and that the term "social" is no more exclusive of the concept "unconscious" than is the term "individual," for the very simple reason that the terms "social" and "individual" are contrastive in only a limited sense. We will assume that any kind of psychology that explains the behavior of the individual also explains the behavior of society, in so far as the psychological point of view is applicable to and sufficient for the study of social behavior. It is true that for certain purposes it is very useful to look away entirely from the individual and to think of socialized behavior as though it were carried on by certain larger entities which transcend the psycho-physical organism. But this viewpoint implicitly demands the abandonment of the psychological approach to the explanation of human conduct in society.

It will be clear from what we have said that we do not find the essential difference between individual and social behavior to lie in the psychology of the behavior itself. Strictly speaking, each kind of behavior is individual, the difference in terminology being entirely due to a difference in the point of view. If our attention is focussed on the actual, theoretically

measurable behavior of a given individual at a given time and place, we call it "individual behavior," no matter what the physiological or psychological nature of that behavior may be. If, on the other hand, we prefer to eliminate certain aspects of such individual behavior from our consideration and to hold on only to those respects in which it corresponds to certain norms of conduct which have been developed by human beings in association with one another and which tend to perpetuate themselves by tradition, we speak of "social behavior." In other words, social behavior is merely the sum or, better, arrangement of such aspects of individual behavior as are referred to culture patterns that have their proper context, not in the spatial and temporal continuities of biological behavior, but in historical sequences that are imputed to actual behavior by a principle of selection.

We have thus defined the difference between individual and social behavior, not in terms of kind or essence, but in terms of organization. To say that the human being behaves individually at one moment and socially at another is as absurd as to declare that matter follows the laws of chemistry at a certain time and succumbs to the supposedly different laws of atomic physics at another, for matter is always obeying certain mechanical laws which are at one and the same time both physical and chemical according to the manner in which we choose to define its organization. In dealing with human beings, we simply find it more convenient for certain purposes to refer a given act to

the psycho-physical organism itself. In other cases the interest happens to lie in continuities that go beyond the individual organism and its functioning, so that a bit of conduct that is objectively no more and no less individual than the first is interpreted in terms of the non-individual patterns that constitute social behavior or cultural behavior.

It would be a useful exercise to force ourselves to see any given human act from both of these points of view and to try to convince ourselves in this way that it is futile to classify human acts as such as having an inherently individual or social significance. It is true that there are a great many organisemal functions that it is difficult to think of in social terms, but I think that even here the social point of view may often be applied with success. Few social students are interested, for instance, in the exact manner in which a given individual breathes. Yet it is not to be doubted that our breathing habits are largely conditioned by factors conventionally classified as social. There are polite and impolite ways of breathing. There are special attitudes which seem to characterize whole societies that undoubtedly condition the breathing habits of the individuals who make up these societies. Ordinarily the characteristic rhythm of breathing of a given individual is looked upon as a matter for strictly individual definition. But if, for one reason or another, the emphasis shifts to the consideration of a certain manner of breathing as due to good form or social tradition or some other principle that is usually

given a social context, then the whole subject of breathing at once ceases to be a merely individual concern and takes on the appearance of a social pattern. Thus, the regularized breathing of the Hindu Yogi, the subdued breathing of those who are in the presence of a recently deceased companion laid away in a coffin and surrounded by all the ritual of funeral observances, the style of breathing which one learns from an operatic singer who gives lessons on the proper control of the voice, are, each and every one of them, capable of isolation as socialized modes of conduct that have a definite place in the history of human culture, though they are obviously not a whit less facts of individual behavior than the most casual and normal style of breathing, such as one rarely imagines to have other than purely individual implications. Strange as it may seem at first blush, there is no hard and fast line of division as to class of behavior between a given style of breathing, *provided that it be socially interpreted*, and a religious doctrine or a form of political administration. This is not to say that it may not be infinitely more useful to apply the social mode of analysis of human conduct to certain cases and the individual mode of analysis to others. But we do maintain that such differences of analysis are merely imposed by the nature of the interest of the observer and are not inherent in the phenomena themselves.

All cultural behavior is patterned. This is merely a way of saying that many things that an individual

does and thinks and feels may be looked upon not merely from the standpoint of the forms of behavior that are proper to himself as a biological organism but from the standpoint of a generalized mode of conduct that is imputed to society rather than to the individual, though the personal genesis of conduct is of precisely the same nature, whether we choose to call the conduct individual or social. It is impossible to say what an individual is doing unless we have tacitly accepted the essentially arbitrary modes of interpretation that social tradition is constantly suggesting to us from the very moment of our birth. Let anyone who doubts this try the experiment of making a painstaking report of the actions of a group of natives engaged in some form of activity, say religious, to which he has not the cultural key. If he is a skilful writer, he may succeed in giving a picturesque account of what he sees and hears, or thinks he sees and hears, but the chances of his being able to give a relation of what happens in terms that would be intelligible and acceptable to the natives themselves are practically nil. He will be guilty of all manner of distortion. His emphasis will be constantly askew. He will find interesting what the natives take for granted as a casual kind of behavior worthy of no particular comment, and he will utterly fail to observe the crucial turning points in the course of action that give formal significance to the whole in the minds of those who do possess the key to its understanding. This patterning or formal analysis of behavior is to a surprising degree

dependent on the mode of apprehension which has been established by the tradition of the group. Forms and significances which seem obvious to an outsider will be denied outright by those who carry out the patterns; outlines and implications that are perfectly clear to these may be absent to the eye of the onlooker. It is the failure to understand the necessity of grasping the native patterning which is responsible for so much unimaginative and misconceiving description of procedures that we have not been brought up with. It becomes actually possible to interpret as base what is inspired by the noblest and even holiest of motives, and to see altruism or beauty where nothing of the kind is either felt or intended.

Ordinarily a cultural pattern is to be defined both in terms of function and of form, the two concepts being inseparably intertwined in practice, however convenient it may be to dissociate them in theory. Many functions of behavior are primary in the sense that an individual organic need, such as the satisfaction of hunger, is being fulfilled, but often the functional side of behavior is either entirely transformed or, at the least, takes on a new increment of significance. In this way new functional interpretations are constantly being developed for forms set by tradition. Often the true functions of behavior are unknown and a merely rationalized function may be imputed to it. Because of the readiness with which forms of human conduct lose or modify their original functions or take on entirely new ones, it becomes neces-

sary to see social behavior from a formal as well as from a functional point of view, and we shall not consider any kind of human behavior as understood if we can merely give, or think we can give, an answer to the question "For what purpose is this being done?" We shall have also to know what is the precise manner and articulation of the doing.

Now it is a commonplace of observation that the reasoning intelligence seeks to attach itself rather to the functions than to the forms of conduct. For every thousand individuals who can tell with some show of reason why they sing or use words in connected speech or handle money, there is barely one who can adequately define the essential outlines of these modes of behavior. No doubt certain forms will be imputed to such behavior if attention is drawn to it, but experience shows that the forms discovered may be very seriously at variance with those actually followed and discoverable on closer study. In other words, the patterns of social behavior are not necessarily discovered by simple observation, though they may be adhered to with tyrannical consistency in the actual conduct of life. If we can show that normal human beings, both in confessedly social behavior and often in supposedly individual behavior, are reacting in accordance with deep-seated cultural patterns, and if, further, we can show that these patterns are not so much known as felt, not so much capable of conscious description as of naïve practice, then we have the right to speak of the "unconscious patterning of

behavior in society." The unconscious nature of this patterning consists not in some mysterious function of a racial or social mind reflected in the minds of the individual members of society, but merely in a typical unawareness on the part of the individual of outlines and demarcations and significances of conduct which he is all the time implicitly following. Jung's "racial unconscious" is neither an intelligible nor a necessary concept. It introduces more difficulties than it solves, while we have all we need for the psychological understanding of social behavior in the facts of individual psychology.

Why are the forms of social behavior not adequately known by the normal individual? How is it that we can speak, if only metaphorically, of a social unconscious? I believe that the answer to this question rests in the fact that the relations between the elements of experience which serve to give them their form and significance are more powerfully "felt" or "intuited" than consciously perceived. It is a matter of common knowledge that it is relatively easy to fix the attention on some arbitrarily selected element of experience, such as a sensation or an emotion, but that it is far from easy to become conscious of the exact place which such an element holds in the total constellations of behavior. It is easy for an Australian native, for instance, to say by what kinship term he calls so and so or whether or not he may undertake such and such relations with a given individual. It is exceedingly difficult for him to give a general rule

of which these specific examples of behavior are but illustrations, though all the while he acts as though the rule were perfectly well known to him. *In a sense it is well known to him.* But this knowledge is not capable of conscious manipulation in terms of word symbols. It is, rather, a very delicately nuanced feeling of subtle relations, both experienced and possible. To this kind of knowledge may be applied the term "intuition," which, when so defined, need have no mystic connotations whatever. It is strange how frequently one has the illusion of free knowledge, in the light of which one may manipulate conduct at will, only to discover in the test that one is being impelled by strict loyalty to forms of behavior that one can feel with the utmost nicety but can state only in the vaguest and most approximate fashion. It would seem that we act all the more securely for our unawareness of the patterns that control us. It may well be that, owing to the limitations of the conscious life, any attempt to subject even the higher forms of social behavior to purely conscious control must result in disaster. Perhaps there is a far-reaching moral in the fact that even a child may speak the most difficult language with idiomatic ease but that it takes an unusually analytical type of mind to define the mere elements of that incredibly subtle linguistic mechanism which is but a plaything of the child's unconscious. Is it not possible that the contemporary mind, in its restless attempt to drag all the forms of behavior into consciousness and to apply the results of

its fragmentary or experimental analysis to the guidance of conduct, is really throwing away a greater wealth for the sake of a lesser and more dazzling one? It is almost as though a misguided enthusiast exchanged his thousands of dollars of accumulated credit at the bank for a few glittering coins of manifest, though little, worth.

We shall now give a number of examples of patterns of social behavior and show that they are very incompletely, if at all, known by the normal, naïve individual. We shall see that the penumbra of unconscious patterning of social behavior is an extraordinarily complex realm, in which one and the same type of overt behavior may have altogether distinct significances in accordance with its relation to other types of behavior. Owing to the compelling, but mainly unconscious, nature of the forms of social behavior, it becomes almost impossible for the normal individual to observe or to conceive of functionally similar types of behavior in other societies than his own, or in other cultural contexts than those he has experienced, without projecting into them the forms that he is familiar with. In other words, one is always unconsciously finding what one is in unconscious subjection to.

Our first example will be taken from the field of language. Language has the somewhat exceptional property that its forms are, for the most part, indirect rather than direct in their functional significance. The sounds, words, grammatical forms, syntactic constructions, and other linguistic forms that we assimilate in

childhood have only value in so far as society has tacitly agreed to see them as symbols of reference. For this reason language is an unusually favorable domain for the study of the general tendency of cultural behavior to work out all sorts of formal elaborations that have only a secondary, and, as it were, "after the event" relevance to functional needs. Purely functional explanations of language, if valid, would lead us to expect either a far greater uniformity in linguistic expression than we actually find, or should lead us to discover strict relations of a functional nature between a particular form of language and the culture of the people using it. Neither of these expectations is fulfilled by the facts. Whatever may be true of other types of cultural behavior, we can safely say that the forms of speech developed in the different parts of the world are at once free and necessary, in the sense in which all artistic productions are free and necessary. Linguistic forms as we find them bear only the loosest relation to the cultural needs of a given society, but they have the very tightest consistency as aesthetic products.

A very simple example of the justice of these remarks is afforded by the English plural. To most of us who speak English the tangible expression of the plural idea in the noun seems to be a self-evident necessity. Careful observation of English usage, however, leads to the conviction that this self-evident necessity of expression is more of an illusion than a reality. If the plural were to be understood

functionally alone, we should find it difficult to explain why we use plural forms with numerals and other words that in themselves imply plurality. "Five man" or "several house" would be just as adequate as "five men" or "several houses." Clearly, what has happened is that English, like all of the other Indo-European languages, has developed a feeling for the classification of all expressions which have a nominal form into singulars and plurals. So much is this the case that in the early period of the history of our linguistic family even the adjective, which is nominal in form, is unusable except in conjunction with the category of number. In many of the languages of the group this habit still persists. Such notions as "white" or "long" are incapable of expression in French or Russian without formal commitments on the score of whether the quality is predicated of one or several persons or objects. Now it is not denied that the expression of the concept of plurality is useful. Indeed, a language that is forever incapable of making the difference between the one and the many is obviously to that extent hampered in its technique of expression. But we must emphatically deny that this particular kind of expression need ever develop into the complex formal system of number definition that we are familiar with. In many other linguistic groups the concept of number belongs to the group of optionally expressible notions. In Chinese, for instance, the word "man" may be interpreted as the English equivalent of either "man" or "men," according to the

particular context in which the word is used. It is to be carefully noted, however, that this formal ambiguity is never a functional one. Terms of inherent plurality, such as "five," "all," or "several," or of inherent singularity, such as "one" or "my" in the phrase "my wife," can always be counted upon to render factually clear what is formally left to the imagination. If the ambiguity persists, it is a useful one or one that does not matter. How little the expression of our concept of number is left to the practical exigencies of a particular case, how much it is a matter of consistency of aesthetic treatment, will be obvious from such examples as the editorial "we are in favor of prohibition," when what is really meant is "I, John Smith, am in favor of prohibition."

A complete survey of the methods of handling the category of number in the languages of the world would reveal an astonishing variety of treatment. In some languages number is a necessary and well-developed category. In others it is an accessory or optional one. In still others, it can hardly be considered as a grammatical category at all but is left entirely to the implications of vocabulary and syntax. Now the interesting thing psychologically about this variety of forms is this, that while everyone may learn to see the need of distinguishing the one from the many and has some sort of notion that his language more or less adequately provides for this necessity, only a very competent philologist has any notion of the true formal outlines of the expression of plurality, of

whether, for instance, it constitutes a category comparable to that of gender or case, whether or not it is separable from the expression of gender, whether it is a strictly nominal category or a verbal one or both, whether it is used as a lever for syntactic expression, and so on. Here are found determinations of a bewildering variety, concerning which few even among the sophisticated have any clarity, though the lowliest peasant or savage head-hunter may have control of them in his intuitive repertoire.

So great are the possibilities of linguistic patterning that the languages actually known seem to present the whole gamut of possible forms. We have extremely analytic types of speech, such as Chinese, in which the formal unit of discourse, the word, expresses nothing in itself but a single notion of thing or quality or activity or else some relational nuance. At the other extreme are the incredibly complex languages of many American Indian tribes, languages of so-called polysynthetic type, in which the same formal unit, the word, is a sentence microcosm full of delicate formal elaborations of the most specialized type. Let one example do for many. Anyone who is brought up in English, even if he has had the benefit of some familiarity with the classical languages, will take it for granted that in such a sentence as " Shall I have the people move across the river to the east? " there is rather little elbow room for varieties of formal expression. It would not easily occur to us, for instance, that the notion of " to the east " might be

conveyed not by an independent word or phrase but by a mere suffix in a complex verb.

There is a rather obscure Indian language in northern California, Yana, which not only can express this thought in a single word, but would find it difficult to express it in any other way. The form of expression which is peculiar to Yana may be roughly analyzed as follows. The first element in the verb complex indicates the notion of several people living together or moving as a group from place to place. This element, which we may call the "verb stem," can only occur at the beginning of the verb, never in any other position. The second element in the complete word indicates the notion of crossing a stream or of moving from one side of an area to the other. It is in no sense an independent word, but can only be used as an element attached to a verb stem or to other elements which have themselves been attached to the verb stem. The third element in the word is similarly suffixed and conveys the notion of movement toward the east. It is one of a set of eight elements which convey the respective notions of movement toward the east, south, west, and north, and of movement from the east, south, west, and north. None of these elements is an intelligible word in itself but receives meaning only in so far as it falls into its proper place in the complexly organized verb. The fourth element is a suffix that indicates the relation of causality, that is, of causing one to do or be something, bringing it about that one does or is in a certain way, treating one in such

and such an indicated manner. At this point the language indulges in a rather pretty piece of formal play. The vowel of the verb stem which we spoke of as occupying the first position in the verb symbolized the intransitive or static mode of apprehension of the act. As soon as the causative notion is introduced, however, the verb stem is compelled to pass to the category of transitivized or active notions, which means that the causative suffix, in spite of the parenthetical inclusion of certain notions of direction of movement, has the retroactive effect of changing the vowel of the stem. Up to this point, therefore, we get a perfectly unified complex of notions which may be rendered "to cause a group to move across a stream in an easterly direction."

But this is not yet a word, at least not a word in the finished sense of the term, for the elements that are still to follow have just as little independent existence as those we have already referred to. Of the more formal elements that are needed to complete the word, the first is a tense suffix referring to the future. This is followed by a pronominal element which refers to the first person singular, and is different in form from the suffixed pronoun used in other tenses and modalities. Finally, there is an element consisting of a single consonant which indicates that the whole word, which is a complete proposition in itself, is to be understood in an interrogative sense. Here again the language illustrates an interesting kind of specialization of form. Nearly all words of the language

differ slightly in form according to whether the speaker is a man speaking to a man or, on the other hand, is a woman or is a man speaking to a woman. The interrogative form that we have just discussed can only be used by a man speaking to a man. In the other three cases the suffix in question is not used, but the last vowel of the word, which in this particular case happens to be the final vowel of the pronominal suffix, is lengthened in order to express the interrogative modality.

We are not in the least interested in the details of this analysis, but some of its implications should interest us. In the first place, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is nothing arbitrary or accidental or even curious about the structure of this word. Every element falls into its proper place in accordance with definitely formulable rules which can be discovered by the investigator but of which the speakers themselves have no more conscious knowledge than of the inhabitants of the moon. It is possible to say, for instance, that the verb stem is a particular example of a large number of elements which belong to the same general class, such as "to sit," "to walk," "to run," "to jump," and so on; or that the element which expresses the idea of crossing from one side to another is a particular example of a large class of local elements of parallel function, such as "to the next house," "up the hill," "into a hollow," "over the crest," "down hill," "under," "over," "in the middle of," "off," "hither," and so on. We may quite

safely assume that no Yana Indian ever had the slightest knowledge of classifications such as these or ever possessed even an inkling of the fact that his language neatly symbolized classifications of this sort by means of its phonetic apparatus and by rigid rules of sequence and cohesion of formal elements. Yet all the while we may be perfectly certain that the relations which give the elements of the language their significance were somehow felt and adhered to. A mistake in the vowel of the first syllable, for instance, would undoubtedly feel to a native speaker like a self-contradictory form in English, for instance "five house" instead of "five houses" or "they runs" instead of "they run." Mistakes of this sort are resisted as any aesthetic transgression might be resisted — as being somehow incongruous, out of the picture, or, if one chooses to rationalize the resistance, as inherently illogical.

The unconscious patterning of linguistic conduct is discoverable not only in the significant forms of language but, just as surely, in the several materials out of which language is built, namely the vowels and consonants, the changes of stress and quantity, and the fleeting intonations of speech. It is quite an illusion to believe that the sounds and the sound dynamics of language can be sufficiently defined by more or less detailed statements of how the speech articulations are managed in a neurological or muscular sense. Every language has a phonetic scheme in which a given sound or a given dynamic treatment of a

sound has a definite configured place in reference to all the other sounds recognized by the language. The single sound, in other words, is in no sense identical with an articulation or with the perception of an articulation. It is, rather, a point in a pattern, precisely as a tone in a given musical tradition is a point in a pattern which includes the whole range of aesthetically possible tones. Two given tones may be physically distinguished but aesthetically identical because each is heard or understood as occupying the same formal position in the total set of recognized tones. In a musical tradition which does not recognize chromatic intervals "C sharp" would have to be identified with "C" and would be considered as a mere deviation, pleasant or unpleasant, from "C." In our own musical tradition the difference between "C" and "C sharp" is crucial to an understanding of all our music, and, by unconscious projection, to a certain way of misunderstanding all other music built on different principles. In still other musical traditions there are recognized still finer intervallic differences, none of which quite corresponds to our semitone interval. In these three cases it is obvious that nothing can be said as to the cultural and aesthetic status of a given tone in a song unless we know or feel against what sort of general tonal background it is to be interpreted.

It is precisely so with the sounds of speech. From a purely objective standpoint the difference between the k of "kill" and the k of "skill" is as easily

definable as the, to us, major difference between the k of "kill" and the g of "gill" (of a fish). In some languages the g sound of "gill" would be looked upon, or rather would be intuitively interpreted, as a comparatively unimportant or individual divergence from a sound typically represented by the k of "skill," while the k of "kill," with its greater strength of articulation and its audible breath release, would constitute an utterly distinct phonetic entity. Obviously the two distinct k sounds of such a language and the two ways of pronouncing the k in English, while objectively comparable and even identical phenomena, are from the point of view of patterning utterly different. Hundreds of interesting and, at first blush, strangely paradoxical examples of this sort could be given, but the subject is perhaps too technical for treatment in this paper.

It is needless to say that no normal speaker has an adequate knowledge of these submerged sound configurations. He is the unconscious and magnificently loyal adherent of thoroughly socialized phonetic patterns, which are simple and self-evident in daily practice, but subtly involved and historically determined in actual fact. Owing to the necessity of thinking of speech habits not merely in overt terms but as involving the setting up of intuitively mastered relations in suitable contexts, we need not be surprised that an articulatory habit which is perfectly feasible in one set of relations becomes subjectively impossible when the pattern in which it is to be fitted is changed.

Thus, an English-speaking person who is utterly unable to pronounce a French nasalized vowel may nevertheless be quite able to execute the necessary articulation in another context, such as the imitation of snoring or of the sound of some wild animal. Again, the Frenchman or German who cannot pronounce the "wh" of our American-English "why" can easily produce the same sound when he gently blows out a candle. It is obviously correct to say that the acts illustrated in these cases can only be understood as they are fitted into definite cultural patterns concerning the form and mechanics of which the normal individual has no adequate knowledge.

We may summarize our interpretation of these, and thousands of other, examples of language behavior by saying that in each case an unconscious control of very complicated configurations or formal sets is individually acquired by processes which it is the business of the psychologist to try to understand but that, in spite of the enormously varied psychological predispositions and types of conditioning which characterize different personalities, these patterns in their completed form differ only infinitesimally from individual to individual, in many cases from generation to generation. And yet these forms lie entirely outside the inherited biological tendencies of the race and can be explained only in strictly social terms. In the simple facts of language we have an excellent example of an important network of patterns of behavior, each of them with exceedingly complex and,

to a large extent, only vaguely definable functions, which is preserved and transmitted with a minimum of consciousness. The forms of speech so transmitted seem as necessary as the simplest reflexes of the organism. So powerfully, indeed, are we in the grip of our phonetic habits that it becomes one of the most delicate and difficult tasks of the linguistic student to discover what is the true configuration of sounds in languages alien to his own. This means that the average person unconsciously interprets the phonetic material of other languages in terms imposed upon him by the habits of his own language. Thus, the naïve Frenchman confounds the two sounds "s" of "sick" and "th" of "thick" in a single pattern point — not because he is really unable to hear the difference, but because the setting up of such a difference disturbs his feeling for the necessary configuration of linguistic sounds. It is as though an observer from Mars, knowing nothing of the custom we call war, were intuitively led to confound a punishable murder with a thoroughly legal and noble act of killing in the course of battle. The mechanism of projection of patterns is as evident in the one case as in the other.

Not all forms of cultural behavior so well illustrate the mechanics of unconscious patterning as does linguistic behavior, but there are few, if any, types of cultural behavior which do not illustrate it. Functional considerations of all kinds, leading to a greater degree of conscious control, or apparent control, of the patterns of behavior, tend to obscure the uncon-

scious nature of the patterns themselves, but the more carefully we study cultural behavior, the more thoroughly we become convinced that the differences are but differences of degree. A very good example of another field for the development of unconscious cultural patterns is that of gesture. Gestures are hard to classify and it is difficult to make a conscious separation between that in gesture which is of merely individual origin and that which is referable to the habits of the group as a whole. In spite of these difficulties of conscious analysis, we respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and, one might almost say, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all. But this code is by no means referable to simple organic responses. On the contrary, it is as finely certain and artificial, as definitely a creation of social tradition, as language or religion or industrial technology. Like everything else in human conduct, gesture roots in the reactive necessities of the organism, but the laws of gesture, the unwritten code of gestured messages and responses, is the anonymous work of an elaborate social tradition. Whoever doubts this may soon become convinced when he penetrates into the significance of gesture patterns of other societies than his own. A Jewish or Italian shrug of the shoulders is no more the same pattern of behavior as the shrug of a typical American than the forms and significant evocations of the Yiddish or Italian sentence are identical with those of any thinkable English

sentence. The differences are not to be referred to supposedly deep-seated racial differences of a biological sort. They lie in the unconsciously apprehended builds of the respective social patterns which include them and out of which they have been abstracted for an essentially artificial comparison. A certain immobility of countenance in New York or Chicago may be interpreted as a masterly example of the art of wearing a poker face, but when worn by a perfectly average inhabitant of Tokio, it may be explainable as nothing more interesting or important than the simplest and most obvious of good manners. It is the failure to understand the relativity of gesture and posture, the degree to which these classes of behavior are referable to social patterns which transcend merely individual psychological significances, which makes it so easy for us to find individual indices of personality where it is only the alien culture that speaks.

In the economic life of a people, too, we are constantly forced to recognize the pervasive influence of patterns which stand in no immediate relation to the needs of the organism and which are by no means to be taken for granted in a general philosophy of economic conduct but which must be fitted into the framework of social forms characteristic of a given society. There is not only an unconscious patterning of the types of endeavor that are classed as economic, there is even such a thing as a characteristic patterning of economic motive. Thus, the acquirement of

wealth is not to be lightly taken for granted as one of the basic drives of human beings. One accumulates property, one defers the immediate enjoyment of wealth, only in so far as society sets the pace for these activities and inhibitions. Many primitive societies are quite innocent of an understanding of the accumulation of wealth in our sense of the phrase. Even where there is a definite feeling that wealth should be accumulated, the motives which are responsible for the practice and which give definite form to the methods of acquiring wealth are often signally different from such as we can readily understand.

The West Coast Indians of British Columbia have often been quoted as a primitive society that has developed a philosophy of wealth which is somewhat comparable to our own, with its emphasis on "conspicuous waste" and on the sacrosanct character of property. The comparison is not essentially sound. The West Coast Indian does not handle wealth in a manner which we can recognize as our own. We can find plenty of analogies, to be sure, but they are more likely to be misleading than helpful. No West Coast Indian, so far as we know, ever amassed wealth as an individual pure and simple, with the expectation of disposing of it in the fullness of time at his own sweet will. This is a dream of the modern European and American individualist, and it is a dream which not only brings no thrill to the heart of the West Coast Indian but is probably almost meaningless to him. The concepts of wealth and the display of honorific

privileges, such as crests and dances and songs and names, which have been inherited from legendary ancestors, are inseparable among these Indians. One cannot publicly exhibit such a privilege without expending wealth in connection with it. Nor is there much object in accumulating wealth except to reaffirm privileges already possessed, or, in the spirit of a parvenu, to imply the possession of privileges none too clearly recognized as legitimate by one's fellow tribesmen. In other words, wealth, beyond a certain point, is with these people much more a token of status than it is a tool for the fulfillment of personal desires. We may go so far as to say that among the West Coast Indians it is not the individual at all who possesses wealth. It is primarily the ceremonial patrimony of which he is the temporary custodian that demands the symbolism of wealth. Arrived at a certain age, the West Coast Indian turns his privileges over to those who are by kin or marriage connection entitled to manipulate them. Henceforth he may be as poor as a church mouse, without loss of prestige. I should not like to go so far as to say that the concepts of wealth among ourselves and among the West Coast Indians are utterly different things. Obviously they are nothing of the kind, but they are measurably distinct and the nature of the difference must be sought in the total patterning of life in the two communities from which the particular pattern of wealth and its acquirement has been extracted. It should be fairly clear that where the patterns of manipulation

of wealth are as different as they are in these two cases, it would be a mere exercise of the academic imagination to interpret the economic activities of one society in terms of the general economy which has been abstracted from the mode of life of the other.

No matter where we turn in the field of social behavior, men and women do what they do, and cannot help but do, not merely because they are built thus and so, or possess such and such differences of personality, or must needs adapt to their immediate environment in such and such a way in order to survive at all, but very largely because they have found it easiest and aesthetically most satisfactory to pattern their conduct in accordance with more or less clearly organized forms of behavior which no one is individually responsible for, which are not clearly grasped in their true nature, and which one might almost say are as self-evidently imputed to the nature of things as the three dimensions are imputed to space. It is sometimes necessary to become conscious of the forms of social behavior in order to bring about a more serviceable adaptation to changed conditions, but I believe it can be laid down as a principle of far-reaching application that in the normal business of life it is useless and even mischievous for the individual to carry the conscious analysis of his cultural patterns around with him. That should be left to the student whose business it is to understand these patterns. A healthy unconsciousness of the forms of socialized behavior to which we are subject is as necessary to

society as is the mind's ignorance, or better unawareness, of the workings of the viscera to the health of the body. In great works of the imagination form is significant only in so far as we feel ourselves to be in its grip. It is unimpressive when divulged in the explicit terms of this or that simple or complex arrangement of known elements. So, too, in social behavior, it is not the overt forms that rise readily to the surface of attention that are most worth our while. We must learn to take joy in the larger freedom of loyalty to thousands of subtle patterns of behavior that we can never hope to understand in explicit terms. Complete analysis and the conscious control that comes with a complete analysis are at best but the medicine of society, not its food. We must never allow ourselves to substitute the starveling calories of knowledge for the meat and bread of historical experience. This historic experience may be theoretically knowable, but it dare never be fully known in the conduct of daily life.