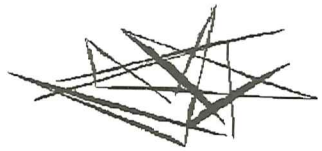
Visions of Culture



An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists

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Ruth Benedict

Patterns of Culture

Ironically, interest in Ruth Benedict's life story overshadows her ideas as an anthropologist, which focused on the relationship between the individual and society. Benedict is the subject of three biographies (Caffrey 1989; Mead 1974; Modell 1983). Benedict is a captivating subject for biographers because she was not only a brilliant anthropologist, but a brilliant woman who was an anthropologist. Benedict was one of the first women to attain prominence as a social scientist, and her life exemplifies the difficult, often conflicting choices that women face in American society. The trajectories of her life and career in anthropology were shaped by that fact.

Background

Ruth Benedict (née Fulton) was educated at Vassar College, which was established in the 1880s with the goal of educating women on an equal plane with men. Although women's university education had existed for 20 years when Ruth Benedict enrolled in 1905, it was still sufficiently new that *Ladies Home Journal* in October 1905 published an article titled, "Madcap Frolics of College Girls," followed in the November issue by the riveting article, "What College Girls Eat" (Caffrey 1989:43). Ruth Benedict studied literature and poetry and later in her life she published poems in poetry magazines and journals. But her exposure to critical analysis, even more than to poetry, was to impact on her anthropology. At Vassar she was exposed to a wide range of Progressive political issues and Modernist artistic trends, and to a challenging body

of English and German literature, particularly the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's works are not read by most Americans today, but many of us know the opening notes of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, actually a tone poem composed by Richard Strauss based on Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Nietzsche chose to write a collection of philosophical statements as if they were spoken by the Persian philosopher Zarathustra (Zoroaster); in fact, they were Nietzsche's own recipes calling for creativity, revolt against conformity, and vigorous engagement with life. Caffrey writes:

> Nietzsche advocated creative iconoclasm. The Self desires to create beyond itself, he wrote: "Creating—that is the great salvation from suffering, and life's alleviation." The creativity he advocated was the creativity of new values. "Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values, doth the world revolve; *inaudibly* it revolveth." [Note the biblical tone of the archaic forms chosen in this translation.] But changing values involved destroying of the old as well as replacement with the new. "False shores and false securities did the good teach you," he wrote for the "good" [i.e., the proper people of society] could not create; instead they crucified the true creators. . . . [Nietzsche] advocated the destruction of conventional morality and conformity because they suffocated creativity. He affirmed physical joy. He called for a renunciation of materialism and for his readers to develop God within themselves. All of these were qualities Ruth believed most important. . . . *Thus Spake Zarathustra* gave her a sense of freedom from that restrictive past and a purpose for living out her future. [1989:54–55]

In 1914 Benedict married Stanley Benedict, but over the years their marriage unraveled. After stints of unsatisfying participation in social work and repressing her own interests for the sake of her marriage, she went back to school at the age of 31 at the New School for Social Research. After a year she was encouraged to take graduate courses at Columbia University where she began an association with Franz Boas that lasted from 1921 until Boas' death in 1942.

Boas supervised Benedict's dissertation—"The Concept of the Guardian Spirit in North America"—which was later published by the American Anthropological Association (Benedict 1923). The dissertation was based on library research rather than field work, but the fact that she obtained her Ph.D. in three semesters is still remarkable. Except for a brief 1922 study of the Serrano in southern California (Benedict 1924), all of Benedict's early writings were based on library research (e.g. Benedict 1922). Beginning in the mid-1920s, however, Benedict went to the American Southwest for summer field research projects among the Zuni (1924), Zuni and Cochiti (1925), O'otam (Pima 1927), and Mescalero Apache (1931). Benedict's Zuni research would become central to her 1934 book *Patterns of Culture*.

During this period Benedict was developing her interests in personality and culture, editing the *Journal of American Folklore*, and teaching at Columbia, where the relationship between Boas and Benedict continued to evolve. After serving as her mentor, Boas became her professional colleague when he got her a position in the Department of Anthropology, which he chaired. Gradually, Benedict was made a full-fledged faculty member, and at her death in 1948 she was one of Columbia University's most eminent professors.

Patterns of Culture

Patterns of Culture was an extremely popular book from the time it was published in 1934. Translated into a dozen languages, issued in 1946 as a paperback that sold for a twenty-five cents, as of 1974 *Patterns of Culture* had sold 1.6 million copies (Mead 1974:1). It is still in print. The ideas of the book spread outside of academia into the American society in general. Because the ideas have permeated modern American culture, we now take them as commonplace. *Patterns of Culture* was written for the non-anthropologist and as Caffrey (1989:209) observes, "it acted as a signal of and a catalyst for the final acceptance of a profound paradigm change in the social sciences and in American society . . . ." Benedict found alleviation from suffering, in Nietzsche's phrase, in the creativity of intellect; *Patterns of Culture* is clear evidence of that intellect at work.

First, it emphasized the importance of culture versus biology; by contrasting the starkly different patterns of life among the Zuni, Dobu, and Kwakiutl, Benedict demonstrated the causal primacy of culture in understanding differences between modern humans. By extension, the profiles of these three societies so different from American society further weakened the grip of Victorian mores on American life.

Second, Benedict's emphasis on *patterns* of culture was a new twist on a fairly twisted idea. The concept of patterns was similar in some ways to the culture-element complexes that Kroeber and others had discussed (see pp. 65–66): patterned co-occurrences of cultural traits that marked different cultural groups. For example, anthropologist

Clark Wissler described the horse-complex among Plains Indians, a constellation of cultural practices including the tipi, travois, buffalo hunting, raiding, and the Sun Dance—all of which revolved around the horse. Similarly, we could define an American car culture in which a wide range of cultural elements—billboards, cellular phones, commuter schools, etc.—are all linked by the presence of automobiles.

But Benedict and other anthropologists were searching for something more subtle and profound, the relationship not only between a set of things and behaviors, but between the underlying ideas, values, and mores that characterize a particular society. The notion of the "Gestalt" configuration was influential at this time. Coming from the German word for the outline of a physical shape, psychologists had applied the notion to experiments in learning behavior that suggested people learn in response to underlying patterns called forth by a specific event rather than by direct stimulus response. Thus we learn that boisterous behavior is inappropriate in a church, but then extend that knowledge to cathedrals and synagogues, certain public monuments (Lincoln Memorial), backyard weddings, and so on. Even in new situations we follow previously learned instructions because the new situation calls forth a basic learned pattern. "The Gestalt idea of configuration," Margaret Caffrey writes, "fell on open minds in America. A configuration was a form of pattern that linked facts and events with the attitudes and beliefs underlying them" (1989:154). Ruth Benedict made this notion of the Gestalt/configuration/pattern central to her work:

> Gestalt (configuration) psychology has done some of the most striking work in justifying the importance of this point of departure from the whole rather than from the parts. Gestalt psychologists have shown that in the simplest sense-perception no analysis of the separate precepts can account for the total experience. It is not enough to divide perceptions up into objective fragments. The subjective framework, the forms provided by past experience, are crucial and cannot be omitted. [Benedict 1959:51]

When Benedict contrasts "objective" and "subjective," she is not using subjective as a synonym for "mere opinion" or an ethnocentric projection; she is attempting to characterize the subjective values that explain why members of a particular society behave in certain ways. Benedict used the concept of pattern to refer to a society's underlying "values of existence." She wrote, "Cultures . . . are more than the sum of their traits. We may know all about the distribution of a tribe's form of marriage, ritual dances, and puberty initiations and yet understand nothing of the culture as a whole which has used these elements to its own purpose" (1959:47).

Benedict exposed the differences in cultural patterns by contrasting three relatively well-studied and markedly different societies: the "Pueblo" Indians (Zuni and Hopi); the Dobu, who live on an island off the south shore of eastern New Guinea; and the Northwest Coast Indians (Tsimshian, Kwakiutl, Coast Salish) who live between Puget Sound and southwestern Alaska. The three groups were chosen because they had been studied by anthropologists whose work Benedict trusted: Reo Fortune had studied the Dobu (he was married to Margaret Mead at the time, see p. 103), Boas had worked on the Northwest Coast, and Benedict herself had conducted research at Zuni pueblo. They were also completely different societies with fundamentally different cultural configurations. Marshaling extensive ethnographic detail, Benedict sifted out the fundamental elements of the cultural pattern. For example, she wrote of the Dobu:

> The Dobuan . . . is dour, prudish, and passionate, consumed with jealousy and suspicion and resentment. Every moment of prosperity he conceives himself to have wrung from a malicious world by a conflict in which he has worsted his opponent. The good man is the one who has many such conflicts to his credit, as anyone can see from the fact that he has survived with a measure of prosperity. It is taken for granted that he has thieved, killed children and his close associates by sorcery, cheated whenever he dared. [1959:168–169]

Contrast this with the Zuni ideal of the good man:

> The ideal man in Zuni is a person of dignity and affability who has never tried to lead, and who has never called forth comment from his neighbours. Any conflict, even though right is on his side, is held against him. The highest praise, describing an impeccable townsman, runs: "He is a nice polite man. No one ever hears anything from him. He never gets into trouble. He's Badger clan and Muhekwe kiva and he always dances in the summer dances." He should "talk lots," as they say—this is, he should always set people at their ease—and he should without fail co-operate easily with others either in the field or in ritual, never betraying a suspicion of arrogance or a strong emotion. [Benedict 1959:99]

Benedict was not just reciting her own prejudices about people; she was proposing ethnographically informed generalizations about the distinct values of different societies. Such societies were so fundamentally different that Benedict turned to Nietzsche's work to borrow two

concepts, the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches to existence. Benedict contrasted the configuration of the Zuni and other Puebloan Indians with that of the Kwakiutl and many other North American groups:

> The basic contrast between the Pueblos and the other cultures of North American is the contrast that is named and described by Nietzsche in his studies of Greek tragedy. He discusses two diametrically opposed ways of arriving at the values of existence. The Dionysian pursues them through "the annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence"; he seeks to attain in his most valued moments escape from the boundaries imposed upon him by his five senses, to break through into another order of existence. The desire of the Dionysian, in personal experience or in ritual, is to press through it toward a certain psychological state, to achieve excess. The closest analogy to the emotions he seeks is drunkenness, and he values the illuminations of frenzy. With Blake, he believes "the path of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." The Apollonian distrusts all this, and often has little idea of the nature of such experiences. He finds means to outlaw them from his conscious life. He knows but one law, measure in the Hellenic sense. He keeps within the middle of the road, stays within the known map, does not meddle with disruptive psychological states. In Nietzsche's fine phrase, even in the exaltation of the dance he "remains what he is, and retains his civic name." [Benedict 1959:78–79]

"The Southwest Pueblos are Apollonian," Benedict wrote, and in contrast to many North American groups:

> Zuni ideals and institutions . . . are rigorous on this point. The known map, the middle of the road to any Apollonian, is embodied in the common tradition of his people. To stay within it is to commit himself to precedent, to tradition. Therefore those influences that are powerful against tradition are uncongenial and minimized in their institutions, and the greatest of these is individualism." [Benedict 1959:80]

Outside of the Pueblos:

> American Indians as a whole, and including those of Mexico [i.e., the Aztec], were passionately Dionysian. They valued all violent experience, all means by which human beings may break through the usual sensory routine, and to all such experiences they attributed the highest value. [Benedict 1959:80]

In spite of the many differences in Native American language and culture, Benedict saw a common emphasis on Dionysian behavior. The most conspicuous evidence was the vision quest, in which an individual—through fasting, drugs (tobacco), and self-mutilation—attempts to break through commonplace existence and obtain a personal vision through direct contact with the supernatural. Such a set of core values shaped larger cultural practices, resulting in distinctive patterns of culture.

And yet not all individuals comfortably fit into the accepted patterns of cultural life. Ruth Benedict knew this from her own experience. She had, as a person, reached a point when she could no longer conform to the normal values for American women in the 1920s; she had not accepted all the core values of her own culture. Benedict saw the potential for conflict between the individual and culture in her own life, and assumed that this would occur in other societies.

And so the final part of *Patterns of Culture* addresses this problem. "We have seen that any society selects some segment of the arc of possible human behavior," Benedict wrote (1959:254), "and in so far as it achieves integration its institutions tend to further the expression of its selected segment and inhibit opposite expressions." Human nature is so malleable, the lessons of one's culture are so explicit, and the sanctions for disobedience so severe, that the vast majority of people not only accept the core values but assume that "their particular institutions reflect an ultimate and universal sanity" (Benedict 1959:254). And yet not everyone finds the institutions of a given culture "equally congenial . . . favored are those . . . whose potentialities most nearly coincide with the type of behavior selected by their society" (Benedict 1959:255). Benedict argues that "deviation" is essentially a conflict between individual personality and a given culture's values and not a singular dimension true for all humans. The deviant in Dobu society is "the man who was naturally friendly," (Benedict 1959:258); the honored man in a Dionysian society is the despised pariah in an Apollonian culture.

So *Patterns of Culture* poses an interesting conflict between the individual and culture: on the one hand, culture is an expression of core values which most people learn and absorb; on the other hand, there are individual personalities that lie outside the particular segment of the arc of possibilities that defines that culture. Therefore, not only are cultural values relative, but the very definition of deviance as well. Benedict's book is one of the founding anthropological texts on the relationship between culture and personality.

Conclusion

Benedict wrote more than just *Patterns of Culture*, of course. During World War II Benedict worked for the Office of War Information by sifting through published materials about other cultures in support of the American war effort, and conducting studies of "cultures at a distance." The best-known study, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1949), was an examination of the core values of Japanese society and how such values influenced Japanese behavior during the war and the post-war American occupation. Less well-known is Benedict's earlier study of the people and culture of Thailand (1952; written in 1943), which anticipates the methods of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

Benedict contributed to the war effort in another, very different way: she and Gene Weltfish (1943) wrote a ten-cent anti-racist pamphlet entitled *The Races of Mankind*. In the face of Nazi racial policies and racial conflicts within the United States, and as American troops fought around the globe, issues of race were paramount. Benedict and Weltfish summarized the current scientific views on race and argued that racial differences were minimal when compared to cultural differences. This argument was also advanced in *Patterns of Culture* and echoed Boas' discussion of race (see pp. 46–48). When the U.S. Army decided to distribute the pamphlet, conservative congressmen attacked it as "Communist propaganda." This patently absurd charge attracted publicity and helped sell over 750,000 copies of the pamphlet, which was translated into seven languages (Edwards 1968).

Other successes notwithstanding, none of Benedict's works surpassed *Patterns of Culture*, in terms of theoretical impact. Its clear argument exposing the basic patterns of a society, the set of basic values which make a cultural chord was fundamental. As the shift from major to minor keys in the opening notes of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* conveys a sense of the universe's majesty and mystery, the Apollonian and Dionysian archetypes evoke certain fundamentals of a society. Note, Benedict was not trying to create a classification system for cultures, although it may seem so. "Categories become a liability," she (1959:238) wrote, "when they are taken as inevitable and applicable alike to all civilizations and events." Cultures were not ragtag assortments of elements tossed together by historical accident; rather, Benedict showed that cultural differences were multifaceted expressions of a society's most basic core values. The goal of anthropology was to document these different patterns. Benedict wrote about the social outcome of that process in the last lines of her *Patterns of Culture*:

> We shall arrive then at a more realistic social faith, accepting as grounds of hope and as new bases for tolerance the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence. [Benedict 1959:278] ✦

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Edward Sapir

Culture, Language and the Individual

Edward Sapir (1884–1939), a former student wrote, "was one of those rare men among scientists and scholars who are spoken of by their colleagues in terms of genius" (Mandelbaum 1968:v). In her obituary of Sapir in *American Anthropologist*, Ruth Benedict (1939:465) wrote, "Few men in academic life have been so brilliantly endowed as Professor Sapir, and the loss which linguistics and anthropology have sustained cannot be measured. To those of us who have been his friends, his death leaves a vacancy which can never be filled" (Benedict 1939:468).

Sapir was recognized as the most brilliant linguist of his era, a "genius" to many (Darnell 1990:x), who revolutionized the study of American Indian languages. He also shaped interdisciplinary studies of human relations and institutions and the field later known as "culture and personality." But the central anthropological theories which Sapir proposed regard the relationship between the individual and culture as dynamically shaped by language.

Sapir's name is linked with that of his student, Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941), in the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which posits a relationship between the categories of meaning found within a language and the mental categories speakers of that language use to describe and classify the world. The implications of this simple hypothesis are profound. It suggests that understanding meaning—in all its different dimensions—is as important as understanding phonetics, syntax, and grammar, the most common dimensions of linguistic analysis prior to Sapir's work. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis implies that different languages mark different systems of perception and the differences between societies' cultural behavior are communicated

by and codified in the structure of linguistic meaning. The study of another culture's language is more than an investigation into how they speak; it's an inquiry into how cultural existence is created.

Sapir's contributions occurred in the context of an anthropological linguistics with long antecedents, but most immediately shaped through the work of Franz Boas. At a time when much ethnographic work was focused on elements of culture which did not require language mastery—e.g., trait studies of material culture or studies conducted through interpreters—Boas' emphasis on the importance of learning non-Western languages was innovative. In 1911 Boas wrote in his *Handbook of American Indian Languages*:

> A command of the language [of a tribe] is an indispensable means of obtaining accurate and thorough [ethnological] knowledge, because much information can be gained by listening to conversations of the natives and by taking part in their daily life, which, to the observer who has no command of the language, will remain entirely inaccessible. [1911:60]

This notion of language as a research tool was less important than the idea that language provided insights into other dimensions of culture, however. Boas particularly emphasized the importance of recording extended native language texts dictated by speakers. These texts could then be wrung of every drop of available information and correlated with other sources of information. The linguist Roman Jakobson describes the impact of Boas' idea:

> Language was considered by Boas not only as part of ethnological phenomena in general but even as "one of the most instructive fields of inquiry" and his motivation is thoroughly remarkable: "The great advantage that linguistics offers in this respect," Boas tells in his magnificent introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (1911), "is the fact that, on the whole, the categories which are formed always remain unconscious and that for this reason the processes which lead to their formation can be followed without the misleading and disturbing factors of secondary explanations, which are so common in ethnology." [Jakobson 1966:129]

This "fertile and pathbreaking" idea, Jakobson (1966:130) continues, implies that:

> Among the various ethnological phenomena the linguistic processes (or rather operations) exemplify most strikingly and plainly the logic of the unconscious. For this reason—Boas insists—"the very fact of the unconsciousness of the linguistic processes helps us to gain a clear

understanding of the ethnological phenomena, a point the importance of which cannot be underrated." The place of language with regard to the other social systems and the meaning of linguistics for a thorough insight into the diverse ethnological patterns had never been stated so precisely.

And thus the fact that cross-cousins and parallel cousins are linguistically distinguished in Crow and not in English is not simply because the languages use different words, but because the classification of relatives differs due to the social roles (i.e., potential spouses) such kin have in relationship to the speaker, Ego. Literally, language reflects and shapes the world as it is perceived by humans, and understanding the organization of linguistic meaning illuminates the basic structures of culture. That basic concept, with its roots in Boas' approach to linguistics, was elaborated and refined in the works of Edward Sapir.

Background

Sapir, a Jew born in Prussia, arrived in New York with his parents when he was five years old, part of the great emigration from Europe that was funneled through Ellis Island. Growing up poor on the East Side of New York, Sapir's intellectual gifts became obvious at an early age. He won scholarships to Columbia College, where he graduated in 1904 at the age of 20, completing his undergraduate education in just three years (Darnell 1990:5). He immediately continued graduate studies at Columbia under Boas, and in 1905 did fieldwork with the Wishram of the lower Columbia River valley; the resulting study was published in 1909. Sapir went to Oregon to study the Takelma language in 1906, research that formed the basis of his doctoral dissertation. The difficulties of the Takelma language make his dissertation quite remarkable; Benedict noted, "There was no period of apprenticeship in Sapir's linguistic work; his phonetic and morphological gifts are as apparent in this boyhood work as in that of a student of long and arduous experience." The same year Sapir finished his dissertation (1907) he also published two articles on Takelma ethnology in the *American Anthropologist* and in the *Journal of American Folklore* (Sapir 1907a, 1907b).

Sapir was a research assistant at Berkeley in 1907–1908, working on the native Californian language, Yana. Next he went to the University of Pennsylvania, which supported his research on the Southern Paiute, the first scientific study of a Shoshonean language. Working with Toni Tillohash, a Southern Paiute man employed by the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Sapir created a grammar of Southern Paiute which set new standards in its sensitivity to the native speaker's intuitive use of language (Darnell 1990:34–35).

In 1910 Sapir obtained his first permanent position as the chief of the Division of Anthropology, Geological Survey of Canada, based in Ottawa (Darnell 1990:65–79). From this post Sapir conducted research on the Nootka of British Columbia and a variety of Athabaskan languages; this work led to the definition of Na-Dene, a linguistic stock consisting of Northwest Coast languages like Haida, Tlingit, and other Athabaskan languages, including Navaho.

During his 15 years in Ottawa, Sapir turned his attention to problems of historical linguistics. "Certain resemblances in vocabulary and phonetics are undoubtedly due to borrowing of one language from another," Sapir wrote in the 1929 *Enyclopedia Britannica*, "but the more deeplying resemblances, such as can be demonstrated, for instance, for Shoshonean, Piman, and Nahuatl or for Athabaskan and Tlingit, must be due to a common origin now greatly obscured by the operation of phonetic laws, grammatical developments and losses, analogical disturbances, and borrowing of elements from sources" (1968a:171). To understand these historical connections, Sapir proposed a reclassification of American Indian languages. The classification proposed by Major John Wesley Powell—the great explorer, geologist and ethnologist—posited some 55 different linguistic stocks for North America, treating each as fundamentally distinct. Sapir saw greater connections between American Indian languages and replaced Powell's scheme with a mere six linguistic stocks for North America: 1) Eskimo-Aleut, 2) Algonkin, 3) Dene, 4) Penutian, 5) Hokan, and 6) Aztec-Tanoan (today called Uto-Aztecan). Languages within such stocks might be mutually unintelligible but exhibit clear affinities and shared ancestry, as do English, German, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, for example. Sapir's six-unit classification of American Indian languages dominated American linguistics into the 1960s, and it remains an essential framework for organizing Native American languages (Darnell 1990:110).

Sapir's Ottawa period was a time of intellectual isolation. Ottawa was far from the centers of anthropology in New York, Berkeley, and Chicago. Sapir's position in the Geological Survey did not involve teaching, so he lacked the stimulation of exchanges with students. The letters exchanged during this time between Sapir and Ruth Benedict make his sense of isolation clear.

But the time in Ottawa was also marked by extreme creativity (Darnell 1990:87–88). Sapir had a wide-ranging intellect, seemingly

captivated by everything to do with words, and his publications from the Ottawa period indicate an extraordinary productivity. In addition to his writings in ethnology and linguistics, Sapir also published poetry, book reviews and essays on nonanthropological subjects. His 26 publications from 1922 include "The Fundamental Elements of Northern Yana" and "Athabaskan Tone"; as well as reviews of poetry and novels which were published in *The New Republic*, *The Dial*, and *Canadian Bookman*; 16 original poems, and translations of three French Canadian folksongs. Such versatile virtuosity is very rare.

In 1925 Sapir eagerly accepted a position at the University of Chicago where he could teach a group of appreciative graduate students, and where he could develop his interests in the area of semantics—the study of meaning—and in personality and culture. This latter arena of interest led him to give central importance to the role of the individual in culture and marked a break with contemporary thinkers about the nature of culture.

Culture and the Individual

A recurrent aspect of early-20th-century definitions of culture is their emphasis on the superorganic, supraindividual nature of culture. The notion of the superorganic is best developed in Kroeber's work (see pp. 73–76), in which he argued that culture had a superorganic property that varied independently of the individuals who composed it, and also that culture, society, and the individual were discrete, irreducible phenomena. Sapir's position was very different: he believed that broad generalizations about society were misplaced and that "There are as many cultures as there are individuals in a population" (quoted by Benedict 1939:407).

This idea forms the background of an article Sapir wrote in 1938, entitled "Why Cultural Anthropology Needs the Psychiatrist" (1968b:569–577). Sapir opens with a discussion of J. O. Dorsey's study of the Omaha Indians and the fact that after making several anthropological generalizations ("The Omaha believe . . .") Dorsey said at various points, "Two Crows denies this." Sapir admits to being shocked when he read this as a student, assuming that Dorsey had not fulfilled his anthropological responsibility of providing the reader with a seamless view of a different society; instead the responsibility of weighing how Two Crows' different opinions fit into the general patterns of Omaha culture had been passed on to the reader. But in retrospective, Sapir wrote:

> We see now that Dorsey was ahead of his age. Living as he did in close touch with the Omaha Indians [Dorsey was a missionary], he knew he was dealing, not with a society or with a specimen of primitive man nor with a cross section of the history of primitive culture, but with a finite, though indefinite, number of human beings, who gave themselves the privilege of differing from each other not only in matters generally considered as "one's own business" but even on questions which clearly transcended the private individual's concern and were, by the anthropologist's definition, implied in the conception of a definitely delimited society with a definitely discoverable culture. [1968b:570–571]

Sapir was tantalized by Two Crows' "contrariness" because he saw the implications for our understanding of other cultures. First, as a matter of method, the inquiry into variation can be extremely fruitful even in matters that may seem to be objective. For example, if all the other Omaha say there are eight clans, but Two Crows states there are seven clans, Sapir (1968b:573–574) wonders "How could this be?" Well, it might be that one clan no longer exists in a practical sense, but that it's remembered by everyone (because a well-remembered elderly man formed a part of it) except Two Crows. Perhaps the clan had a particular social or ceremonial function that makes its "existence" hard to overlook. Maybe Two Crows comes from a clan that detested the now extinct clan, making it easy for him to forget it and giving him "the perfectly honest conviction that one need speak of only seven clans in the tribe." Two Crows "had a special kind of rightness, which was partly factual, and partly personal." But more important than this is the fundamental implication of Two Crows' opinion:

> The truth of the matter is that if we think long enough about Two Crows and his persistent denials, we shall have to admit that in some sense Two Crows is never wrong. It may not be a very useful sense for social science but in a strict methodology of science in general it dare not be completely ignored. The fact that this rebel, Two Crows, can in turn bend others to his own view of fact or theory or to his own preference in action shows that his divergence from custom had, from the very beginning, the essential possibility of culturalized behavior. [1968b:572]

Thus we arrive at a paradox, almost Zen-like in its counter-intuitive simplicity, that normative and deviant behaviors are equally cultural

behaviors, that "the world of socialized behavior is nothing more than consensus of opinion" (1968b:572). Sapir's answer about the relationship between the individual and society is to simply point out that society consists of individuals, that culture is consensus, and that generalizations about cultural behavior are counterbalanced with individual, divergent behaviors. This is different from Benedict's approach, which presented the individual and culture as dichotomous; those individuals who through experience and personality fit easily into their culture were successes, those who did not were deviants (see pp. 83–85). Sapir denied this implicit opposition between individual and culture:

> There is no real opposition, at last analysis, between the concept of the culture of the group and the concept of individual culture. The two are interdependent. A healthy national culture is never a passively accepted heritage from the past, but implies the creative participation of the members of the community. . . . It is just as true, however, that the individual is helpless without a cultural heritage to work on. [Sapir 1968e:321]

Not surprisingly, Sapir extended this view of cultural behavior to that pure example of cultural practice, language:

> It is obvious that for the building up of society, its units and subdivisions, and the understandings which prevail between its members some processes of communication are needed. While we often speak of society as though it were a static structure defined by tradition, it is, in the more intimate sense, nothing of the kind, but a highly intricate network of partial or complete understandings between the members of organizational units of every degree of size and complexity. . . . It is only apparently a static sum of social institutions; actually it is being reanimated or creatively reaffirmed from day to day by particular acts of a communicative nature which obtain among individuals participating in it. [1968c:104]

On *Language*

In 1921 Sapir published *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, his only book for a general audience. Sapir's biographer, Regna Darnell (1990) writes that *Language* was directed to a broad readership lacking in his own foundations in ethnology and linguistics. "Anthropologists knew about fieldwork but not about linguistic methods," Darnell (1990:96) observes. "Linguists knew about the methods but not about their application to a full range of human languages. The educated public knew neither." The literary origins and Indo-European focus of traditional linguistics and the methodological weakness and non-Western emphasis of anthropology meant that neither discipline agreed on a common ground. Darnell (1990:96) writes that "disciplinary boundaries had cut off recognition of the actual creativity of language, which was, in all cultures, a rich and precise vehicle for the expression of thought. Sapir set himself the challenge of producing a book that could be understood by any educated person with an open mind. . . ."

First, Sapir described the dynamic artificiality of human communication: "Language is a purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (1921:8). Sapir then shows that words are not symbols of specific perceptions or even specific objects but always refer to concepts of objects, "a convenient capsule of thought that embraces thousands of distinct experiences and that is ready to take in thousands more" (Sapir 1921:13). These capsules of thought not only express our thoughts, but in the process of learning language our thoughts are shaped by the concepts used to organize the perception of experience. That is true of even the most simple descriptive terms about the environment:

> The mere existence, for instance, of a certain type of animal in the physical environment of a people does not suffice to give rise to a linguistic symbol referring to it. It is necessary that the animal be known by the members of the group in common and that they have some interest, however slight, in it before the language of the community is called upon to make reference to this particular element of the physical environment. In other words, so far as language is concerned, all environmental influence reduces at last analysis to the influence of social environment. [1968d:90]

Sapir cites numerous examples of the ways that language reflects the socially significant aspects of the environment; he lists, for example, eighteen topographic features used by the Shoshone Paiute to describe the landscape of their desert homeland, including canyon with creek, canyon without water, slope of mountain or canyon wall receiving sunlight, shaded mountain slope or canyon wall, and so on (1968d:91). In passing, Sapir points out that virtually any Native American hunter and gatherer would be shocked by the range of plants we would simply refer to as "weeds." But note, our linguistic impression does not merely reflect our lack of social interest in seed collect-

ing—the words we employ and the conceptual categories they imply *shape* the way we perceive the world. We look into a vacant lot and all we *see* are weeds. That basic truth is at the core of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which links the categories of language and the cultural perception of the world.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Benjamin Whorf was an amazing man who made significant contributions to linguistics in a scant dozen years before his early death in 1941 at the age of 44. Whorf was a peculiarly American type of genius (Chase 1956). He worked as a fire prevention engineer for the Hartford Fire Insurance Company for 22 years; his linguistic studies were done after work and during extended leaves from his company. Whorf's introduction to linguistics was circuitous, sparked by an interest in Aztec culture which led to an interest in Nahuatl, the Aztec language. His linguistic research was sufficiently impressive that he was awarded a grant to study Nahuatl in Mexico in 1930. Whorf's contributions and achievements, all self-tutored, were very impressive.

But Whorf's linguistic career took a major change when he met Sapir. In the fall of 1931 Sapir left the University of Chicago for Yale and Whorf immediately enrolled in Sapir's seminar. At Yale Whorf's study on American Indian languages intensified and he became a central member of a group of Yale graduate students—including Morris Swadesh, Charles Hockett, and Carl Voeglin—who made major contributions to American linguistics. Sapir was instrumental in directing Whorf towards a study of the Uto-Aztecan languages and particularly, Hopi, and the two men's interaction led to a basic concept, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

As discussed above (pp. 88–89), the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis proposes that linguistic categories structure and transmit culturally learned perceptions of existence. It is difficult to determine each man's contribution to the hypothesis about the relationship between language, culture, and perception. Whorf's ideas are clearly based on Sapir's writings and teachings, although Sapir died before most of Whorf's writings were published and thus never commented directly on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Darnell 1990:375).

In a paper titled "Linguistic Factors in the Terminology of Hopi Architecture," written in 1940 but not published until 1952, Whorf outlined the range of building terms and concepts associated with the Hopi's pueblo constructions and, more generally, their concepts of space. Whorf notes that the Hopi terms "all denote three-dimensional solids in the geometrical sense, solid and rigid masses, or definitely bounded areas on or penetrations through such solids"; these words included *té'kwa* for a section of wall, unfinished wall, or walls of a ruin; *kí.?àmi* for roof; or *poksö* for a vent hole, unglazed window or chimney (1956:200). What Whorf did not find was a diversity of words for three-dimensional spaces—corridor, hall, passage, cellar, loft, attic, storeroom, chamber, and room—like we have in English. It is not that Hopi is linguistically impoverished in its description of architecture, but that the spaces are described not in functional or nominative terms but in locational terms. Whorf writes:

> This is in line with the way Hopi and, in fact, most or all Uto-Aztecan languages represent location in space, or regions in space. They are not set up as entities that can function in a sentence like terms for people, animals, or masses of matter having characteristic form, or, again, human groups and human relations, but are treated as *purely relations concepts*, of an adverbial type. Thus hollow spaces like room, chamber, hall, are not really *named* as objects are, but are rather *located*; i.e. positions of other things are specified so as to show their location in such hollow spaces. [1956:202]

According to Whorf, the Hopi emphasize solid and constructional elements rather than enclosed spaces and describe the spaces in spatial reference to each other. This is a fundamentally different way of thinking about architectural space than we have in English, in which some architectural locators even incorporate functional elements *(Where is it? Upstairs)*.

The differences between the Hopi and English treatment of interior architectural spaces is paralleled in the terms applied to buildings as a whole. Whorf points out that in English we have a large vocabulary for buildings with different functions—as in *church, chapel, cathedral, synagogue, meeting house, temple, shrine,* just to cite some religious structures—that does not exist in Hopi. Hopi has three words for structures, two of them minor—the word for shrine (*té*tèska*) and the word for tent (*mecávki*), an introduced item—and then *ki*he*, building. Even though the Hopi have different "types" of buildings—residences, storehouses, piki-houses (used only for baking corn wafers [*piki*]), and the semisubterranean circular kivas used only for ceremonies)—the language does not fuse structure and activity into functional sets. "They do not have . . . the pattern which is so natural to us," Whorf (1956:204) observes, "in which 'a church,' i.e. an institution, is a term

that merges quite imperceptibly into 'a church' meaning a type of building used as a meeting place for this institution, with the distinction hardly felt until attention is drawn to it. . . ."

Such fundamental differences in the description of architectural space are paralleled by differences in basic classifications of the external world: colors, directions, weather phenomena, plant and animal classifications, kin relations, social obligations, and so on. These classifications reflect more than just different words applied to the same objects and concepts, but objects and concepts which are perceived and conceived of in fundamentally different ways. This basic realization, the central tenet of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, reverberated through anthropology and the other social sciences and focused attention on the issue of meaning.

Conclusion

Sapir and Whorf died within a few years of each other at the relatively young ages of 54 (Sapir) and 44 (Whorf). It is impossible to know what more these men would have achieved had they lived as long as Alfred Kroeber. Apart from his linguistic analyses and polymathic accomplishments, elements in Sapir's work have great importance for current anthropological thinking. The issue of meaning is central. Sapir's work shifted the focus of linguistic analysis from the word to its meaning, which immediately led to ideas about the cultural creation of meaning. If, as Two Crows seemed to demonstrate, the world of socialized behavior is simply, but significantly, nothing more than public consensus of opinion, then it follows that such a consensus is hammered out in argument, debate, gossip, rituals, and a whole array of symbolic interactions that anthropologists like Clifford Geertz (see Chapter 19) would refer to as "discourse" (Geertz 1973:9–10).

Culture is not a chaotic tangle of individual opinions, however, in the views of Sapir and Whorf, because language itself imposes certain structures on perception. As members of a culture and speakers of a language we learn certain implicit classifications and consider those classifications to be accurate renderings of the world. And since those linguistic categories vary, different cultures, though comprised of individuals who have the ability to disagree, also exhibit distinctive consensuses about the nature of existence. ✦

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Margaret Mead

The Individual and Culture

When she died in November 1978, Margaret Mead was the most widely read anthropologist in America; she probably still is. Her first book, *Coming of Age in Samoa,* was published in 1928, became an instant classic, and remains the best selling of all anthropological books (Freeman 1983:xii). The book's vast popularity stemmed from its central question, a question humans find fascinating: Why are we the way we are? Mead found the answer in three experiences that most people share—childhood, parenthood and sex—and thus her work was immediately relevant to literally millions of people. The wide interest in Mead's work and ideas is reflected by her numerous, diverse publications, and availability in a variety of media, including records, tapes, films, and videos. As of 1976 her bibliography listed over 1400 printed works: books, articles in scientific journals, book reviews, newspaper articles, statements entered as congressional testimony, conference reports, and a continuous stream of magazine articles (Gordon 1976). The magazine articles are interesting in their titles and venues: "South Sea Hints on Bringing Up Children" appeared in the September 1929 issue of *Parents Magazine*; the July 1948 *Mademoiselle* featured "Are Children Savages?"; and beginning in the 1960s Mead wrote a monthly column in *Redbook Magazine* in which she would answer readers' questions: "Margaret Mead Answers: Questions About School Prayers, Happiness, Telepathy, etc." (February 1963), "Margaret Mead Answers: Is Housework Easier than It Was 50 Years Ago? Was Shakespeare Really Shakespeare? What is the Fatal Fascination of Baseball?" (November 1964), and "Margaret Mead Answers: Questions about Jean-Paul Sartre, School Busing, Why People Like to Have Their Hair

Stand on End, etc." (March 1965). This shows a certain daredevil flair, a bold willingness to write about almost anything. "Anthropology had attracted Mead in the first place because its borders were so flexible," Jane Howard (1984:13) writes, "but even it could not contain her."

Mead's motive was advocacy, her desire to speak to central issues about society and to reform social conditions based on comparative anthropological data. The fact that another society did not, for example, feed infants on a rigid schedule implied that to do so involved learned behavior, behavior which could be identified and changed if desired. The impacts of different child-rearing practices on adult personality could be assessed, different practices could be advocated and adopted, and society could be improved. "The process of inquiry," her daughter Mary Catherine Bateson writes about Mead's experimentation with her own child, "involving the life of a child, could have been pursued only in a context of advocacy, and advocacy, for Margaret, was never far behind" (Bateson 1984:30).

Mead's insights into child-rearing were widely felt in American society. Mead chose Dr. Benjamin Spock as her daughter's pediatrician because he had been psychoanalyzed (Bateson 1984:31), and Mary Catherine Bateson was the first breast-fed and demand-fed infant he had encountered. As an anthropologist, Mead recorded her infant's feeding demands, found patterns in the times, and then scheduled her teaching and writing commitments around those times. This had some influence on Dr. Spock's writings on infant care, and consequently for the rearing of the post-World War II baby boomers. For better or worse, many of us were raised or raise our children in a manner indirectly influenced by Margaret Mead. As her daughter writes, "The innovations that Margaret made as a parent were actually greater than they seem now because so many have been incorporated into patterns of society" (Bateson 1984:33).

In spite of her prolific writings, or maybe because of them, Margaret Mead's influence on anthropology is diffuse. Unlike theoreticians like Sapir or Benedict whose core concepts can be neatly summarized and their implications derived, Margaret Mead's central idea—that differences between peoples are usually cultural differences imparted in childhood—does not lead to specific expectations but instead to a general shift in view, to a concern with how a human infant is transformed into an adult member of a particular society. And Mead's very public role as an advocate has raised questions about the accuracy of her anthropological research (Freeman 1983; Holmes 1987; Leacock 1993). Margaret Mead lived long, worked hard, and argued for combining social innovation and a respect for tradition in an effort to improve the human situation. The consequences of her life and work are deep and continuing.

Background

Margaret Mead was born in 1901 into an upper-middle-class, educated, and socially solid family. Her father was an economics professor, and her mother a college-educated woman active in a variety of social causes—civil rights, women's sufffrage, anti-fur—who imparted her sense of advocacy to her daughter. After a year at DePauw University, Mead transferred to Barnard College, the women's university associated with Columbia University in the heart of New York City. She thoroughly enjoyed herself at Barnard, forming lifelong friendships with other students and becoming swept up in the major theories, political issues, and controversies that flowed through academic circles with the development of modernism (Mead 1972).

As an English and psychology major, Mead took a course from Franz Boas in her senior year. She was captivated by Boas' lectures and after the first term attended every course and seminar he offered at Columbia. Mead was also fascinated by Boas' teaching assistant, Ruth Benedict, who convinced Mead to pursue anthropology as a graduate student. By the end of her senior year at Barnard, Mead was prepared to begin her studies in anthropology—and her first marriage to Luther Cressman, who went on to become a well-known archaeologist. She later married the anthropologist Reo Fortune, whose work *Sorcerers of Dobu* is a classic ethnography discussed by Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* (see pp. 82–83), and finally Gregory Bateson, one of the most creative and iconoclastic social scientists of the 20th century (Lipset 1980). Mead conducted fieldwork with Fortune and Bateson, and she and Bateson had a daughter, the anthropologist and writer Mary Catherine Bateson. Mead's anthropological research and her personal life were parallel explorations of the relationships between gender, childhood, and society.

Gender, Child-rearing and Culture: Fieldwork and Theory

Mead's theoretical ideas evolved directly from her field investigations. Between 1925 and 1939 Mead participated in five field trips and studied eight different societies. Oddly, her own dissertation was not based on fieldwork but on library research about the material culture of

Polynesia—a topic Boas assigned—and is described as detailed and competent by some (Thomas 1980) and lackluster by others (McDowell 1980:278). Mead's first field research was in Samoa where she spent eight months in the field in 1925. Her book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, was the extremely popular outcome, and her results remain controversial (see discussion below, pp. 106–107). On the return voyage from Samoa Mead and Fortune worked on two field projects: a brief investigation of the Omaha during the summer of 1930 (her only work on a Native American group), and a much longer research project in New Guinea (1931–1933), a cross-cultural comparison described in her *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935). Later she conducted field research with Gregory Bateson in Bali in 1936–1938 and again in 1939 and among the Iatmul of New Guinea in 1938. The Balinese research is notable for its use of photography as a research tool, and it resulted in *Balinese Character* (Bateson and Mead 1942).

These three phases of fieldwork capture the ethnographic bases of Mead's central contribution: that specific child-rearing practices shape personalities that in turn give specific societies their essential natures. In the introduction to *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Mead wrote:

> [T]his tale of another way of life is mainly concerned with education, with the process by which the baby, arrived cultureless upon the human scene, becomes a full-fledged adult member of his or her society. The strongest light will fall upon the ways in which Samoan education, in its broadest sense, differs from our own. And from this contrast we may be able to turn, made newly and vividly self-conscious and self-critical, to judge anew and perhaps fashion differently the education we give our children. [Mead 1928:13]

Mead's profile of Samoan upbringing was based on a detailed study of 68 girls between the ages of 8 and 20 in three near contiguous villages on the island of Ta'u, the largest of the three islands which make up the Manu'a group of easternmost islands in American Samoa. A sample record sheet (Mead 1928:284) indicates that Mead collected a variety of personal and family data on the ways Samoans evaluated each other (the most beautiful girl, the wisest man, the worst boy), and administered a set of basic psychological tests such as rote memory for numbers. "But," Mead admitted,

> [T]his quantitative data represents the barest skeleton of the material which was gathered through months of observation of the individuals and of groups, alone, in their households, and at play. From these observations, the bulk of the conclusions are drawn concerning the attitudes of the children towards their families and towards each other, their religious interests or the lack of them, and the details of their sex lives. This information cannot be reduced to tables or statistical statements. [1928:264]

The basic conclusion was that adolescence in Samoa was not a stressful period for girls, because in general Samoan society lacked stresses:

> The Samoan background which makes growing up so easy, so simple a matter, is the general casualness of the whole society. For Samoa is a place where no one plays for very high stakes, no one pays very heavy prices, no one suffers for his convictions or fights to the death for special ends. Disagreements between parent and child are settled by the child's moving across the street, between a man and his village by the man's removal to the next village, between a husband and wife's seducer by a few fine mats. . . . And in personal relations, caring is slight. Love and hate, jealousy and revenge, sorrow and bereavement, are all matters of weeks. From the first months of its life, when a child is handed carelessly from one woman's hands to another's, the lesson is learned of not caring for one person greatly, not setting high hopes on any one relationship. [Mead 1928:199]

Mead cited a number of observations to support her conclusion. Samoan babies are nursed on demand until two or three, but other foods like mashed papaya and coconut milk are given to the infant during the first week. After weaning, toddlers are turned over to a girl who is six or seven years old; these older children watch over and are held responsible for their charges' misbehavior. The Samoan household is bilateral and often extended; household composition varies from nuclear families to households of 15 to 20 people who may be related by marriage, blood, adoption or friendship. This flexibility of residence allows a Samoan child to take up residence with another set of relatives when there are conflicts at home.

Mead described sexual relations as frequent and usually without consequence. Of the 30 postpubescent girls Mead studied, 17 had heterosexual relations and 22 homosexual relations; most of the female virgins lived in the house of the Christian pastor. Liaisons occurred on the beach or when an intrepid lover crawled into the house; rape was infrequent (p. 93; cf. Freeman 1983) in contrast to the "*moetotolo*, in which a man stealthily appropriates the favours which are meant for another." Abortions may end pregnancies, although there is no great fuss made over "illegitimate" children who are incorporated into the household.

This ease of transitions, the fluidity of status changes, Mead argued, characterized childhood and society in Samoa. It was not simply a matter of childhood shaping society or vice-versa, but both. The implications of this research, and the discovery that adolescent turmoil was not an innate characteristic of the human condition, gave Mead's work great significance.

It is also a source of controversy 55 years later. In 1983 Derek Freeman published *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmasking of an Anthropological Myth* in which he argued that Mead systematically distorted Samoan society. Freeman, also a specialist on Samoa, contended that Mead "greatly underestimated the complexity of the culture, society, history, and psychology" of Samoans, assuming them to be "very simple" (Freeman 1983:285). That simplicity, Freeman held, merely reflected Mead's lack of command of Samoan language, her ignorance of the complexities of Samoan status and political systems, and a naive euphoria over Samoa as a tropical Eden. But most damning, in Freeman's critique, was that Mead went to Samoa with the preconceived intention of showing that culture, not biology, determined human responses to life's transitions, like adolescence. Freeman writes:

> It is thus evident that her writings from this period, about Samoa as about other South Seas cultures, had the explicit aim of confuting biological explanations of human behavior and vindicating the doctrines of the Boasian school. . . . [T]here can be no doubt that Mead's fervent desire to demonstrate the validity of the doctrines she held in common with Benedict and Boas led her, in Samoa, to overlook evidence running counter to her beliefs. . . . [Freeman 1983:282]

Freeman's accusations touched off a howl of controversy, quite separate from the evaluation of the evidence, since he had had evidence contradicting Mead since the 1960s, but only published it after her death. The debate, which was featured in the media, grew particularly vitriolic, because it touched a real nerve: the debasement of the best-known work of the best-known American anthropologist (see, for example, Holmes 1987; Leacock 1993).

But long before the controversy, Mead's work in Samoa set the pattern for a series of detailed ethnographic studies elsewhere in Oceania and Melanesia. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* presents the results of Mead's 1931–33 work among three New Guinea societies. Her research examined a basic question about "the conditioning of the social personalities of the two sexes." She wrote:

> This study is not concerned with whether there are or are not actual and universal differences between the sexes, either quantitative or qualitative. It is not concerned whether women are more variable than men, which was claimed before the doctrine of evolution exalted variability or less variable, which was claimed afterwards. It is not a treatise on the rights of women, nor an inquiry into the basis of feminism. It is, very simply, an account of how three primitive societies have grouped their social attitudes towards temperament about the very obvious facts of sex-difference. I studied this problem in simple societies because here we have the drama of civilization writ small, a social microcosm alike in kind, but different in size and magnitude, from the complex social structures. . . . Among the gentle mountain-dwelling Arapesh, the fierce cannibalistic Mundugumor, and the graceful headhunters of Tchambuli, I studied this question. Each of these tribes had, as has every human society, the point of sex-difference to use as one theme in the plot of social life, and each of these peoples has developed that theme differently. [Mead 1963:viii–ix]

These three groups lived within a 100-mile radius of each other on the northern shore of Papua New Guinea, and yet their personalities were completely distinct. Of the Arapesh, Mead wrote:

> [T]hey lack the conception of human nature as evil and in need of strong checks and curbs. . . . they regard both men and women as inherently gentle, responsive, and cooperative, able and willing to subordinate the self to the needs of those who are younger or weaker and to derive a major satisfaction from doing so. They have surrounded with delight that part of parenthood which we consider to be specially maternal, the minute, loving care for the little child and the selfless delight in that child's progress towards maturity. [1963:134]

Arapesh child-rearing responsibilities were so evenly divided between mother and father that, "if one comments upon a middle-aged man as good-looking, the people answer, 'Good-looking? Y-e-s? But you should have seen him before he bore all those children'" (Mead 1963:39).

The Mundugumor could not be more different. Living in a society "based upon a theory of a natural hostility that exists between all members of the same sex . . .," Mundugumor fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters were adversaries. "The Mundugumor man-child is born into a hostile world," Mead (1963: 189) wrote, "a world in

which most of the members of his own sex will be his enemies, in which his major equipment for success must be a capacity for violence, for seeing and avenging insult. . . ." This hostile temperament was shared by men and women; the Mundugumor have "no theory that women differ temperamentally from men. They are believed to be just as violent, just as aggressive, just as jealous. They simply are not quite as strong physically, although a woman can put up a very good fight and a husband who wishes to beat his wife takes care to arm himself with a crocodile jaw and to be sure that she is not armed" (Mead 1963:210).

Turning to the Tchambuli, Mead found another society where the principal themes of temperament and gender were differently defined:

> As the Arapesh made growing food and children the greatest adventure of their lives, and the Mundugumor found greatest satisfaction in fighting and competitive acquisition of women, the Tchambuli may be said to live principally for art. Every man is an artist and most men are skilled not in some one art alone, but in many: in dancing, carving, plaiting, painting and so on. Each man is chiefly concerned with his role upon the stage of his society with the elaboration of his costume, the beauty of the masks that he owns, the skill of his own flute-playing, the finish and elan of his ceremonies, and upon other people's recognition and valuation of his performance. [1963:245]

And while Tchambuli men were preoccupied with art, women had the real power, controlling fishing and the most important manufactures, looking on their menfolk with "kindly tolerance and appreciation" (Mead 1963:255).

Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies was important because at that time in the United States sex roles were viewed—by men and women—as inevitable, natural characteristics of gender differences; Mead showed that these behavior patterns were actually extremely malleable and reflected *cultural* differences.

Mead and Gregory Bateson also explored the cultural bases of personality in their fieldwork in Bali in 1936 to 1938. Their goal was to "translate aspects of culture never successfully recorded by the scientist, although often caught by the artist, into some form of communication sufficiently clear and sufficiently unequivocal to satisfy the requirements of scientific enquiry" (Bateson and Mead 1942:xi). In the absence of a complex scientific vocabulary designed to express a culture's ethos, Mead had relied on ordinary English words—even though their meanings were specific to a cultural setting completely different from Balinese experience (Bateson and Mead 1942:xi). The way out of this dilemma was to combine traditional ethnography with a photographic record so that the observations could be recorded and communicated.

The result is a fascinating anthropological record. Based on their work in the mountain community of Bajoeng Gede, Mead and Bateson document a way of life which is based on orientation. "Orientation," Mead (1942:11) observes, "in time, space, and status are the essentials of social existence . . . ." Mead (1942:7) writes that "Each man's place in the social scheme of his village is known." The status differences are reflected in space (the superior person should sleep on the eastern or inland side of the interior person), vertical elevation (higher chairs for higher statuses), language (using polished language to speak to someone of a higher caste or status), posture and gesture. In Bajoeng Gede, "space and time and social status form an orderly whole, with little stress or strain" and "within the fixed and complicated sets of regulations, obligations, and privileges, the people are relaxed and dreamy" (Mead 1942:10). "Orientation is felt as a protection rather than a straitjacket and its loss provokes extreme anxiety" (Mead 1942:10).

This cultural knowledge is literally transmitted at birth. Mead writes (1942:13):

> When the Balinese baby is born, the midwife, even at the moment of lifting him in her arms, will put words in his mouth, commenting, "I am just a poor little new-born baby, and I don't know how to talk properly, but I am very grateful to you, honorable people, who have entered this pig sty of a house to see me born." And from that moment, all through babyhood, the child is fitted into a frame of behavior, of imputed speech and imputed thought and complex gesture, far beyond his skill and maturity.

Gradually the child adopts these patterns of speech and behavior, a process that Mead describes in a fine metaphor, as "slip[ping] into speech, as into an old garment, worn before, but fitted on another hand" (Mead 1942:13).

"As with speech, so with posture and gesture," Mead writes, and it is in Bateson's photographs that we see mothers pose their children's hands in prayer, dance teachers extending children's arms to instruct by muscular rote, and a mother teasing her son by holding his younger sibling over his head and thus inverting proper relationships of age, status, and elevation. In all Bateson shot some 22,000 feet of 16mm film and 25,000 still photographs; combined with Mead's intensive ethnographic record, as Nancy McDowell (1980:297) observed, "they found themselves with a body of data, particularly photographic material, that was so detailed, extensive, and innovative that no other body of data

existed with which they could compare it." It remains a masterpiece of documentation and analysis.

Conclusion

Balinese Character exemplifies a central theme in Mead's work—the relationship between individual and cultural pattern. It is an approach which became known as "culture and personality," and although it shares concerns with Benedict's approach of cultural patterns, Mead's work exhibits a more explicit use of psychological theory, methods of data collection, and a greater awareness of the dynamic between the individual and cultural ethos.

Culture is not just the individual writ large, Mead argued. The individual is a product of cultural behavior that shapes the person in common but unique manners that then are reinterpreted, and reexpressed, relived as the infant becomes an adult, as the child becomes a parent. This interaction between individual and culture is the dynamic, complex process by which humans learn to be humans, but humans of very distinctive sorts.

Like her colleagues Kroeber, Benedict, and Sapir, Mead attempted to discover what it was that made cultures distinctive but coherent. How is it that human societies can be so incredibly different, not just on the surface but at their very cores, and yet within a particular society there can be such unanimity as to values and practice? For the Victorian evolutionists the answer was easy: societies were so different because they represented stages in the "nearly uniform channels" of human progress. The Boasian critique demolished that easy answer, yet put nothing in its place; the best Boas could suggest was to keep collecting good ethnographic data and some day, perhaps, the laws of human culture would become evident.

But that apparently did not satisfy Boas' students, at least not Kroeber, Sapir, Benedict, and Mead. Each sought a different way to explain the coherency of culture: Kroeber turned to the superorganic, Benedict to the core values of culture, Sapir and Whorf to the conceptual categories embedded in language, and Margaret Mead to the processes of human development: the way an infant is bathed, the shared intimacies of husband and wife, or the small gestures that teach a child its place in the world. ✦

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