WHAT IS THE TOTAL PATTERN OF OUR WESTERN CIVILIZATION? SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

By OSCAR WALDEMAR JUNEK

APPROACHING their study objectives through a variety of data, anthropologists everywhere pay little or no attention to the final or up-to-date results of culture accretion in the total pattern of their own western civilization. This may be excused on the basis of lack of interest in what is so familiar as to be more or less taken for granted. It is also true that when people study their own culture, they pay more respect to origins than to an overall evaluation of the characteristics of the total pattern.

This need not be so. Studies of many cultures were made by men who wished to obtain such an overall view if only to indicate the degrees of complexity which these cultures presented.

In his summary of the outstanding complexes of some fifteen aboriginal American cultures, Kroeber devised a diagrammatic scheme which revealed the cumulative results of culture accretions.[1] Although the diagram illustrated both the early and late occurrences of some representative elements of culture, their antiquity or recency was not as important to me as the final result of culture accretion itself since the totality of a culture pattern is indicative of its relative complexity or simplicity, and the closer study of it may open up new avenues for research or at least inquiry as to why it is simple or complex. In his diagram Kroeber desired to indicate the comparative complexity of the Mexican, Andean and Colombian cultures, at least two of which approximated what anthropologists term "civilization," defining it as a cross-fertilization of cultures perhaps independently developed.

Albeit that many were the complexes which went into the building of the two great Pre-Columbian civilizations, Kroeber indicated only the *mainstays* in their structures, which mainstays we may call complexes of a total pattern. They were: maize, agriculture and pottery; stone buildings and town life; cotton growing and textile clothing; temples and priesthood; confederacy; mathematics, calendar and astronomy; books; metallurgy and allied arts.

Kroeber's scheme to show some of the more significant elements of culture was also attempted by Herskovits who put forth a similar effort by his outline of eight African culture areas.[2] In his list of typical complexes Herskovits used types of food, clothing, shelter, occupation, domestic animals, cultivated plants, language, religion, property and marriage.

Both of these authors followed some earlier scholars among whom Wissler made an outstanding contribution by his delineation of Amerindian food or

[1] Kroeber, 1923, diagram facing p. 340. [2] Herskovits, 1924.

culture areas.[3] In another work Wissler also listed fourteen significant traits in Old and New World civilizations,[4] but this later list shows only certain culture parallels occurring in the two hemispheres rather than the outlines of the total patterns characterizing the two great areas. Still other attempts to characterize cultures were made by Benedict[5] and by Redfield,[6] the latter making a claim that

"understanding of society in general and of our modern urbanized society in particular can be gained through consideration of the societies least like our own: the primitive, or folk societies."

With the exception of another of Wissler's works[7] which concerned itself with the analysis of culture in general, none of these studies, however, attempted to give a summary of, or at least to give a list of the outstanding complexes of, our modern western civilization. Nor did Lynd's classical approach to the study of a midwestern American city[8] give such a summary, although its results acquaint the reader with many of the characteristic western culture-complexes.

It is desirable therefore that a total picture of that civilization be succinctly given so that an understanding of our modern urbanized society might be as clear to us as, say, that of the Yukaghir, the Kwakiutl or the Baganda, whose cultures we regard as "least like our own," for it is not enough to speak of differences and then illustrate these differences by presenting only the totality of cultures "least like our own," assuming that "our own" is perfectly understood.

When more than a decade ago I tried to differentiate a simple folk culture from that of a complex urban society, I used for illustration ten specifically western complexes which I said were indispensable parts of our western culture. I used these complexes as indices of the presence or absence of that culture in a geographically and socially isolated community.[9]

Since my last report I have gone over the same ground with greater care, discovering that my list was incomplete.[10] My present treatment of this problem therefore embodies sixteen complexes, several of which differ very much among themselves as to antiquity or recency, but together they do form a more or less unified picture of what we now term "Euro-American" or "western" or "civilized." Although the emphasis is very strongly on the scientific-technological side of our life, the list includes non-technological complexes such as our individuated art, our social, political and economic institutions and doctrines, and some of our mental habits.

[3] Wissler, 1938. [4] *Id.*, 1945. [5] Benedict, 1934.
[6] Redfield, 1942, p. 1. [7] Wissler, 1923.
[8] Lynd, 1929. See also: *Id.*, 1937; Dixon, 1928. for criticism of some of the developments of the culture-area theory.
[9] Junek, 1937. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

It is obviously beyond the power or ken of even an organized group of stock-takers, engineers and statisticians to make up a complete inventory of western civilization, it being so very complex and ramified. The mainstays of it, however, seem to be sufficiently clear and outstanding to allow me to assert that wherever or whenever any one of them is absent, we may speak of an *incomplete* pattern, and where such an absence seriously affects the health or the safety of a community, as for example in an uncontrolled outbreak of cholera or typhoid fever, or an unchecked fire menace, we must regard these absences as *defects* of our civilization.

In making up a summary of his study of cultures either similar to or dissimilar from our own, a field worker may wish to make a condensed outline of these in his report. When doing so he may also find it useful to list for purposes of acculturation control the characteristic content of our western culture. For this the opportunities for anthropologists who may serve in the capacity of civil administrators of trusteeship territories loom now larger than ever before. It is well to bear in mind these possibilities and with them also the need of a good understanding of the main characteristics of our western civilization, some small parts of which have already intruded into the cultures of peoples inhabiting the territories to be administered by us. Some of the complexes, e.g., modern motive power, modern factory system, mass education, modern sanitation and hygiene, will play an important role in the administrative policies of our government in its contacts with these peoples and their orientation in the world scheme.

TABLE I

Complexes of Western Civilization which may be regarded as mainstays of the total pattern.

1. *Motive Power.* Steam, associated with highly mechanized coal-mining techniques; electricity, associated also with the erection of power dams; internal combustion, associated with the exploitation of petroleum sources. (Motive power is the basis of every civilization. Western civilization depends on these three types. Although the recent unshackling of atomic power may some day displace these three, it is at this time only a possibility or a wish to be fulfilled.)
2. *The Modern Factory System* and standardized machine-made (mass-made) goods. Associated with organized group research in physics, chemistry, engineering and agronomy devising and discovering new methods of manufacture. The time study and the assembly line. This complex is also associated on the one hand with such distributing techniques as advertising and marketing, and on the other with the unionization of labor and the establishment of chambers of commerce and industry. Here also belong trusts, cartels and chain stores, the Patent Bureau, the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Labor and Commerce Departments, the National Labor Relations Board, the last five being examples of governmental regulation for benefit of the people.

3. *Mass Education* enforced by law. Associated with scientific pedagogy and regional and national education associations whose function is the raising of standards of instruction and educational equipment.
4. *Universal Suffrage.* Secret ballot and legislative processes (parliamentarism) whose function is the impersonal regulation by *statutory* law for personal security and well-being of the people.
5. *Modern Sanitation and Hygiene.* (Sanitary Engineering and *Preventive* Medicine.) The function of this complex is twofold: 1. Modern housing, safe water-supply, sewage disposal and conversion of sewage into fertilizers; artificial (central) heating, cooling and ventilation systems; the extermination of pests and vermin; abatement of smoke nuisance. 2. The organization of modern hospital system; medical, surgical, dental, epidemiological, obstetrical, gynecologic, pediatric, dietetic and psychiatric research. It is this complex which expresses the extremely high value placed on the life of the individual, one result of which is the increased life-span.
6. *Public Safety System,* inclusive of an efficient (specialized) fire-fighting and police personnel and apparatus; scientific crime detection; reformatory measures as a part of social therapy. The complex is the result of recognition of the fact that certain services can be performed better by group effort than by individual effort (group responsibility).
7. *Soil Chemistry* and other forms of conservation, e.g., reforestation. The function of this complex, though ostensibly rural, is to be subservient to the needs of all people and is directly associated with the modern factory system by its research in nitrogenous and similar compounds, its aim being *continued* food production and the replacement of raw materials such as lumber for the use of the factory system and large urban concentrations. The complex is the growth and modification of the earliest concepts of civilization, i.e., the domestication and cultivation of nature instead of its exploitation. By its continued replacements of raw materials it manifests the sense of prevision in modern society. The restoration of depleted soil-elements is an important function. Nutritional experts have been warning that mineral-poor soils produce mineral-poor foods which in turn are responsible for malnutrition and ill-health.
8. *Scientific Food Packing, Storage and Distribution.* Canning, refrigeration and dehydration of foods. Tendency for the distribution of great variety of foods grown in varying climates and seasons. Refrigerator trains in America and ice trains in Britain.
9. *Banking and Insurance* with all their ramifications (e.g., loan and building societies), and *Social Insurance* covering old-age, sickness and unemployment benefits. The function of these two complexes is personal security in the commercial sense of the word, and of social security as conceived by collective responsibility. In simpler cultures it is always some smaller group or an individual that is personally responsible for individual security.

COMMUNICATIONS

10. *Telephone, Telegraph, Teletype and Wirephoto* services (see also complex 12).
11. *Postal service.* (Some of its branches, e.g., postal savings and the money-order system, are a governmental duplication of part of complex 9.)

12. *Newspapers, Periodicals and Books.* Associated on the one hand with a highly organized newsgathering and distributing technique, and on the other with the scientific library systems. The function of this complex as of the previous two is to carry information and culture to all the people. Stability of a society is partly based on the prompt dissemination of news and culture irrespective of class and status. One may contrast this function with the rigidity of the Hindu caste system.
13. *Radio and Cinema* with all of their ramifications: radar, walkie-talkie, television, technicolor. (See also complexes 15 and 16 as well as all previous complexes with which this one is associated.)
14. *Railroad, Steamship, Automobile, Airplane and Elevator Services.* This complex is associated with a highly organized system of roads, tunnels, bridges, piers and landing fields. The Interstate Commerce Commission, the Civil Aeronautic Authority. The function of this complex is to bring about rapidity and ease of movement and communication as in complexes 10 to 13. It may be said to be directly associated with all of the preceding complexes and dependent on complexes 1 and 2.

Complexes 10 to 14 inclusive may be considered as a kind of a supercomplex having to do with all communications. Their integrative qualities are manifest inasmuch as each one of them is either supporting or contributing to a smooth functioning of all the others. This applies likewise to complexes 1 to 9, since complexes 10 to 14 are indispensable to them and may therefore be regarded as a sort of connective tissue for the entire pattern.

15. *Aesthetics.* Operatic and symphonic music (*individuated* musical art); modern stagecraft (related to complex 13); landscape architecture (public parks); museums of art (individuated art mostly). The function of this complex is to make the individual aesthetically articulate. It is tied up with mass education on the one hand and the factory system on the other (mass production of individuated art work, e.g., phonograph disks and radio sets).
16. *Sports and Athletics.* Integrated with complex 3. Both sports and athletics are highly organized. Their manifest function is to satisfy the need for play. They also supply some of the ritual needs in western civilization. There are instances where the sport and athletic ritualism are able to displace some of the primitive ritualism such as head hunting among the Bontoc Igorot.

A characteristic tendency in both complexes 15 and 16 is their commercialization; one may say that all recreational activities now tend to become commercialized.

We are not concerned here with the history and development of human skill but only with the results of accretions of human achievement both in scientific technologies and in organization of functions. And yet one cannot fail to observe the fact that since the Industrial Revolution great events have crowded the life of the Western World, and that the cumulative effect of inventions affected in a large degree the behavior and the outlook not only of the people of that world but of many others living thousands of miles away from Europe and America. The capacity for cooperation is becoming greater

as the spheres of activity become wider. In this the capacity for closer intercourse is aided by modern inventions and the discovery of new resources and processes. The tendency of the total pattern is to spill over from locality to locality, affecting the whole world. "A local body of people cannot have the full advantage of industrial progress unless they share it with wider bodies of people" says MacGregor,[11] adding that "the transitions and changes which inventions create . . . cause a necessary fusion of industrial and social evolution."[12]

It is this tendency of the western civilization to widen its spheres of activity that must be fully appreciated by anthropologists who are best qualified of all professions to judge which parts of the total pattern may also serve the well-being of other cultures without necessarily disorganizing them. The need for this appreciation was pointed out by Mead[13] who also stressed the importance of the choice to be made of only certain parts of the total pattern in our contacts with preliterate peoples if their cultures and the personalities they produce are not to suffer by the impact made by our civilization. As an example of choice in the case of Polynesian culture, Mead suggested that there are various ways to educate a native.

"He can be taught . . . how to use European tools which are adapted to his native economy. He can be sent to medical school or he can be taught the political and economic structure of the world and the place of his society in it."[14]

In order to make such a choice for the gradual processes of acculturation an anthropologist should be fully acquainted with every part of his own culture. It is with this end in view that a thorough study of the whole western pattern is recommended.

Although the majority of the complexes in the total pattern are scientific and technologic, there is no doubt that western civilization could also be characterized in terms of social doctrines and mental habits. In fact some of the complexes, such as mass education, universal suffrage and more recently the social and economic equality of women, are all parts of the doctrine of democracy as are also the aesthetic and other features of it made accessible to the great mass of the population. Democracy is as much a state of mind as it is a system of government. It is moreover the recognition of and the respect for the rights of the individual supported by the collective responsibility of the people.

It is more important, nevertheless, to know that in western civilization certain conditions exist which lead to the acquisition of these mental habits and the formulation of these social doctrines. Most of these conditions are the

---

[11] Macgregor, p. 28. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 33. [13] Mead, 1943, pp. 193–197.
[14] *Ibid.* As for the British view of this problem see Stevenson, 1945.

outgrowth of the aggregations of our highly organized economy and its technologic complexes, for it cannot be denied that there is a greater and greater dependence on the mass of technologic devices whose accessibility even to the most impecunious is manifest within the daily routine of living.

To summarize these conditions as parts of the total pattern we may consider:

1. The habitual acceptance of and dependence on modern technology, a habituation which may be termed "Gadget Behavior." This dependence is becoming greater from year to year, so much so that it seems to take for granted the almost automatic functioning of the complex machineries and other technologic devices. The satisfaction of many social needs (e.g., educational and aesthetic) is likewise delegated to the impersonalized systems indicated in Table I. The impersonality and efficiency of the factory system and the rest of the complexes in the whole pattern tend to increase, and the general tendency is to satisfy almost every human need from morning to night and from the cradle to the grave. The result is that man becomes so submerged and influenced by the ever-increasing flow of technologic advances, that his thinking, his actions and his entire outlook on life become colored and conditioned by it.

   It is this dependence on and the increasing habituation to our modern technology, and the delegation of primary group-satisfactions to the impersonalized institution and controls that set us apart from many other cultures. The factory system may serve here as an example. Many large corporations set up personnel departments whose function, besides the selection of employees, is to assist individuals in their solution of personal and domestic difficulties. The idea back of this is not any sympathetic desire on the part of the corporation to help the individual, but rather to iron out the difficulties because they might interfere with production. The motivation therefore is institutional needs and not personal well-being.
2. The great heterogeneity of peoples and interests is only a concomitant of the above condition, as are also
3. The ever-increasing mobility and transience coupled with anonymity and impersonality of behavior,[15] and
4. The rapid changes of interest and the variety of nervous stimulation.[16]

One might argue that in a modern metropolis, which is most representative of the total pattern of our western civilization, there should be a correspondence of rational and scientific thinking. That this is far from so has been demonstrated by the students of L. Lévy-Bruhl[17] who called this inconsistency

---

[15] An investigation is now being conducted by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the New York University to determine whether this idea of anonymity and impersonality still holds good. Some current opinion claims that there is a tendency among the inhabitants of large metropolitan areas to create primary group relationships. Until the results of this investigation can be gained, however, it is best to question the point.

[16] Park, pp. 557 et seq., has shown how the mobility and diversity of urban populations have produced these changes. [17] Lévy-Bruhl, 1923.

"pre-logical" thinking or "mystic participation." One such is Pareto who, in his voluminous work *Mind and Society*, called this condition "residue," using that concept without any reference to Durkheim's and Lévy-Bruhl's concepts. In spite of this very obvious shortcoming, however, Pareto was investigating a very real problem.

Similar inconsistencies are also manifest in the coexistence of obsolescent doctrines and socially progressive ideas and institutions.[18] Thus private monopolies, trusts and cartels may be found to exist in a society which is also the recipient of the benefits of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Social Security Act.

The outstanding social, economic and ethical doctrines now commonplace may be cited:

TABLE II

Doctrine and Ethos

1. The Madisonian philosophy of interest[19] which states that in all great societies there exist a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a transportation interest and a public official interest, plus others of lesser type, and that these interests divide people into classes in which their interests clash.

2. The Jeffersonian philosophy of democracy which preaches full equality of all citizens before the law and embodies in itself political freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, freedom of the press, and educational opportunities granted to all people and transcending racial and credal lines. This philosophy is now a part of the politico-democratic and socio-democratic thought. Of late the preachment advocating freedom from want obviously belongs to an economic-democratic doctrine which also insists on a national (governmental) responsibility for the employment of the greatest majority of the people and the desirability of a raised standard of living. Perhaps the best example of the acceptance of this philosophy by a non-western people and culture is contained in the Filipino Constitution, Article II, Section 1: "All sovereignty resides in the people and all governmental authority emanates from them."

3a. The philosophy of socialism based on the principle that individual freedom should be completely subordinated to the interests of community, with any deductions that may be correctly or incorrectly drawn from it, e.g., substitution of cooperative for competitive production, national ownership of land and capital, state distribution of products, free education and feeding of children, and the abolition of excessive benefits of inheritance.

3b. Christian socialism which is an attempt to apply Christian precepts in ordinary life resulting in some approximation to the aims of socialism.[20]

4. The Marxian philosophy of communism which preaches a materialist basis of

---

[18] *E.g.*, Herbert Hoover's address delivered in Washington, D. C. on Sept. 29, 1924, opposing Senator La Follette's proposal for the public ownership of public utilities.

[19] See Madison's treatment of this in the Tenth number of the Federalist Papers.

[20] Some parts of the socialist doctrine are now functioning in countries whose governments are not avowedly socialistic, such as the United States, Sweden and others.

history, the recognition of basic human needs as interpreted by the dialectics of Karl Marx in his *Das Kapital*, and which specifically teaches a comradely cooperative economy versus a capitalistic exploitation of human labor for the private and personal ends of a few at the expense of many. Communism may also be defined as "any theory or system of social organization involving common ownership of the agents of production, and some approach to equality in the distribution of the products of industry."[21] Since communist methods are now a part of the governmental policies of some European states, they ought to be considered as a part of the total pattern of western civilization.

5. The Judeo-Christian religion and ethics. Although this complex was first promulgated and developed in the Near East, it gradually became the recognized body of ethics and religious practices in the Western World where its most extensive and intensive development took place, leading to a great variety of sects. It is this complex, too, that may be regarded as one of the original carriers of the economic and technologic complexes of the Western pattern.

Ethically speaking, the sixteen complexes of Table I do not constitute a civilization. The ethics of a civilization are more or less implicit in the four or five complexes as given in Table II and are *implemented* by the totality of complexes contained in Table I. Pure science and technology are said to be without morals. The complexes in Table I may therefore be harnessed to the chariots of war or to the vehicles of peace depending upon the ethos of a people and of their leaders. In countries supposedly permeated by Judeo-Christian ethics, and in some countries guided by the socialist and communist doctrines, the aim is to make the sixteen complexes subservient to peace and the continued raising of the standards of living. For these complexes nos. 3, 4, 12 and 13 are especially used as control devices.

CONCLUSIONS

Although a description of the full pattern of our modern western civilization would require considerable indexing, its outstanding characteristics may be sketched in outline to obtain an overall view not only for the purposes of comparison with other cultures, but chiefly to enable anthropologists serving in the capacity of civil administrators of trusteeship and other territories to select from the total pattern only those complexes and traits which would fit into other cultures and become useful to them, rather than disorganizing both culture and personality.

This outline consists of a twofold approach: The listing of (1) technologic and other activities which for convenience are grouped into sixteen complexes to be regarded as mainstays of the total pattern; (2) social doctrines and mental habits.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK CITY

[21] Webster's New International Dictionary, edition of 1932.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BENEDICT, RUTH
1934 *Patterns of Culture*. Boston.
DIXON, R. B.
1928 *The Building of Cultures*, New York.
HERSKOVITS, M. J.
1924 A Preliminary Consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa. *American Anthropologist*, 26, No. 1, pp. 50–63.
JUNEK, OSCAR W.
1931 More Homes for Convalescents. *The Modern Hospital*, 37, No. 1. Chicago.
1937 *Isolated Communities*. The American Book Co., New York.
KROEBER, A. L.
1923 *Anthropology*. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York.
LÉVY-BRUHL, LUCIEN
1923 *Primitive Mentality*. (Transl. by Clare) Macmillan Co., New York.
LYND, R. S. AND H. M.
1929 *Middletown*. New York.
1937 *Middletown in Transition*. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York.
MACGREGOR, D. H.
The Evolution of Industry. Henry Holt & Co., New York.
MEAD, MARGARET
1943 South Sea Culture in the Post-War World. *American Anthropologist*, 45, No. 2, pp. 193–197.
PARK, ROBERT E.
1915 Human Behavior in Cities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 20, pp. 557 et seq.
REDFIELD, ROBERT
1930 *Tepoztlan, a Mexican Village*. Chicago.
1940 The Folk Society and Culture. *Eleven Twenty-Six: A Decade of Social Science Research* (L. Wirth, Editor), University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
1941 *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago.
1942 *The Folk Society*. Multigraphed by the University of Chicago.
STEVENSON, H. N. C.
1945 The Case for Applied Anthropology in the Reconstruction of Burma. *Man*, 45, pp. 1–18.
WISSLER, CLARK
1923 *Man and Culture*. New York.
1938 *The American Indian*. Third Edition, New York.
1945 Corn and Early American Civilization. *Natural History* 54, No. 2, pp. 56–65.