THE definition of culture most often quoted is that of Tyler: “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” A particular culture has been defined by Redfield as “an organized body of conventional understandings, manifest in act and artifact, which, persisting through tradition, characterizes a human group.” Excellent definitions both, yet culture is one of those large concepts, like democracy or science, a definition of which seems very bare and inadequate to convey its rich meanings. Different students will emphasize different aspects of culture as most significant, and in the future important new ideas about culture may be discovered. At the present time the aspects of culture of most interest to sociologists may be grouped around four ideas.

I

The study of culture developed out of the soil of biological sociology. The impact of the discoveries of Darwin, particularly the evolution of man from the anthropoids, on social thought was tremendous. Nothing like it had so shocked mankind since it was discovered that the earth was round and whirling through space, held there by balancing forces. The ramifications of the latter discovery, for instance, reached as far as the theory of the state and supported the doctrine of checks and balances, so evident in our own governmental structure. Likewise the ramifications of the idea of evolution extended quite generally, especially to societies. Out of it were developed the organismic theories of the state. A great impetus was given to biological interpretations of society by such men as Spencer and Huxley. The achievements of man were seen as the direct outgrowth of his inherited capacities. The wasps build one type of house, the ants another, because their biological structures are different. It followed, by inference, that the Aztecs have one type of culture and the Egyptians another because their biological natures are different. Function was seen as following structure very closely. The European was further along in the scale of biological evolution than the Australian black fellow since his culture was more advanced. Social evolution was dependent upon biological evolution. The monkeys had no civilization because they had not evolved far enough. Man, however, with his larger brain case had gone further in biological progress...
and was capable of developing civilization.

It is interesting that the idea of culture, which later was so often opposed to biology, was developed by one of the most biologically-minded men of the age, Herbert Spencer. He remarked that there was a time when there was no life on the earth. Everything was inorganic. In the course of time, inorganic matter evolved to a point when life appeared. Then the evolution of the organic matter began. When it reached the level of man, there appeared culture or, as Spencer called it, the 'superorganic' which, in turn, began its evolution.

Though Spencer helped to give birth to the idea of culture, he never really saw its nature clearly. For instance, to him the superorganic was dependent in a most intimate and direct way upon the organic. The concept of the superorganic was then only the beginning of the unfolding of the concept of culture. If the variations in the organic determined the nature of the superorganic in detail, as Spencer thought, then sociology not only rested on biology, but was really a biological science.

Out of the tide of enthusiasm for biology, there appeared those twin absurdities, the recapitulation theory and the successive stages theory. According to the former the individual recapitulated the history of the race, so that the less evolved primitive peoples were seen only as children. According to the latter theory, since social stages were determined by biological stages of evolution, they must follow in succession, as monogamy followed polygamy. Supposedly Russia could not go from the household agricultural economy to socialism without passing through capitalism. The power of education and of the diffusion of culture traits in breaking up such a succession of stages was not appreciated.

Such was the background of sociological thought when the concept of culture appeared. But as the phenomena of cultural growth were studied, it was observed that social institutions evolved into new forms in periods of history too short for any biological evolution. Hence doubt was cast on any correlation of cultural evolution and biological evolution, at least during the historical period, if not since the ice ages. Peoples of the same race were noted to have greatly different levels of civilization, and peoples of different racial types were observed to have the same social institutions. The growth of a particular culture, ethnologists were showing, was not so much from inventions produced within that culture as from traits imported from other cultures. Thus any inevitable succession of stages was negated.

The close correlation of function and structure may exist when such widely different species as rats and guinea pigs are compared, but among peoples the functions as measured by customs and institutions were not found to be correlated with any discernible structure. When an Eskimo adult who could not count above ten and was thus supposed to be no further advanced than a child was taught to solve problems in calculus, the recapitulation theory lost its appeal.

That tremendous cultural variations were possible even if there were no races and that rapid social evolution could take place if biologically men evolved not at all but were quite stationary, were ideas revolutionary to the biological sociology of the time. Culture cut the chains that tied sociology to biology. This freedom meant an actual stimulus in proposing new hypotheses and in generating new ideas about civilization, and explanations therefore on other grounds than biology.

However, it should not be understood
from the foregoing account that all fields of sociology were affected in this manner by biology. There were, for instance, many aspects of institutional relationships which were studied without any particular relationship to race, inheritance, or instinct. However, many more phases of sociology were related to biological theories than was, for instance, the case with economics or political science.

One angle from which these relationships may be viewed was the controversy over the very nature of sociology itself. It was being variously described as the study of society, of the group, or of group behavior. Certainly back of these various conceptions was the idea of the group and group relations. The individual was the object of study of psychology or biology, but the group was the particular province of sociology. Sociology is derived from the Latin word socios, meaning companion and implying a plural number of individuals.

With the wider acceptance of the meaning of culture, group behavior as a mere type of inherited activity became of less importance. Discoveries regarding group processes such as social control, collective behavior, social pressure, mob action, social contagion, ostracism, leadership, and the social instincts, remained of importance to sociology, but interest tended to shift to the cultural forms and patterns carried by the group and to the various habits and personalities favored by these cultural influences. The field of group action, viewed as a psychological and biological phenomenon, had been pretty well cultivated, and, though still yielding discoveries, had perhaps reached the point of diminishing returns, at least at that time. Interest shifted to the cultural forms and their influence on the individual. Meanwhile descriptive work on the various cultures of the world was being carried out by ethnologists in the field. The literature was greatly enriched on different types of culture among different peoples, and much was learned about the organization of culture and the variations among the social institutions. This type of phenomenon was inherently interesting aside from race and tended to overshadow the description of biological behavior of groups.

The question then may be raised as to whether the definition of sociology as the study of the group gave the proper emphasis. It may be argued that there was a large group of sociologists never much interested in psychological or biological behavior of the group, but who were rather more interested in social organization, or in the culture carried by the group. Nevertheless, if interest is primarily in the culture carried by the group, why say that the interest is in the group? To do this, there must be a special definition of the group. It must mean that the group and the culture carried by the group were very closely related, if not synonymous.

Under the influence of biology, group activity and behavior were seen as biological products. It was the nature of man to behave this way in groups. It was instinct. The objective of sociology was to define more elaborately the nature of this group behavior. If this fuller description carried the investigation into social institutions, these became still the elaboration of instinctive social nature. Since function was seen as so closely related to structure, the different group functions, the different social institutions were the product of different group capacities. With this view, sociology as a study of the group was, ipso facto, a study of the group products, that is, its culture.

But with the recognition that cultural variations could occur without biological
variations, the group and the group’s culture were no longer the same. The group might remain biologically the same yet have a succession of different cultures. Hence, for the definition of sociology to be the study of the group, implied no longer that it was the study of the culture of that group. It was customary to say at this earlier period that man created his culture. This was true if men of all time are considered and if man is being contrasted with another species. But one cannot say that the Greeks or the Mayans created their culture, much less the inhabitants of any one village or the peoples of any one century. The culture is rather an environment in which they live, which, if conditions are favorable, they may modify somewhat in a given time by invention. The term social heritage, often used interchangeably with culture, suggests the futility of saying that a particular group creates a culture.

Concluding this part of the discussion then, the idea of culture is necessarily at least as significant for sociology as is biology. As Darwinism and biology tended to give sociology a definition as the study of the group, culture, being in a way the antithesis of biology has necessarily changed the definition of sociology and added to the tasks of sociology the study of cultural processes. This change in concept of sociology itself suggests questions of new relations of sociology to ethnology and to the special social sciences, such as economics and political science, which are, however, not appropriate for the present discussion.

II

One aspect of this new relationship of sociology to ethnology and the special social sciences is the consideration of culture as a whole consisting of interrelated parts. The ethnologists have always so considered it for the primitive cultures, and have brought forward such indicative terms as culture pattern and configuration. An ethnologist goes to a primitive people and writes for the record an account of the whole culture of the people he visits, but he does not generally confine himself to any particular part as, for instance, their economic institutions, as a social scientist often does in a modern culture, such as those of Europe or North America. The mere write-up of the whole culture of a people necessarily brings out the integration of the different parts into the whole, especially when comparisons are made with other cultures.

No scientific body seems to do for modern civilization quite what the ethnologist does for a simpler culture. Perhaps the task is too large. The historian doesn’t do it. He is describing usually events rather than institutions, and the events he describes are often selected as for instance, political occurrences, military records, or economic achievements.

In actual practice, the field of labor in studying modern civilization is subdivided. The economist concerns himself with the institutions used in the production and consumption of wealth. The political scientist deals with the governments and their operation. And so on. Perhaps there is no great demand for a description of the whole of western civilization. What the future may produce in integrated studies of the whole of a culture is not known.

This demand for an integrated picture of the whole of a culture in modern times has come nearer to fruition in the description of communities. It has long been the tradition of the sociologist to do for a particular village or city what the ethnologist does for a primitive culture. The primitive culture though is more nearly a closed system than is a single modern
community. Hence these modern community studies do not describe with completeness the political, social, and economic institutions of a community. They omit what the readers will in general know, for instance, about the religious or educational system, only noting the variations supposed to be peculiar to the village being described or else facts not available for the country as a whole.

While it is then true that the rise of the study of culture has forced upon the specialists studying modern society the idea that the parts make up a whole, the demand is not so much for a description of the whole, as it is for the interrelationships of the parts. The culture pattern is of interest as a whole but also because of the interrelationships of the parts.

Thus, in some cultures, religious practices are closely related to recreational activities in ceremonies, rituals, and religious festivals. The economic system may be closely related to customs of hospitality. For instance, the interchange of gifts associated with ceremonies may be a substitute for money and serve as a medium for the exchange of goods. Or, again, wealth and economic values may be subordinated to prestige as found in rank. Religious ideas may be connected with medical practice, art forms, or even economic activities, and yet have little to do with moral questions.

There are interrelationships between the parts of modern society as truly as in the cultures of preliterate peoples. But these interrelationships tend to be neglected by modern social scientists because of their specialization in particular fields. They are, though, the concern of practical men who have to deal with them. For instance, the points of contact between government and business are very numerous and some study of their interrelations is forced upon government officials and business men more than it is upon economists or political scientists. Government, today, as it expands its functions is making contacts with many more social institutions, such as the family, clubs, recreational organizations, schools and church. But the political scientists seldom study as social scientists these interrelationships.

How these interrelationships of different parts of society may be studied in the future is a question. But the concept of culture precipitates the issue. It is true the issue has been injected also by the pressure of practical problems, but here the demand is for a practical solution rather than a scientific study. The ethnologist objects to the treatment of any part of culture apart from the culture pattern. Thus he may say that a treatment of marriage alone, for illustration, throughout a region or a period of time should not be done since the full meaning of marriage cannot be appreciated except as a part of the culture. Marriage should be always studied in connection with the culture of which it is a part. The interrelationships of the parts of culture seem to be given relatively more attention in the study of primitive cultures than in modern civilization.

It hardly seems practicable that sociologists should be the ones to study these interrelations, though theoretically it might be argued that it is their task. They would have difficulty in covering the necessary ground to give the detailed study necessary for dealing with the practical questions that arise. But, it is possible that they might do much to study the interrelationship of the functions of the different social institutions, from the point of view of social science.

III

A third significance of the concept of culture lies in its contribution to the study
of social change. The evolution of culture, once free of biology, came to be seen in terms of cultural factors such as inventions, the diffusion of culture traits, culture contacts and isolation, the relation of the stock of knowledge existing at any one time to the rate of new inventions, social attitudes toward change, resistance to the adoption of inventions, and other such factors of a social nature.

The idea of change is not central to the ethnologist's study of culture. It is true he sees the culture of primitive peoples undergoing profound changes due to contacts with the culture of the white peoples, but usually his search is to reconstruct the ancient culture as it was before the changes due to contacts with the whites. The study of the effect of the white man's culture on the native cultures is, of course, a very special type of social change.

The historian records happenings and events but makes no systematic record of institutional changes and the causes therefor. The specialists in the various social sciences do make analyses of the changes in the particular institutions concerned, political, economic, educational, or whatever they may be. But, again, it may be observed that no institution exists alone and unrelated to any other; hence the specialist is handicapped if he restricts his attention to the causes of change lying within the institution concerned. True, he does not always so restrict himself for the reason that often causes of great change in any organization come from outside. The specialist though is likely to see only the more obvious external factors, since they lie without his special field. The growth or change of the superorganic is not best approached by a study of the changes in the different parts of the whole. It is better to view the whole culture pattern as undergoing change, for the very term "pattern" indicates that the parts of culture are fitted together in a configuration, rather than the aggregation of so many unrelated units. The parts of culture are not related so simply as the links of a chain, but are integrated more like the parts of a machine, so that when one part is changed the various other parts are likely to be affected also, even though in some cases only slightly.

The correlation between the different parts of culture is in unequal degrees. The church and art may be more closely related than government and art. Literature is more closely related to education than to economic processes. Medicine was at one time in closer connection with religion than with science, while in another culture it may be closer to science than to religion. A change therefore beginning in any one part of culture will affect the other parts in unequal degrees. Similarly impinging forces in any part of culture come with unequal forces from other parts of culture.

The evolution of the superorganic then is the change of a whole where various parts are more or less integrated. But the various parts are not propelled forward with equal force. Some are changing rapidly, some slowly. Some parts change because of inventions occurring in that part. So, for instance, technology or science changes today. Other parts are changing more from inventions occurring outside. Such was largely the case with the family in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century. These unequal rates of change in the different correlated parts of culture cause stresses and strains in the relationship of the parts of culture.

There thus occurs in a changing society maladjustment between its parts, adjustments which are either less satisfactory than either previous or possible future
relationships. As an illustration, the relationship that exists between science and religion has been disturbed at various times by virtue of discoveries in science relating to the nature of the world and of man. These acute tensions become eventually smoothed out, but for the time there is a serious maladjustment, usually for the part of culture which receives the force of invention, social or mechanical. These strains are in many cases caused by the fact that there is a delay or lag in keeping up with the precipitating changes. In modern society mechanical invention and scientific discovery are, in fact, the precipitators of many changes in other parts of culture. So that the various social organizations, philosophies, habits, are forced to adjust, after a delay, to new situations brought about by these mechanical and scientific innovations.

Thus the study of cultural evolution gives rise to important hypotheses of a purely cultural nature.

IV

A last influence of culture to be considered here is on social psychology. It seemed, from the so-called instinct psychology, that one could start with a blue print of man's original nature and read off his social institutions. One started with motives and found there the explanation of custom and other human behavior. But inquiries into the explanation of cultural phenomena have reversed the process. It is better to start with the cultural phenomena and by history and description to arrive at motives as the end result. Similarly the social institutions must first be accounted for on cultural ground before one can be sure what parts of original nature are involved. A psychological inventory of original nature cannot be used as a blue print for predicting social organization.

This approach radically revised the explanation of personality. It was once thought that personality was largely the gift of inheritance. But the personality of the young is now held to be more the outgrowth of group experience and of the culture pattern in which the child is reared. Group relationships, as in the family, church, school, club, playground, are of great importance in shaping the personalities; but so also are the culture patterns carried by the group, be they those of warlike Sparta or the peaceful Greenland Eskimo.

This study of cultural and group influences on the personality of children is not as amenable to study by the ethnologist as is the description of culture pattern. The ethnologist is not in a good position nor well equipped to watch the growth of young children in a primitive culture, though comparisons may be made in the personalities of adults in different cultures. The early Icelanders were so murderous that it was thought they could never settle the island because they killed each other off so fast. But the culture pattern has changed and it is said there were only a dozen murders in Iceland in the nineteenth century. Comparative studies show the influences of different cultures on producing different personality traits. The development of personality ceases then to be wholly in the province of psychology. The psychologist who works in the laboratory is concerned with the account of general inventories, habits and the processes of the conditioned reflex, rather than the influence of particular culture patterns on young people. The laboratory psychologist is not well trained for studying the various cultural stimuli, as appear in custom and institution, which shape personality. Likewise it is a study not to be undertaken by special social scientists such as economists or political
scientists. The study of personality would seem to fall within the sphere of activity of the special science of education or of the general science of sociology as well as in psychology. If sociologists acquire the task of studying personality as influenced by culture, they cannot be concerned with only one institution. The family may be the most important. But schools, churches, communities, clubs, occupations, etc., must all be studied. He really must look at culture as a whole. The sociologist, trained in psychology, is also in a very good position to make such studies because of his interest in the group and group processes, which are particularly important in stamping the culture pattern on the individual, in making him conform to the pattern or become a variant. Also in studying the influence of culture on the individual, it is necessary to view culture as a whole.

With regard to the old question of the psychological adjustment of man, the primitive hunter, to modern culture, the question is not now expressed in the earlier biological language of adaptation and environment. It is rather phrased in the expression the interrelationship between personality and culture. Though personality may be the product of culture, the individual may deviate from the pattern and hence not be adjusted. If the deviation is rather far, he may be called a neurotic personality. In a modern society there are patterns within patterns. Society is heterogeneous and consists of many groups, with different folkways, so that the effect of culture on the personality is far from simple. The new approach to culture and personality is not wholly due to the growing appreciation of culture. Psychology also makes its contribution. Researches there have shown many marvelous new habits that can be set up on the principle of the conditioned reflex. Thus the modifiability of original nature, rather than a relatively rigid set of instincts, is a lesson from psychology that offers a basis for describing the different effects of culture on personality.

Not even the different personalities of the sexes, is now admitted to be wholly determined by the obviously different sexual constitutions of male and female. But traits which are considered masculine in our culture are found to be feminine in other cultures and vice versa. Furthermore, as cultural change is now taking place in modern culture, the feminine personality is quite different today from what it was 50 years ago in, say, the Victorian era. No doubt there are limits to which biological nature can be bent; and what is more important, there is probably some kind of biological norm of behavior to which, as culture molds personality, there is a more harmonious relationship established. But for the moment, the culture enthusiasts are forgetting the biological limits to cultural influence, even though there be an alarming number of psychotics.

With a fixed biological nature and a rapidly changing culture, optimistic man with notions of progress is even looking forward to possibilities of bending culture to make a better relationship. But the question on the other hand is being raised whether a rapidly changing culture, with all its lags and inequalities of rates of change and uncertain futures, is not a more difficult one to which to make an adjustment than a stationary culture.

Personality and culture is more often viewed as a one way relationship. But, of course, a personality may influence culture. The question of the impact of the
great man on culture has no special new emphasis since the intrusion of the culture concept, except perhaps to strengthen the case of social forces influencing the great man, rather than the great man influencing social forces.

The personality influences the superorganic through inventions—mechanical, social, or ideational. Hence the importance of how inventions originate. Little evidence seems to be forthcoming that the inventor is a biological mutation, or even in the upper extreme of some distribution curve of inherited traits or combination of traits.

In conclusion, it has been shown that the biological influences on sociology of a generation or so ago acted as a springboard for hurling the new idea of culture into sociological thought. The magnitude of the idea is quite comparable with the magnitude of social biology. Indeed, the importance of culture has forced a reorientation of many of the most important concepts of sociology and even the consideration of a redefining of sociology.

SOCIAL METABOLISM IN ITS BEARINGS ON PROGRESS

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NO OTHER doctrine appears to be more dominant in the social thinking and constructive statesmanship of today than that established by Lapouge in Les Selections Sociales (Paris 1896). It is in his message, namely—that (1) the annihilation of the Aryan is inevitable; (2) all the forms and processes of contemporary civilisation are but cumulatively heading towards regression and decay; and finally, (3) progress cannot be considered to be the rational conclusion from the data of world-history—that contemporary philosophy, sociology and politics find a challenge as well as a problem.1

The names of thinkers who, in recent years, have preached the doctrine of mankind's decline or regress are legion. From Spengler's Untergang des Abendlandes, has come the formula that the West is headed for decay. Romain Rolland has popularized the notion that Western civilization is doomed. In the Italian demographist Gini's analysis of "the parabola of evolution," the European races are all exhibiting senescence with the solitary exception, perhaps, of the Italians.2 American sociologists are not immune to this decline-cult and some of them are anxiously discussing the question with reference to the decline in the natural fertility of the Eur-American population.3

In all these decline-cults of today the student of sociology is being forced to grapple with the problems of social longevity, growth, and expansion, and along with them the question of social metabolism and transformation.4 It is in and through social mobility, vertical or horizontal, that group metabolism manifests itself.5 An examination of the dynamics of life or of the forces that serve to transform and reconstruct the races, classes, castes, and other groups ought, therefore,

1 Les Selections Sociales, chapters XIII, XV.