

Savage Minds Occasional Papers No. 8

Configurations of Culture in North America

By Ruth Benedict

Edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub

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Savage Minds Occasional Papers

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Benedict, Ruth. 1932. Configurations of culture in North America. American Anthropologist 34 (1): 1-27.

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Introduction

This edition of “Configurations of Culture in North America” is the openest, freest, and shortest summary of Ruth Benedict’s 1934 classic *Patterns of Culture*. In it, Benedict rehearses the same arguments -- often with the same data -- that we see in *Patterns*. I hope that it will introduce these arguments to readers who do not have the time (or money) to read *Patterns*, which is still under copyright (at least in the United States).

All scholars agree that “Configurations” is an important part of Benedict’s opus, but readers will recognize that it is not as carefully crafted as *Patterns*. The piece has a clear structure, but Benedict does not always do a good job leaving signposts for the reader. At points she engages in point-last writing, or drifts off into discussions whose role in her argument can be difficult to discern. For this reason, it is worth rehearsing her argument here.

Benedict begins the essay with a central question: now that anthropology has the solid ethnographic data that Boas insisted on (rather than the anecdote that Victorian anthropology relied on), what are we to do with it? Malinowski suggested the importance of studying culture in context, but seems merely to assert that all culture traits have a function -- a point, Benedict archly notes, that is about as insightful as the claim that eyes see or hands grasp. Instead, Benedict draws on Dilthey and Spengler for inspiration, claiming that cultures have patterns or configurations which shape the way culture traits are integrated into them.

Benedict then contrasts the Pueblo of the southwest United States with the cultures of the great plains. The Pueblo, she argues, is ‘Apollonian’ in its disdain for emotional excess, while the Plains are ‘Dionysian’ in their love of strong emotion. She demonstrates the differences in these patterns by examining how the same trait -- bereavement (mourning for the dead) is different in these two places.

Benedict then makes her analysis more complicated. She tells us that bereavement is just one example of the more general phenomenon called the “danger situation”: moments of extreme risk and intensity that inevitably occur in human life such as birth, death, and adolescence. Then she introduces another dichotomy that cross-cuts the Apollonian and Dionysian distinction: that between realistic and non-realistic cultures, which she also calls the tough-minded and tender-minded distinction. Benedict uses ‘tough’ and ‘realist’ (and their opposite, ‘tender’ and ‘non-realistic’) interchangeably, and only explains these terms fully at the end of the section in which she discusses them. I have chosen to consistently use the terms ‘tough’ and ‘tender’ for simplicity here. According to Benedict, tough-minded cultures look reality squarely in the eye and attempt to deal with it, while tender-minded cultures see magic and supernatural powers at work in ‘danger situations’.

The result is a two-way contrast that Benedict uses to classify various groups in North America:

	Tough-minded (realist)	Tender-minded (non-realist)
Apollonian	Zuñi (Pueblo)	-
Dionysian	Cheyenne, Shosone (Plains)	Pima, Mohave, Northwest Coast

Benedict then describes how this model can be used to make sense of homicides (people who have killed other people) and their treatment in different cultures. Cheyenne (tough-minded realists) do not see supernatural forces at work in death. The Pima and Mohave (tender-minded Dionysians) do. In a separate section, Benedict examines her two types of danger situations, bereavement and homicide, in the Pacific Northwest, amongst “Kwakiutl” (Kwakwaka'wakw) and Haida people.

In the end of the paper, Benedict draws a number of conclusions from her discussion. First, she points out that more data are needed to take her analysis further. Second, she insists that because each culture has its own configuration, we can not generalize from one of them and assume that all other ‘primitive societies’ function in a similar manner. Neither can we assume that all cultures respond the same way to the same event -- just because everyone dies, that does not mean that there is one universal, cross-cultural style of bereavement. In closing, Benedict suggests that the study of cultural configurations is similar to the study of individual psychology, and also similar to the study of art history. Both these approaches (‘humanistic’ ones in her eyes) offer proof of the validity of her approach.



This version of “Configurations” is around 9,000 words, roughly 3,000 words shorter than the original. This piece is not as clearly written as some of Benedict’s other work, and I have cut some words and phrases for clarity. In a few cases, I have cut paragraphs where digressions took away from the main thrust of the paper. I have removed footnotes (readers interested in her sources can consult the original text), which I believe are not necessary for an introductory reader. I have also divided the text into sections and named them to help make the organization of the text clearer.

Throughout, I have attempted to keep Benedict’s qualifications and clarifications about her claims, because I believe these are important for giving a sense of her worldview and project, which is often unfairly oversimplified by some authors. I have also kept as much as possible of the ethnography -- this text is a classic because it shows us an early anthropologist working with ethnographic materials. The ‘how’ of Benedict’s analysis is as important as its ‘what’. Overall, my goal has been to create a document that can be taught in a single session alongside SMOPS 7 “Anthropology and the Humanities”. These two documents together provide, I believe, an excellent short overview of Benedict’s thought that readers seeking a quick review or orientation to her work will consider valuable. And, of course, most importantly I hope it will spur people to a deeper and more thorough reading of this important thinker.

In sum, then, I hope that this paper, like the others in this series, will help present early anthropological theory in a form that is accessible to everyone. There is today a tremendous amount of material which is open access, but it is difficult to find, inconvenient to read, and many people do not know where to start looking for it. By curating a selection of important open access work, I hope to make open access resources better known and to raise awareness of the actual history of anthropological theory.

-R
13 January 2014
Honolulu

Configurations of Culture in North America

By Ruth Benedict

In the past twenty-five years the fact of prime importance in anthropology has been the accumulation of a few full-length portraits of primitive peoples. It is hard to think back to a time when the chance of reconstructing even a passable picture of any primitive tribe was limited to two or three regions, each of them beset with difficulties. The best accounts available were the outcome of the lucky chances that brought together a good observer and a striking culture, the records of Sahagun, for instance, or Codrington in Melanesia.

The vast amount of material was frankly anecdotal as in travelers' accounts, or schematically dissected and tabulated as in many ethnologists'. Under the circumstances anthropological discussion had recourse to the comparative method, which is by definition anecdotal and schematic. It sought by collecting great series of observations detached from their context to build up "the" primitive mind, or "the" development of religion, or "the" history of marriage. There flourished also the strict diffusionists who made a virtue out of the limitations of materials at their disposal and operated solely with detached objects, never with their setting or function in the culture from which they came.

The growing dissatisfaction with these two dominant theoretical approaches of the anecdotal period of ethnology has always been explicit in Boas' insistence upon exhaustive study of any primitive culture, and is today most clearly voiced by Malinowski. He insists that anthropological theory must take into account human cultures as organic and functioning wholes. He would have us realize that when a museum collection has been installed from the Niam-Niam we still know nothing about them unless we know how each object and culture trait is employed in their native life. Malinowski, somewhat disappointingly, does not go on to the examination of these cultural wholes, but is content with pointing out that each trait functions in the total cultural complex, a conclusion which seems increasingly the beginning of inquiry rather than its peroration. For it is a position that leads directly to the necessity of investigating in what sort of a whole these traits are functioning, and what reference they bear to the total culture. In how far do the traits achieve an organic interrelation? Are the *Leitmotive* in the world by which they may be integrated many or few? These questions the functionalists do not ask.

The fact is that these cultures, though they are overwhelmingly made up of disparate elements fortuitously assembled from all directions by diffusion, are none the less integrated according to very different and individual patterns. The order that is achieved is not merely the reflection of the fact that each trait has a function that it performs -- which is much like a great discovery in physiology that the normal eye sees and the normally muscled hand grasps. The order is due to a principle according to which the assembled cultural material is made over into consistent patterns in accordance with certain inner necessities that have developed within the group. These syntheses are of various sorts. For some of them we have convenient terminology

and for some we have not. But they are in each case the more or less successful attainment of integrated behavior.

The proposition that cultures must be studied from this point of view has been put forward by the German school headed by Wilhelm Dilthey and popularly represented in English-speaking countries by Oswald Spengler in his *Untergang des Abendlandes* [*The Decline of the West*]. For this philosophical school, history is the succession of culturally organized philosophies of life, and philosophy is the study of these great readings of life. For Dilthey the emphasis is only secondarily on the configuration of culture. His primary emphasis is upon these great interpretations as expressing the variety of existence and is directed against the assumption that any one of them can be final. He argues vigorously that essential configurations in philosophy are incommensurable and that their fundamental categories cannot be resolved the one into the other. His most systematic study, the *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, is frankly historically descriptive. When he does become systematic, his groupings are not configurations at all but personality types in philosophy; he groups Democritus, Epicurus, Hobbes, and the French Encyclopedists as exemplifying his “materialist-positivist” type, over against which he sets a type of objective idealist and the idealist of freedom, both of them as eclectically selected from different nations and ages.

Spengler, however, has elaborated the cultural aspect of the philosophy of his school. He has avoided their attempt to define and limit “the” types that may occur. For him the “destiny ideas” that evolve within a culture and give it individuality are what is dynamic and challenging in human life. These have differed profoundly one from another, and they condition their carriers so that certain beliefs and certain blindnesses are inevitable to them. Each great culture has taken a certain direction not taken by another, it has developed beliefs and institutions until they are the expression of this fundamental orientation, and the full working out of this unique and highly individualized attitude toward life is what is significant in that cultural epoch. His study makes a confused impression owing to its discursiveness and the unresolved complexities of the civilizations with which he deals. From an anthropological point of view the fundamental criticism of his work is that it involves treating modern stratified civilization as if it had the essential homogeneity of a primitive culture. His picture, especially of the modern world-view which he calls the Faustian, is only one of the integrated pictures that could validly be drawn for modern man. It needs to be balanced by a picture of a Babbitt or a Roosevelt, for instance. Even at that, what with his rather mystic consideration of numbers, of architecture, of music, of painting, of will, space, and time, the definition of his types becomes confused, and the identification of his different Faustian “destiny ideas” in mathematics, finance, philosophy, and morals hard to make out.

The fundamental principle of the philosophy of Dilthey and his school has remained in its application to the civilization of western Europe stimulating and provocative rather than convincing. The difficulty is very clear; historical data of western Europe are too complex and cultural stratification too thoroughgoing to yield itself in our present state of historical knowledge to the necessary analysis. It is one of the philosophical justifications for the study of primitive peoples that ethnological data may make clear fundamental social facts that are otherwise not open to demonstration. Of these none seem to me more important than this of

fundamental and distinctive configurations in culture that so pattern the emotional and cognitive reactions of its carriers that they become incommensurables, each specializing in certain selected types of behavior and each ruling out the behavior proper to its opposites.

[APOLLONIAN PUEBLO AND DIONYSIAN PLAINS]

I have recently examined from this point of view two types of cultures represented in the Southwest: that of the Pueblo contrasted with those of the various surrounding peoples. I have called the ethos of the Pueblo Apollonian in Nietzsche's sense of the cultural pursuit of sobriety, of measure, of the distrust of excess and orgy. On the other hand Nietzsche's contrasted type, the Dionysian, is abundantly illustrated in all the surrounding cultures. It values excess as escape to an order of existence beyond that of the five senses, and finds its expression in the creation in culture of painful and dangerous experiences, and in the cultivation of emotional and psychic excesses, in drunkenness, in dreams, and in trance.

The Southwest gives an opportunity for the study of the extent to which contrasted psychological sets of this sort can shape the resulting cultures. The Pueblo are a clearly marked-off civilization of considerable antiquity, islanded in the midst of highly divergent cultures. But this islanding of their culture cannot be set to the physical environment. There are no mountain ranges, no impassable deserts that separate them from their neighbors. It is a cultural islanding achieved almost in the face of geographical conditions. The eastern Pueblo went regularly to the plains for the buffalo hunt, and the center of the Pima country is within a day's run on foot of Hopi and Zuñi. The resistance that has kept out of the Pueblo such traits as that of the guardian spirit and the vision, the orgy, the cultural use of intoxicants is a cultural resistance.

The culture of the southwest Pueblo is a thoroughgoing, institutionalized elaboration of the theme of sobriety and restraint in behavior. This theme has prevented the development of those Dionysian situations which most North American tribes elaborate out of every phase of life. It has likewise refused such traits of surrounding cultures as the inspirational vision, along with shamanism. It hates disruptive impulses in the individual -- I speak in an animistic shorthand, meaning that their cultural bias is opposed to and pares down to a minimum the potential human impulses to experiment in indulgences and work off its energy in excesses of the flesh. The whole interest of the culture is directed toward providing for every situation sets of rules and practices by means of which one gets by without resort to the violence and disruption that their culture distrusts. Even fertility practices, associated so universally in other cultures with excess and orgy, are non-erotic rites based on analogies and sympathetic magic.

Such configurations of culture, built around certain traits and working toward the obliteration of others are of first-rate importance in the understanding of culture. Traits objectively similar and genetically allied may be utilized in different configurations without change in detail. The relevant facts are the emotional background against which the act takes place. Imagine the Pueblo snake dance in the setting of our own society. Among the western Pueblo repulsion is hardly felt for the snake. They have no physiological shudder at the touch of its body. It is a completely characteristic Apollonian dance expression, whereas with us, with our emotional reaction to the snake, the dance is not possible upon this level. Without changing an item of the outward behavior of the dance, its emotional significance and its functioning in the culture are

reversed. [The] reworking of traits into different configurations of culture can only be adequately described when there is a much greater body of field data presented from this angle, and a much greater agreement has been arrived at among anthropologists as to the relevant patternings. There are however certain configurations of culture that are clear from the existing monographs. In order to establish the validity of the argument I am presenting, I shall limit myself to traits diffused over this continent and discuss the way in which they have been shaped by the dominant drives of certain contrasted cultures.

[APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN APPROACHES TO BEREAVEMENT]

The bereavement situation is characteristically handled in Dionysian and in Apollonian cultures according to their bias. Dionysian behavior for the bereaved has found several different channels of expression in North America. Among the western Plains it was a violent expression of loss and upheaval. Abandon took the form of self-mutilation, especially for women. They gashed their heads, their calves, they cut off fingers. Long lines of women marched through camp after the death of an important person, their legs bare and bleeding. The blood on their heads and legs they let cake and did not remove. When the body was taken out for burial everything in the lodge was thrown on the ground for any that were not relatives to possess themselves of it. The lodge was pulled down and given to another. Soon everything was gone and the widow had nothing left but the blanket about her. At the grave the man's favorite horses were killed and both men and women wailed for the dead. A wife or daughter might remain at the grave, wailing and refusing to eat, for twenty-four hours, until her relatives dragged her away.

Such descriptions are characteristic of Plains mourning. They have in common fundamental social patternings of violent and uninhibited grief. This has nothing to do, of course, with the question of whether this is the emotion called up in all those who participate in the rites; the point at issue is only that in this region institutionalized behavior at this crisis is patterned upon free emotional indulgence.

In such a typical Apollonian culture as the pueblo of Isleta, Plains mourning is unthinkable. Strong feeling is repulsive to it and even at death their whole emphasis is to provide a routine for getting by with the least possible upheaval. A priest who is known as the Black Corn Mother officiates at death. He is called immediately and prepares the corpse, brushing the hair and washing and painting the face with identification marks to indicate the social affiliation of the dead. Only once during all this ritual tending of the dead are the relatives admitted, and when the priest has ready a small smudge from the combings of the dead man's hair. The bereaved breathe this in and will thereby cease to grieve over the dead person. The burial takes place the following day, but the family and relatives are ceremonially taboo for four days and remain in retreat in the house of the dead man, receiving certain ritual washings from the priest. The formalities that more nearly correspond to burial in other regions are performed over the burial of food for the deceased on the fourth day. They go outside the village for this, and after it is over, they break the pot in which water was carried, and the hairbrush that was used to prepare the body for burial, and on their return cut their trail with a deep incision with a flint knife. They listen and hear the dead man come, far off, to the place where they buried food for him. The house is filled

with people awaiting their return, and the Black Corn Mother preaches to them, telling them this is the last time they need be afraid of the dead man's returning. The relatives go to their houses but the housemates observe the ordinary taboos for ceremonial purity for eight days more, after which everything is over. The Black Corn Mother goes to the cacique and returns to him the power he received from him and must always receive from him for every death, but which he has this means of disposing of when he is not compelled to exercise it. It is a characteristic Apollonian touch, and very common in the Southwest.

There is here no institutionalized indulgence in grief, no cutting off of fingers nor gashing of bodies. Instead of insistence upon prolonged mourning by the most closely bereaved, the emphasis is all upon immediate forgetting. The two pictures are of course familiar types of contrasted behavior, and they are here institutionalized for two contrasted cultures.

[TENDER-MINDED APPROACHES TO THE DANGER SITUATION]

In the face of the opposition of these two types of behavior it is at first sight somewhat bizarre to group them together over against another type. It is true nevertheless. the Southwest and the Plains are alike in not capitalizing ideas of pollution and dread. These two are alike in realistically directing their behavior toward the loss situation instead of romantically elaborating the danger situation. In Isleta the clan head officiating at death does not have to be purified and the curse of contact with the dead lifted from him when the rites are over. Similarly on the Plains the giving away of property is a gesture of grief. They do not destroy the tipi and all the man's horses, for they are neither concerned with the contamination of the corpse nor with the malice of the ghost toward those who continue to enjoy them. Neither do they capitalize that common theme for patterning a danger situation, the fear and hatred of the person who has used supernatural power to kill the deceased. These themes however are the very basis of the mourning ceremony in surrounding regions. It is no uncommon thing to find that death rites are wholly preoccupied with contamination. The Navaho are by no means extreme examples.

The Franciscan Fathers tell us that in former times slaves were employed to prepare and carry the corpse and they were killed at the grave. Now members of the family must expose themselves to this defilement. Men and women strip themselves to a breechcloth for the duty and leave the hair flowing so that not even a hair string may be exposed. Only those who because of their close kinship cannot avoid the duty accompany the body. Four are necessary, one to lead the favorite horse which is to be killed on the grave of his master, two to carry the corpse, and one to warn any travelers along the way that they may turn aside and save themselves from defilement. To protect themselves the mourners keep strict silence. Meantime the hogan in which death occurred has been burnt to the ground. All the members of the family fast for four days and during this time a guard warns all comers off the trail between the hogan and the grave lest they incur danger.

The dreaded vengefulness of the ghost and his malice toward those who have been spared by death is not as popular in North America in the elaboration of the horror situation as it is in South America. One of the clearest examples on this continent is from the Fox. The Central Algonkin have a strong belief in cruel antagonists which the dead must overcome along their route, and the custom of burying weapons with the body was in order that they might be armed against them. It

was a frequent request of the dying that they might be provided in the grave with a war hatchet to protect themselves against Cracker of Skulls; but this the living would not do because the dead were feared and it was desirable that they be weaponless. Therefore they are helpless before Cracker of Skulls who scoops from each a fingerful of brain.

The Mohave on the other hand made much of the fear and blame of the medicine-man who had supernaturally caused the death. A seer was employed to visit the land of the dead after a death. If the deceased was not there, it was known that the doctor who attended him was guilty of malpractice. "It is the nature of these doctors to kill people in this way just as it is the nature of hawks to kill little birds for a living," according to a Mohave in the 80's. A rich man remained rich in the other world and all those a medicine-man killed were under his chieftainship. He desired a large rich band. "I've killed only two. When I die I want to rule a bigger band than that." When blame was attached to any medicine-man, anyone might take it upon himself to kill him. The medicine-man openly avowed his complicity. He might hand a stick to a man and say, "I killed your father." Or he might come and tell a sick person, "Don't you know that it is I that am killing you? Must I grasp you and despatch you with my hands before you will try to kill me?" The point is that this is supernatural killing. There has never been any intimation that it was the custom for a medicine-man to use poison or knife. It is a blame- and terror-situation open and declared, a situation more familiar in Africa than in North America.

It is well to contrast this Mohave attitude with Pueblo witchcraft theories. In Zuñi the bereavement situation is not lost in a situation of sorcery and vengeance; bereavement is handled as bereavement. In spite of the great amount of anxiety about witches which is always present among the Pueblo, at a death little attention is paid to the possibility of their complicity. Only in an epidemic when death becomes a public menace is the witch theory acted upon. And it is a community anxiety neurosis, not a Dionysian situation depending like the Mohave on the exercise of the shaman's will to supernatural power, and the ambivalent attitude of the group toward this power. I doubt whether anyone in Zuñi has any witch techniques which he actually practices. It is never the medicine-man who is also the death bringer and embodies the characteristic Dionysian double aspects of power. Death is not dramatized as a duel between a shaman and his victim.

[TENDER- AND TOUGH- MINDED CULTURES]

There are other themes upon which danger situations can be and have been built up around death in different cultures. The point is that the Dionysian indulgence in emotion at death can be institutionalized around realistic grief at the loss of a member of the community, or around various constructs such as contamination, guilt, and the vengefulness of the dead. The contrast between cultures which indulge in danger constructs of this sort in every situation in life and those that do not is as striking as that between the Apollonian-Dionysian types.

Where human contacts, the crises of life, and a wide range of acts are regarded realistically in any culture, and especially without the metamorphosis that passes over them in consequence of the fear- and contamination- constructs, and this is institutionalized in culture, I shall call them realists. Cultures of the opposite type I shall call simply non-realists. It is admittedly poor terminology. James's antithesis of the tough and tender-minded approaches also the distinction I

wish to make, but his substitute for these of healthy-mindedness and the sick soul brings in an implication I wish to avoid.

Those cultures that institutionalize death as loss, adolescence as an individual's growing up, mating as sex choice, killing as success in a fight, and so on, contrast strongly with those who live in an Aladdin's cave where all the vegetation is something else. It is certainly one of the most striking facts of anthropology that primary life situations are so seldom read off culturally in this direct and realistic fashion.

Indeed it is the realistic institutions that seem to be the less thoroughly carried through. Human culture as a whole throughout its history has been based on certain non-realistic notions, of which animism and incest are the ones which will occur to every anthropologist. These notions have conditioned the human race from the beginning, and it is impossible to go back to their beginnings or discuss the attitudes that gave them birth. We must accept them as we have to accept the fact that we have five fingers. Even the realistic Plains have not discarded them, though they use them more realistically than other cultures.

In the region we are discussing, the Dionysian cultures are cross-sectioned by this realist-nonrealist antithesis, the Plains institutionalizing excess and abandon without elaborating danger-situations, and the non-Pueblo Southwest, the Shoshoneans, and the Northwest Coast carrying these danger-situations to extremes. The realist cultures likewise are Dionysian among the Plains and Apollonian among the Pueblo. The two categories operate at a different level and cross-section each other. It is difficult, however, to imagine an Apollonian culture maintaining itself on the basis of fundamental danger-constructs, and certainly this type does not occur in the region we are considering.

[HOMICIDES IN CHEYENNE, PIMA, AND ZUÑI]

The situation of the man who has killed another throws into relief the attitudes we have been discussing. The Cheyenne scalp dance is characteristic of Plains configuration. Tremendous Dionysian exaltation is achieved, but not by way of horror or contamination ideas connected with the corpse; it is an uninhibited triumph, a gloating over the enemy who has been put out of the way. There is no intimation of a curse lying upon the scalper which it is the function of the dance to remove.

Before setting out upon a warpath everything is solemn and prayerful, even sorrowful, in order to gain pity from the supernaturals. On the return with the scalps, however, all is changed. The party falls upon the home camp by surprise at daybreak, the favorite hour for Indian attack, their faces blackened in triumph

shooting off their guns and waving the poles on which were the scalps that had been taken. The people were excited and welcomed them with shouts and yells. All was joy. The women sang songs of victory... In the front rank were those who had... counted coups... Some threw their arms around the successful warriors. Old men and women sang songs in which the names were mentioned. The relatives of those who rode in the first rank... testified to their joy by making gifts to friends or to poor people. The whole crowd might go to where some brave man lived or to where his father lived, and there dance in his honor. They were likely to prepare to dance all night, and perhaps to keep up this dancing for two days and two nights.

There was no ceremonial recognition of the priest or of his services on their return. The scalp was an emblem of victory and something to rejoice over. If members of the war party had been killed the scalps were thrown away and there was no scalp dance. But if the warrior who had been killed had counted coup before he died there was no occasion for grief, so great was the honor, and the victory celebration over the scalp went forward.

Everyone joined in the scalp dance. In keeping with its social character it was in charge of berdaches who were here matchmakers and “good company” and who took the place of the female relative who usually has so conspicuous a role. They called out the dances and carried the scalps. Old men and women came out as clowns, and as if anything were wanting to emphasize the absence among the Cheyenne of dread and danger in relation to the slain enemy, Grinnell says that some of these were dressed to represent the very warriors whose scalps were the center of the ceremony.

This Plains behavior was unthinkable over a great part of the continent. In the southern belt of the United States, from the Natchez to the Mohave -- excluding the Pueblo for the moment -- the opposite attitude is at its height. The point of the scalp dance was the great dangerous supernatural potency of the scalp and the curse that must be removed from the slayer. It belonged to their whole tender-minded awe before dark and uncanny forces.

Years ago in the government warfare against the Apache the inexorable purification ceremonies of the Pima almost canceled their usefulness to the United States troops as allies. Their loyalty and bravery were undoubted, but upon the killing of an enemy each slayer must retire for twenty days of ceremonial purification. He selected a ceremonial father who cared for him and performed the rites. This father had himself taken life and been through the purification ceremonies. He sequestered the slayer in the bush in a small pit where he remained fasting for sixteen days, each four days with a plunge into the river, no matter what the weather, and a slight change in the rules of fasting. His wife must observe similar taboo in her own house. On the sixteenth day the dance occurs. The slayer sits again in a small pit in the middle of the dance circle, a hole that allows him only the most cramped position, and the “braves,” men who have qualified as warriors, dance for him. The whole ceremony is one for drawing the teeth of a dangerous power and freeing the perpetrator from curse, to the end that the power may be rendered beneficent.

There is no culture trait in Zuñi that presents so many unmodified likenesses to institutions outside the Pueblo as the scalp dance. From the point of view of Pueblo cultural attitudes it presents strikingly atypical elements which are well-known for the central region of North America and at home there. One such is the biting of the scalp, reported from Laguna and Zuñi. This act is performed in the face of a strong feeling of contamination from the scalp. In Zuñi they say that the woman upon whom this act devolves is free of the curse because she rises to the point of “acting like an animal.” It is an almost unique recognition in this culture of the state of ecstasy, and is an instance of a diffused culture trait, the scalp dance, which has been accepted among the Pueblo without the reconstruction that would have been necessary to bring it into line with their dominant attitudes.

The Zuñi scalp dance has been modified at their hands. In the first place, they have rephrased the release from the curse so that it is no longer, as with the Pima, a dramatization of ambivalent attitudes toward the sacred -- on the one hand, the polluting, on the other, the powerful -- but belongs with any retreat undertaken to gain membership in a society. The scalp dance in Zuñi is an initiation into the policing society of the bow priesthood. It is taken up into their pattern of providing formal fraternal organizations for handling every situation. The bow priesthood is an elaborate organization with special responsibilities, functioning for life. The curse of the slayer and the release from it are dwarfed by the pattern of initiation into a new set of social functions.

Similarly the cleaning of the scalp, which in more Dionysian cultures is done with the tongue, lapping the fresh drops of blood, in Zuñi is an adoption rite, a baptism in clear water which is performed by the father's sisters to give status in the clan group. It must be performed not only at adoption but at marriage, and, as we have seen, in the scalp ceremony. The idea underlying the act in Zuñi is that of adoption of a new, beneficent influence into tribal status--surely a clear example of the way in which Pueblo configurations draw the teeth of more violent behaviors.

Their attitude is especially clear in the scalp dance prayers:

For indeed the enemy
Even though on rubbish
He lived and grew to maturity
By virtue of the corn priests' rain prayers (He has become valuable.)
Indeed the enemy
Though in his life
He was a person given to falsehood
He has become one to foretell How the world will be,
How the days will be ...
Even though he was without value, Yet he was a water being,
He was a seed being,
Desiring the enemy's waters,
Desiring his seeds,
Desiring his wealth,
Eagerly you shall await his days (the scalp dance).
When with your clear water
You have bathed the enemy (the scalp),
When in the corn priests' water-filled court
He has been set up,
All the corn priest's children
With the song sequences of the fathers
Will be dancing for him.
And whenever all his days are past,
Then a good day,
A beautiful day,
A day filled with great shouting,
With great laughter,
A good day,
With us, your children,
You will pass

It is not dread and horror that find expression in such lines as these. Instead the attention is realistically turned upon his unremarkable mortal existence, and the contrast is made with his present beneficence as a means toward rain and crops.

[PERSONAL AGGRANDIZEMENT ON THE NORTHWEST COAST]

Both the bereavement situation and the murder situation show therefore strong contrasts in the three North American cultural configurations we have considered. I shall arbitrarily select one other contrasting configuration that is perhaps nowhere in the world more strikingly illustrated than in North America. The pursuit of personal aggrandizement on the Northwest Coast is carried out in such a way that it approaches an institutionalization of the megalomaniac personality type. The censorship which is insisted upon in civilizations like our own is absent in such self-glorifications as a Kwakiutl public address, and when censorship functions, as among the tribes of the gulf of Georgia, their self-abasements are patently not expressions of humility but equivalents of the familiar self-glorification of the Kwakiutl. Any of their songs illustrate the usual tenor:

I am the great chief who makes people ashamed.
I am the great chief who makes people ashamed.
Our chief brings shame to the faces.
Our chief brings jealousy to the faces.
Our chief makes people cover their faces by what he is continually doing in this world
Giving again and again oil feasts to all the tribes
.....
I began at the upper end of the tribes. Serves them right! Serves them right!
I came downstream setting fire to the tribes with my fire-bringer.
Serves them right! Serves them right!
My name, just my name, killed them, I, the great Mover of the world. Serves
them right! Serves them right!

The energy of the culture is frankly given to competition in a game of raising one's personal status by the humiliation of one's fellows. In a lesser degree this pursuit of personal prestige is characteristic of the Plains. But the picture is sharply contrasted. The Plains do not institutionalize the inferiority complex and its compensations. They do not preoccupy themselves with the discovery of insults in every situation. They are anything but paranoid. But it is in terms of these particular psychological sets that the pursuit of personal aggrandizement is carried out in the culture of the North Pacific coast. Probably the inferiority complex has never been so blatantly institutionalized. The greatest range of acts are regarded as insults, not only personal derogatory acts, but all untoward events like a cut from an axe or the overturning of a canoe. All such events threaten the ego security of the members of this paranoid-like civilization, and according to their pattern may be wiped out by the distribution of property. If they cannot be, the response is perfectly in character: the bubble of self-esteem is pricked and the man retires to his pallet for weeks at a time, or, it maybe, takes his life. This extreme of negative self feeling is far removed from the exhibitions of shame due to indecent exposures or breaking of taboo in other regions. It is plain sulking, the behavior of a person whose self-esteem is all he has and who has been wounded in his pride.

All the circumstances of life are regarded on the Northwest Coast, not as occasions for violent grief or jubilation, but primarily as furthering this insult contest. They are occasions for the required fight for prestige. Sex, the life cycle, death, warfare, are all almost equivalent raw material for cultural patterning to this end. A girl's adolescence is an event for which her father gathers property for ten years in order to demonstrate his greatness by a great distribution of wealth; it is not as a fact in the girl's sex life that it figures in their culture, but as a rung of her father's ladder toward higher social standing, therefore also of her own. For since in this region all property that is distributed must be paid back with usury (else the recipient will entirely lose face), to make oneself poor is the prime act in acquiring wealth. Even a quarrel with one's wife is something only a great man may indulge in, for it entails the distribution of all his property, even to the rafters of his house. But if the chief has enough wealth for this distribution of property, he welcomes the occasion as he does his daughter's puberty as a rung in the ladder of advancement.

This comes out clearly in the reinterpretation of the bereavement situation in this region. Even the cutting of the hair in mourning has become not an act of grief on the part of near relatives, but the service of the opposite phratry signifying their tribute to the greatness of the deceased, and the fact that the relatives of the dead are able to recompense them. Similarly it also is another step upward in the pursuit of prestige and the acquisition of wealth. All the services for the dead are carried out in like manner. The emphasis of the society at death fell upon the distribution of property by the bereaved phratry to the officiating opposite phratry. Without reference to its character as a loss- or danger-situation, it was used just as the occasion of the girl's first menstruation or a domestic quarrel to demonstrate the solvency of the family group and to put down rival claimants to like wealth. Among the Haidas the great funeral potlatch, a year after the death, where this property was distributed, was organized around the transfer of winter-dance society membership to members of the host's phratry from members of the guests' phratry, in return for the property that was being distributed to them-an activity of course that has reference to ideas of ownership and prestige and winter ceremonial among the Haida but not to the loss involved in death nor yet to the danger associated with the corpse or the ghost. As the Kwakiutl say "they fight with property" -- i.e., to achieve and maintain status based on wealth and inherited prerogatives; therefore "they fight," also, with a funeral.

This reinterpretation of the bereavement situation in terms of the "fight with property" is only a part of the Northwest Coast pattern of behavior. It is assimilated as well to the insult preoccupation. The death of a relative, not only in a war but by sickness or accident, was an affront to be wiped out by the death of a person of another tribe. One was shamed until the score had been settled. The bereaved was dangerous in the way any man was who had been grievously shamed. When the chief Neqapenkem's sister and her daughter did not come back from Victoria either, people said, because their boat capsized or they drank bad whiskey, he called together the warriors. "Now I ask you tribes, who shall wail? Shall I do it or shall another?" The foremost responded, "Not you, Chief, let some other of the tribes." They set up the war pole, and the others came forward saying, "We came here to ask you to go to war that someone else may wail on account of our deceased sister." So they started out with full war rites to "pull under" the Sanetch for the chief's dead relatives. They found seven men and two children asleep and killed all except one girl whom they took captive.

Again, the chief Qaselas' son died, and he and his brother and uncle set out to wipe out the stain. They were entertained by Nengemalis at their first stop. After they had eaten, "Now I will tell you the news, Chief," Qaselas said. "My prince died today and you will go with him." So they killed their host and his wife. "Then Qaselas and his crew felt good when they arrived at Sebaa in the evening. ...It is not called war, but 'to die with those that are dead.'"

This is pure head hunting, a paranoid reading of bereavement that stands almost alone in North America. Here death is institutionalized in such practices as this as the major instance of the countless untoward events of life which confounds a man's pride and are treated as insults.

Both the preoccupation with prestige and the preoccupation with insults underlie the behavior centered around the killing of an enemy. The victory dance has become permanent, graded societies institutionalizing the most fiercely guarded prerogatives of these tribes; they constitute one of the most elaborate prestige organizations we know anything about. The original trait upon which they were built is preserved among the tribes to the south. It was a victory dance with the head of the enemy held in the teeth. As Professor Boas has shown, this became, as it was worked up into the Northwest Coast configuration, the cannibal dance and the pattern of the secret societies. The dancers of the Kwakwiltl secret societies are still considered "warriors," and the societies, which are normally in operation only during the winter season, always function on a war party no matter what the season. Now these secret societies are the great validations of prestige and of wealth through the distribution of property, and the final Northwest Coast form of the germinal idea of the victory dance is therefore that of enormously elaborate, rigidly prescribed secret societies, membership in which establishes and validates social status.

The dominant drive being the competition for prerogatives, another turn is given to the situation of the person who has killed another. One can get prerogatives, according to their idea, not only through the death of relatives, but through that of a victim, so that if a person has been killed at my hands I may claim his prerogatives. The slayer's situation is therefore not one of circumventing a dread curse or of celebrating a triumph of personal prowess; it is one of distributing large amounts of wealth to validate the privileges he has taken by violence at the moment when, incidentally so far as institutional behavior goes, he took also the life of the owner. That is, the taking of life is dwarfed behind the immense edifice of behavior proper to the Northwest Coast configuration.

As in the bereavement situation, the pattern has led to the institutionalization of head hunting with all its rigid rules of procedure. Meled had killed the chief of the local group Gexsem.

If he (Meled) had paid a copper or if he had given his daughter to marry the elder brother of the one he had shot, then his local group would have been disgraced, because he paid in order not to be killed in return. Only those pay who are weak minded.

He did not pay, and he was killed in revenge. But the man who killed him on sight was not a member of the local group of the chief whose death he was avenging. That chief's mother paid the avenger a slave but it was a disgrace to her local group and in spite of Meled's death it was not counted that the stain upon the name of the dead chief's local group had been wiped out. If another man of the local group Gexsem had killed Meled, then there would have been no disgrace to their group and all the men would have stopped talking about it.

Death on the North Pacific Coast, therefore, was primarily an insult situation and an occasion for the validation of prerogatives. It is taken up into the characteristic configuration of this region and made to serve the drives that were dominant in their culture.

[CONCLUSIONS]

There are of course aspects of culture which are independent of many of the aims and virtues a society may make for itself. I do not mean to imply that the fortunes of the sinew-backed bow will depend upon whether the culture is Dionysian or Apollonian. But the range of applicability of the point I am making is nevertheless greater than is generally supposed. Radin has argued very cogently from Winnebago material for the great importance of individuality and individual initiative "among primitives." Now the Plains and the Winnebago are among our great primitive examples, according to all observers, of high cultural evaluation of the individual. [But] Radin's point of very great personal initiative is a prime fact among the Winnebago and the western Plains, not coextensive with primitive culture. It is an attitude to be studied independently in each area.

The same is also true of Malinowski's picture of the way in which the Trobrianders have made reciprocity a basic behavior trait of their culture. He describes the reciprocal obligations of sea and land peoples, of chief and subjects, of the two sides of the house, of husband and wife and other selected reciprocating relatives, and he deduces from this that what really holds "society" [together] is reciprocity. But this organization of society is of a definite type, highly uncharacteristic, say, of Siberia, and fundamental in any description of Melanesia. In what way it ties up with fundamental attitudes in that region is still to be defined.

Cultural configurations stand to the understanding of group behavior in the relation that personality types stand to the understanding of individual behavior. In the psychological field it is recognized that the organization of the total personality is crucial in the understanding or even in the mere description of individual behavior. If this is true in individual psychology where individual differentiation must be limited always by the cultural forms and by the short span of a human lifetime, it is even more imperative in social psychology where the limitations of time and of conformity are transcended. The degree of integration that may be attained is of course incomparably greater than can ever be found in individual psychology. Cultures from this point of view are individual psychology thrown large upon the screen, given gigantic proportions and a long time span.

This reading of cultural from individual psychology is not open to the objections that always have to be pressed against such versions as Frazer's or Lévy-Bruhl's. The difficulty with the reading of husband's prerogatives from jealousy, and secret societies from the exclusiveness of age- and sex-groups, is that it ignores the crucial point, which is not the occurrence of the trait but the social choice that elected its institutionalization in that culture. The formula is always helpless before the opposite situation. In the reading of cultural configurations as I have presented it in this discussion, it is this selective choice of the society which is the crux of the process.

It is probable that there is potentially about the same range of individual temperaments and gifts, but from the point of view of the individual each culture has already chosen certain of these

traits to make its own and certain to ignore. The central fact is that the history of each trait is understandable exactly in terms of its having passed through this needle's eye of social acceptance. This involves another aspect of the problem of cultural configurations, that which concerns the adjustment of the individual to his society. The group has already made its cultural choice of those human endowments and peculiarities it will put to use. Out of small leanings in one direction or another it has bent itself so far toward some point of the compass that no manipulation can change its direction. Most of the persons born into the culture will take its bent and very likely incline it further. Those are most fortunate whose native dispositions are in accord with the culture they happen to be born into -- the Apollonians who are born among the Pueblo, the Dionysians who are born among the American Indians outside the Pueblo. In the particular situation we have been discussing, the person to whom violent indulgence in grief is congenial is well provided for culturally among the Cheyenne; the one who wishes to get the painful situation over with with a minimum of expression, in Isleta.

Contrariwise, the misfit is the person whose disposition is not capitalized by his culture. The Dionysian who is born among the Pueblo must re-educate himself or go for nothing in the culture. The Apollonian, likewise, in California is shut out of social activity in so far as he cannot learn to take to himself the institutionalized behavior of the locality. It is clear that there is not possible any generalized description of "the" deviant -- he is the representative of that arc of human capacities that is not capitalized in his culture. In proportion as his civilization has committed itself to a direction alien to him, he will be the sufferer. The intelligent understanding of the relation of the individual to his society, therefore, involves understanding the types of human motivations and capacities capitalized in society and the congruity or incongruity of these with those that are native to the individual under discussion or are the result of early familial conditioning. It can be assumed that by far the majority of any population will be thoroughly assimilated to the standards of their culture. But the person who is at a loss in his society, the unavailable person, is not some one type to be specified on the basis of a universally valid abnormal psychology, but represents the type not capitalized in the society to which he was born.

All this has a most important bearing on the formation and functioning of culture traits. We are too much in the habit of studying religion or property complexes as if the fundamental fact about them were a dependable human response: like awe or the "acquisitive instinct," from which they stemmed. There have been human institutions that do show this direct correspondence to simple human emotions -- death practices that express grief, mating customs that express sex preference, agricultural practices that begin and end with the provisioning of the tribe. But even to list them makes clear how difficult it is to find such examples. As a matter of fact, economic life usually sets itself other ends than the satisfaction of the food quest, marriage expresses other things than sex preference, and mourning notoriously does not stress grief. The more intimately we know the inner workings of different cultures the more we see that the almost infinite variability in any cultural trait is not a mere ringing of the changes upon some simple underlying human response. Another and greater force has been at work that has used the recurring situations of mating, death, and provisioning almost as raw material and elaborated them to express its own intent. This force that bends occasions to its purposes and fashions them to its own idiom we can call within that society its dominant drive. Some societies have brought

all this raw material into conspicuous harmony with this dominant drive, the societies which Sapir would allow the appellation of “genuine culture.” Many have not. Sapir holds that an honest self-consistency that rules out hypocritical pretensions is the mark of a genuine culture. It seems to me that cultures may be built solidly and harmoniously upon fantasies, fear-constructs, or inferiority complexes and indulge to the limit in hypocrisy and pretensions. The person who has an ineradicable drive to face the facts and avoid hypocrisy may be the outlaw of a culture that is nevertheless on its own basis symmetrical and harmonious. Because a configuration is well-defined it is not therefore honest.

It is, however, the reality of such configurations that is in question. I do not see that the development of these configurations in different societies is more mystic or difficult to understand than, for example, the development of an art style. In both if we have the available material we can see the gradual integration of elements, and growing dominance of some few stylistic drives. In both, if we had the material, we could trace the influence of gifted individuals who have bent the culture in the direction of their own capacities. But the configuration of the culture nevertheless always transcends the individual elements that have gone to its making. The cultural configuration builds itself up over generations, discarding, as no individual may, the traits that are uncongenial to it. It takes to itself ritual and artistic and activational modes of expression that solidify its attitude and make it explicit. Many cultures have never achieved this thoroughgoing harmony. Like our own civilization they may have received too many contradictory influences from different outside sources and been unable to reduce them to a common denominator. But the fact that certain people have not done so, no more makes it unnecessary to study culture from this angle than the fact that some languages shift back and forth between different fundamental grammatical devices in forming the plural or in designating tense, makes it unnecessary to study grammatical forms.

These dominant drives are as characteristic for individual areas as are house forms or the regulations of inheritance. We are too handicapped yet by lack of relevant descriptions of culture to know whether these drive distributions are often coextensive with distribution of material culture, or whether in some regions there are many such to one culture area defined from more objective traits. Descriptions of cultures from this point of view must include much that older fieldwork ignored, and without the relevant fieldwork all our propositions are pure romancing.