

values, activities and products absorbs and directs the energies of human beings. It is the basis of the transformation of nature and the environment for which archaeology provides the earliest evidence and which is historically, accelerating continuously. These are collective achievements which make the accentuation of individual difference possible. This is one of the more important paradoxes that governments often find confusing. Individualization, just as self-realization and political project, depends on quite definite arrangements for sharing a collective product.

Culture depends on individuals for continuous dismantling, reassembling and modification, but even more on social relations and the larger configuration of those relations. These are called societies. Society then, has a quite definite place within the order of our world—set between species and culture and an environment, parts of which have been created by us. It is our relation with each other, providing both base and limits to what we can do as individuals.

In respect of society, culture is a double-edged acquisition. Based on social relations, it can also transform them. It provides guides and criteria which people take account of, in their daily behaviour. These are norms which are always ambivalent, that is, they become facts when followed, but turn into ideals when failed to measure up to. The regulation of an individual's behaviour is the core feature of human condition.

Now we are on the threshold of a transformation of the species, a possible new evolutionary stage when the potential exists not just to destroy people but to change genetic inheritance. The new genetics is important because it opens the possibility for science to change the biological basis of human life even as it fails to show that society is determined by genes. The 50–100,000 genes in the human genotype provide the preconditions for culture, not its direction. This is provided by an alliance between scientific values and capitalistic interests, taking us into uncharted territory.

Only when a set of research practices and exchange of ideas and results among members of an organized occupation begin to take place, can we talk of the arrival of sociology as a discipline. So the invention of the word 'sociology' in 1839 by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was only a preliminary first step, though his idea that there was a law of three stages governing the development of society became widely known.

Herbert Spencer, a railway engineer from Derby, England, was even more successful as a publicist. His visit to the US in 1882, gelled with the American fervour for social improvement, popular education and philanthropy and the 'sociological movement' was rooted in colleges and universities. William Graham Sumner, who had given the first lecture course on the subject in Yale University in 1876, addressed a farewell banquet to Spencer saying, 'we look upon his work in sociology as a grand step in the history of science'.

## NOTES

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## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the theories about the origin of human society
- Derive the importance of society for individuals
- Discuss the life of individuals in terms of heredity and environment

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## 2.2 THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SOCIETY

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The origin or emergence of society may be viewed as one of the great steps in evolution. However, this step was taken only by a few species. Like other steps, it represents a new synthesis of old materials, possessing unique qualities that are not found in old materials that are considered separately. It is thus a true example of what is known as an emergent evolution. To realize that society is a true emergent, one needs to trace its independent origin in countless animal types. One needs merely grasp the difference between it and the organisms which it is composed of. Several decades ago, it was normal to compare society with an organism. The idea was to demonstrate that a social system after all, is a system. The analogy was helpful but never perfect. The cells of an organism are rigidly fixed in their mutual relations, completely subordinated to the organism and too specialized to be called members of the society. They are not spatially detached and independently mobile. So the organism is not, strictly speaking, a society of cells. The organism possesses a consciousness, which no society possesses.

Like an organism, a society is a system of relations, but relations between organisms themselves rather than between cells. Like the organism, a society has a determined structure and the parts of this structure, when in operation contribute to the existence of the whole. This gives it continuity, which is apart from that of the constituent individuals. It is this possession of continuity and structure of its own that makes it impossible to reduce the study of society, merely to a study of its individual members. It is like a house, which, though composed of bricks, nails, mortar and pieces of lumber, cannot be understood purely in terms of these materials, as it has a form and functions as a complete house.

### 2.2.1 Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory is unique, giving importance to individuals as architects of society. This theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau. According to this theory, all men were born free and equal and individuals made a mutual agreement and created a society.

Thomas Hobbes, in his book, *The Leviathan*, discusses the state of nature. He gives a very gloomy picture of the state of nature. According to him, society is a means of protection for men, against the consequence of their own untrammelled nature. In the state of nature, man was in perpetual conflict with his neighbours on account of his essentially selfish nature. Man's actions were motivated by selfish interests. According to Hobbes, the state of nature was solitary poor, nasty, brutish and short. There was liberty without license. The stronger enjoyed a privileged position. As a result, man's life become miserable and totally insecure. In order to come out of these evil consequences and to ensure peaceful coexistence, a civil society was needed. So men came out of the state of nature to set up a civil society. By such contract, man gave up their liberty to a single individual who would give them security. Thus, the individual became the 'great monster' i.e., repository of all power and he was known as *the leviathan*. Thus man, with his fellow men, organized society in order to be at love and peace with all.

John Locke, in his book, *Two Treaties on Civil Government*, gave an optimistic view about the state of nature. He tried to justify that the state of nature was not so perverted and it was a state of peace, goodwill, mutual existence and preservation. The only disadvantage of the state of nature was that there was no recognized system of law. To overcome this deficiency and to ensure the exercise of his liberty, man entered into a contract by which certain powers were conformed upon a community.

J.J. Rousseau, in his book, *Contract Social*, gave a classical opinion about the Social Contract Theory. He started with Hobbes and ended with Locke. He held that all men, in the state of nature, were equally self sufficient and contended. Man was a noble savage and was untouched by all negative vices of life. Man lived a life of idyllic happiness and primitive simplicity. But, with the growth of population, quarrels arise which necessitate the establishment of a civil society. Consequently, men entered into a contract and thus society was originated.

The criticisms of Social Contract Theory are as follows:

- MacIver argues that the theory is not historical because history has not supported the existence of the state of nature anywhere.
- This theory is considered illogical. The theory seems to assume that man existed before society, but such an assumption is erroneous.
- This theory suppresses the sociable character of individuals
- Society emerged gradually, thus, this theory does not offer a valid explanation of the origin of society.

### 2.2.2 Organismic Theory

This is another vital theory about the origin of human society. Plato, Aristotle, Herbert Spencer and Novicow were the exponents of this theory. However, Spencer occupies a unique place. This theory states that society is never man-made. It is a natural creation and has started through the process of evolution.

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Spencer conceives society as a biological system, a greater organism alike in its structure and functions, exhibiting the same kind of unity as the individual organism and subject to similar laws of development, maturation and decline. Thus the basic assumption is society is like a biological organism and the only difference is in the size. Spencer tries to draw analogy between the organism and the society on the basis of the following points:

- **Evolution**

Evolution or development is the basic characteristic of a biological organism. Society, like an organism, grows or develops gradually. As an organism passes through the laws of development, maturation and decline, so does society.

- **Systems**

The biological organism consists of different systems like the circulatory, nervous, respiratory, etc., which correspond to similar systems in society. For instance circulatory system corresponds to the system of transport and communication in the society, the nervous system corresponds to the government of the state, etc.

- **Structural differentiation and function integration**

In both, society and biological organisms, there exists close integration or interdependence of parts. The institutions are parts of the society. Just as different parts of an organism are mutually dependent so are the individuals mutually dependent upon each other. If any part of the structure is affected, the entire system is paralyzed.

- **Cellular formation of both society and individual**

The individual or organism is made up of cells, similarly the society is also composed of cells and people are the cells of society.

Thus, Spencer concluded that society is like an organism. Spencer observed the following differences between the organism and the society:

- In organic growth, nature plays a dominant role and the organism grows naturally, while social growth may be checked.
- An organism is composed of many cells, whereas a society is composed of a collection of individuals.
- Society is abstract whereas organism is concrete.
- The units of society are not fixed, like those of an individual organism.

### **Criticism**

MacIver argues that the theory does not explain the relationship between society and individual in social life. He also argues that this theory is the unreal death of an individual organism, which does not correspond in a proper sense to the death of society.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is sociology?
2. What does culture include?
3. What is the core feature of human condition?
4. What does one need to do to realize that society is a true emergent?
5. Who propounded the Social Contract Theory?
6. In which book does Thomas Hobbes discuss the state of nature?

**NOTES****2.3 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUALS**

There is a lack of certain amount of factual evidences in the interrelationship between individual and social orders. The following cases have been discussed below to understand the importance of society for individuals.

**Case I**

The famous case of Kaspar Hauser is peculiarly significant because this ill-starred youth was in all probability bereft of human contacts through political machinations. Therefore his condition could not be attributed to a defect of innate mentality. When Hauser, at the age of seventeen, wandered into the city of Nuremberg in 1828, he could hardly walk, had the mind of an infant and could mutter only a meaningless phrase or two. Sociologically, it is noteworthy that Kaspar mistook inanimate objects for living beings. And when he was killed five years later, his post-mortem revealed that the development of his brain was subnormal. The denial of society to Kaspar Hauser was the denial of human nature itself.<sup>1</sup>

**Case II**

One of the most interesting of the feral cases involved two Indian children in 1920. These children, who were eight and two years old respectively, were discovered in a wolf's den. The younger child died within few months of the discovery but the elder, Kamala, as she became named, survived until 1929. Her history has been carefully recorded in human society. Kamala brought with her almost none of the traits that we associate with human behavior. She would walk on all four of her limbs and could not speak any language other than wolf-like growls. Like any other undomesticated animal, she too was shy of humans. However, as a result of the most careful and apparently sympathetic training, she was taught rudimentary social habits. Before her death, she had slowly learned some amount of simple speech, human eating and dressing habits, etc. This wolf child utterly lacked human habits when she was first found, but her individuality emerged when she interacted with human society.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maclver and Page, *Society* pp. 44-45

<sup>2</sup> Maclver and Page, *Society* pp. 44-45

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**Case III**

Recently, sociologists and psychologists have studied the case of Anna and her illegitimate American child, who were isolated since the child was six months old, until her discovery five years later, in 1938. During her confinement, Anna was fed little else than milk, was not given any general training and had no contact with other human beings. This extreme and cruel social isolation provided scientists with a laboratory case and left the child with few attributes of a normal, five-year-old child. When Anna was discovered she could not walk or speak, she was completely apathetic and indifferent to people around her. As in the case of Kamala, Anna responded to the careful treatment provided to her after she was released. However, because of her young age and limited contacts while she was a prisoner, she interacted with humans much more rapidly before she died in 1942. Anna's case illustrates once again that human nature develops in man only when he is a social being, only when he is a part of the society and shares a common life.<sup>3</sup>

**2.3.1 Individual Dependence on Social Heritage**

Each individual is the offspring of social relationships, itself determined by pre-established mores. Further, man or woman are essentially terms in relationships. The individual is neither a beginning nor an end, but a link in the succession of life. This is a sociological as well as a biological truth. But yet, it does not express the depth of our dependence as individuals on society, for society is more than a necessary environment and more than just the soil in which we are nurtured. Our relation to social heritage is more intimate than that of a seed to the earth in which it grows. We are born in a society, the processes of which determine our heredity and part of which becomes our internal mental equipment in time and not merely an external possession. Social heritage, continuously changes because of our social experiences. It evokes and directs our personality. Society both liberates and limits our potentialities as individuals, not only by affording definite opportunities and stimulations, not only by placing definite and interferences restraints on us, but also subtly and imperceptibly, by molding our attitudes, beliefs, morals and ideals.

Comprehension of this fundamental and dynamic interdependence of individual and social heritage permits us to appreciate the truth of Aristotle's famous phrase, that man is a social animal. However, this does not mean that man is a sociable animal. Man is greater than that, in this respect. This also does not mean that man is altruistic in his impulse toward society, nor does it mean that he is social by virtue of some original constitution of human nature. This means that without society, without the support of social heritage, the individual personality does not and cannot come into existence.

<sup>3</sup> Maclver and Page, *Society* p. 45

### 2.3.2 Individual and Society

The system approach of Talcott Parsons claims that the governance of individual relationships at micro level is taken care of by the macro level and that the functional contribution of an individual to the society is so indispensable, that the society cannot live without the individual and vice versa. The entire interactive approach in sociology and even social psychology revolves around this concept of relationships between individuals and society. This relationship paves the way for framing the most acceptable definition of society which is given by MacIver and Page, 'Society is a system of usages and procedures of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions of controls of human behavior and of liberties'.

We will discuss the relationship of individual and society through the following points:

- (i) **The nature of social unity:** The unique quality of social unity is revealed when it is contrasted with other types of unities. Various forms of unities may be distinguished by viewing the nature of the functional relations of the units or parts of the whole. A type of unity is the organism, to which the society itself is assigned, mistakenly. In this type, one can interpret the cells, organs and various systems that these compose, for instance, circulatory, glandular, nervous, etc. These derive their significance solely from their utility to the life of the organism, as a whole. Mechanism is another type of unity, the specific form of which is a man-made machine. The machine is not autonomous or self sustaining or self reproducing, like the organism. However, its various parts like wheels, gears, transmission belts, etc., can be understood in terms of their contribution to the functioning of the whole machine. Like organic unity, mechanical unity has been attributed to the society or parts of it. But the social system must be distinguished from these types. For a social system, social relationships grow and change in accordance with the changing attitudes and interests of its members, of some or all of the units or individuals who compose it. Here, the system derives its significance from its support of and contribution to the final purpose of individuals themselves. Without this purpose, social unity cannot be envisaged. This principle makes the harmonization of society and individuality possible.
- (ii) **Understanding individuality:** When we extend the meaning of individuality to man, we find it essential to use the term in its sociological reference. Here, one can argue that a social being has more individuality in the following circumstances:
  - a. His conduct is not imitative nor is it the result of suggestion
  - b. He is not entirely the slave of custom or even of habit
  - c. His responses to the social environment are not altogether automatic and subservient
  - d. His personal purpose are factors in his real-life activities

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- e. Individuality in sociological sense is that attribute which reveals the member of a group as more than merely a member.
- f. He is a self, a centre of activity and response, expressive of a nature that is his own. This concept supports the admonition that we often give to others or to ourselves
- g. The factor of 'being yourself'. Being oneself need not mean just originality; it certainly does not mean eccentricity. A strong individuality may, in fact, express more fully the spirit or quality of his country or his time, but he does so, not because he is quickly imitative or easily suggestible, but because of his sensitivity to the age itself.

It is true that when members of a group are more individualized, they will exhibit greater differences and will express themselves in a greater variety of ways. But the criterion of individuality is not the extent to which each individual differs from the rest. It is rather, how far each acts autonomously, in his own consciousness and with his own interpretation of the claims of others. When the possessor of individuality does as others do, at least in those matters which he deems important, he does it simply. This is not because others do it, but because he himself approves that particular behavior. When he follows authority, except as far as he is compelled to, he follows it partly because of conviction and not because of authority. He does not specifically accept or reflect the opinions of others. He has certain independence of judgment, initiative, discrimination, strength of character, etc. The extent to which he exhibits these qualities is directly proportional his individuality.

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## 2.4 LIFE OF INDIVIDUALS—HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

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Since ancient times, man has experienced irregular relations between broad physical conditions and modes of living. The inhabitants of tropical regions for instance exhibited characteristic differences from those of temperate or of arctic regions. But recently, these observations have been gradually refined and turned more systematic. French sociology has been especially prominent in the development of such studies since the time of Montesquieu, inspired by leaders like Le Play, Demolins and Brunhes. The relationship between physical environment and social phenomena has been of particular interest to two groups of American sociologists in recent times. The development of an ecological school has been stimulated by the investigations of late R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess, at the University of Chicago. Human or social ecology, that found suggestive analogies in plant and animal ecologies have been particularly interested in the social and cultural phenomena that is associated with various urban areas.

There are several levels of adaptation to the environment. It has been argued that 'man adapts himself to his environment'. The adaptation may be employed in physical, biological and a social reference.



- **Physical adaptation:** Purely physical adaptation is independent of our striving and our aims. The sun will tan our skin if we expose ourselves to it. This is a form of physical adaptation, irrespective of whether it helps us or not. Similarly, fresh air will stimulate our lungs and poisonous gases will destroy them. Strength or weakness, health or sickness is an equal expression of natural law. Everywhere, nature makes such demands, death itself being the final statement of physical adaptation. Irrespective of the conditions, whether wild or civilized, poor or prosperous, favourable or unfavorable, good or evil, this unconditional physical adaptation remains with all its compulsion.
- **Biological adaptation:** Biological adaptation means that a particular form of life is suited to survive or to prosper in environmental conditions. One can argue that fish are adapted to marine environment or tigers, to the conditions of life in a jungle. In this sense, we can also speak of the inability to adapt. For instance, when it is said that a tiger is unable to adapt to the conditions of the desert or those of the polar snows, it means that the conditions do not permit adequate functioning of the organism. This implies that inevitable physical adaptation is detrimental to biological demands. In order to attain certain equilibrium, that involves the survival or fulfillment of an organism, environment support is required.
- **Social adaptation:** Social adaptation reveals an extension of biological use. Social adaptation is conditional adaptation when it involves some standards of value. When various sociologists speak about the process of adjustment or of accommodation, they basically refer to the conditions that are associated with it. In social sense, adaptation definitely implies valuation. Social adaptation involves man's continuous adjustment to his changing life conditions and his evaluation of both his own adjustments and social conditions.

To understand the overall environmental conditions of human beings, one needs to focus on two important components of total environment: external environment and internal or social environment. Outer environment specifically refers to material culture. Inner or social environment consists of organizations and regulations, traditions and institutions, repression and liberation of social life. This is collectively referred to as social heritage. Man adapted himself to this through conscious response and habituation.

#### **Heredity and environment**

It is ancient observation which confirms that in almost all human groups the traits or habits of parents are inherited by their children. The difference in heredity then might account for the difference in the traits or qualities of individuals or groups, even in different environments. Some biologists have been supported by a number of psychologists and a few sociologists, while the students of environment studies have generally stressed on other aspects. Therefore, a major dispute pertaining to

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the relative importance of the two arose and continues, even today. In explaining the variations of human beings and their societies, some claim that heredity is the stronger determinant, while others belittle heredity in comparison to environment. Some argue that certain qualities, such as those of health and intelligence depend mainly on heredity, while they admit that other qualities, particularly social qualities that extend in morals, customs and beliefs, depend more directly on environment.

The whole issue was raised in a definite form by Francis Galton in his pioneer work, *Hereditary Genius* (1869) in which he sought to show that the probability of the occurrence of greatly gifted children is vastly higher when the fathers are of a superior intelligence. Galton's work was carried on by Karl Pearson, who applied his method of correlation to this theory. He concluded that in the determination of important human differences, the influence of environment is far less than that of heredity. Pearson claimed that it was even possible to measure the relative efficacy of the two and gave evidences purporting to show that for people of the same race, within a given community, heredity is seven times more important than environment<sup>4</sup>. Many other researchers have followed the path of Pearson. Some have taken class or occupational categories and have shown that the groups with higher social or intellectual rating have produced more geniuses or persons of distinction. This positive correlation has been illustrated in studies showing that royal families produce more geniuses in comparison to others; families of the clergy in the US produce the largest number of notable men, followed by those of professionals, businessmen, farmers and laborers. American men of science emanate in largest numbers from professional classes and in smaller numbers from agricultural class and so forth.<sup>5</sup> Other psychologists have chosen racial or national categories and applications of psychological tests. Intelligence tests, have typically brought about considerable differences between them, as in the well known army tests of an immigrant group in the US and more generally of native-born, foreign-born, and Negro section of the population<sup>6</sup>.

MacIver argues that from such studies, conclusions are frequently drawn to indicate a superficial analysis of the problem of heredity and environment. A large number of earlier researchers have given us more precise evidence with reference to a common observation: that those who are born in families or groups which possess distinction or prestige are more likely to develop intellectual or other attainments

Heredity contains all potentialities of life, but all its actualities are evoked within and under the conditions of environment. A biologist is interested in tracing the inheritance of those unit characteristics, such as blue eyes, albinism, hemophilia, etc., which suggest separable specific determinants in the mechanism of heredity. Biologists are also interested in the manner in which specific organic predispositions, such as the tendency to certain disease, reveal themselves under varying conditions

<sup>4</sup> Pearson K. *Nature and Nurture*, London, 1910, Eugenics Lecture Series

<sup>5</sup> Woods. F.A, *Mental and Moral Heredity in Royalty*, 1906, New York

<sup>6</sup> Klineberg, O. *Race Differences*, 1935, New York

of environment. On the other hand, sociologists are interested in the way in which a group deals with another group, which is brought up in a given environment and is affected by changes occurring within it or by their transference to a different environment. An immigrant group, irrespective of its hereditary characteristics, exhibits entirely different characteristics, when transported from Italy, Greece or Ireland to North America. One cannot but be impressed by the way in which customs, attitudes and modes of life change, to new occupational activities and so forth, in response to changes in economic conditions,.

Heredity is the potentiality which is made within the actual environment. All qualities of life are present in heredity. The evocation of qualities depends on environment. It follows from this initial principle that the higher the potentiality, greater is the demand on environment. Instead of seeking to exalt the importance of one factor over the other, it is easier to analyse the importance of the fitness of the environment. Thus, though more subtle differences in environment may have little effect on beings with low potentialities, they are vastly significant for beings which are more responsive to them. A seemingly minor change in a situation, a stimulus to success, an encouragement, a rebuff, may prove decisive to a sensitive nature while scarcely affecting a less sensitive one. Hence the imponderables of the social environment become more important for civilized individuals and groups.

## NOTES

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Why does social heritage continuously change?
8. What does Talcott Parson's system approach claim?
9. What can be called a specific form of mechanism?

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## 2.5 SUMMARY

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- In general, human society extends to all human beings and all members of the animal species. But we should not equate the human species with human society. As with other animals, the qualities of the species are distributed among individual members. In totality, they make up humankind. It is through their social relations that they constitute societies and the total set of relations at any time makes up what we call world society.
- The development of culture makes human society a special case, as compared to the societies of other species. The ways of acting, thinking and feeling are transmitted from one generation to the other and across societies, through learning and not through inheritance.
- Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action.

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- Like an organism, a society is a system of relations. These relations are between organisms themselves, rather than between cells. The organism a determined structure and parts of this structure, when in operation, contribute to the existence of the whole. This whole gives it continuity, which is apart from that of constituent individuals.
- The Social Contract Theory is unique. It gives importance to an individual, as the architect of society. This theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau. According to this theory, all men were born free and equal and individuals make a mutual agreement and create society.
- Organism theory states that society is never made by man. It is a natural creation and has begun through the process of evolution. Spencer conceives society as a biological system, a greater organism alike in its structure and functions, exhibiting the same kind of unity as the individual organism and subject to similar laws of development, maturation and decline. Thus, the basic assumption of society is similar to a biological organism; the only difference is in the size.
- Heredity contains all the potentialities of life, but all its actualities are evoked within and under the conditions of environment.

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## 2.6 KEY TERMS

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- **Society:** A group of people who live together in communities
- **Coevolution:** The evolution of two or more interdependent species, each adapting to changes in the other
- **Double-edged:** The property of having two possible meanings
- **Ambivalent:** The act of showing both, positive and negative feelings towards something
- **Genotype:** The combination of genes that a particular living thing carries
- **Analogy:** The process of comparing one thing with another, that has similar features in order to explain it
- **Heredity:** The process by which mental and physical characteristics are passed by parents to their children

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## 2.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. Sociology is the study of human society or societies.
2. Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action.
3. The regulation of an individual's behaviour is the core feature of human condition.



4. To realize that society is a true emergent, one needs to trace its independent origin in countless animal types.
5. The Social Contract Theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau.
6. Thomas Hobbes discussed the state of nature in his book titled, *The Leviathan*.
7. Social heritage continuously changes because of our social experiences.
8. Talcott Parson's system approach claims that the governance of individual relationships at micro level is taken care of by the macro level and that the functional contribution of an individual to the society is so indispensable, that the society cannot live without the individual and vice versa.
9. A man-made machine can be called a specific form of mechanism.

## NOTES

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## 2.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Why is it not right to equate all human species with the human society?
2. How is society similar to an organism as a system of relations?
3. What did J.J. Rosseau opine in his book *Contract Social*?
4. List the points on the basis of which Spencer tries to draw analogy between the organism and the society.
5. Based on which levels does man adapt himself to his environment?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the important theories of the origin of society.
2. Discuss the importance of society for individuals.
3. Write a note on the role of relationship between heredity and environment, in the life of an individual.
4. Analyse the life of individuals, on the basis of heredity and environment.

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## 2.9 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 3 CULTURE

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Characteristics and Functions of Culture
- 3.3 Types of Culture
- 3.4 Cultural Lag
- 3.5 Culture and Personality
- 3.6 Culture and Civilization
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key Terms
- 3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.10 Questions and Exercises
- 3.11 Further Reading

### NOTES

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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With the evolution of homo sapiens, a number of biological characteristics emerged in species. These characteristics supported the growth of culture. A few of these characteristics were: upright posture, well developed constitution of the brain, the ability to see objects with length, width and depth, development of the hand, etc. Any one of these biological features, if considered in isolation, cannot contribute to the development of culture. Even in totality, the most they can assure is that human beings would be the most privileged species of the animal kingdom. The evolution of culture has been gradual.

In experiences during their life, people develop an array of regulations and processes. This is accompanied by a sustained collection of concepts and ethics known as culture. Sir Edward Tylor (1871) defined culture in a classical and sociological manner. According to him, 'Culture is that complex entirety which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits, that are acquired by man, as a member of society'. One can define culture that factor, which is absorbed by society. It is a trait that is adopted collectively and practiced by all members of a society. An individual inherits culture as part of social legacy. This inherited legacy is altered and restructured with slight changes and modifications, before it is again inherited by the future generations.

Culture can be divided into material and nonmaterial forms. Material culture comprises man-made objects like tools, furniture, roads and buildings. Practically, any physical item that has been altered for use falls in the category of material culture. These man-made things are also known as artifacts. Contrarily, nonmaterial culture comprises language, ideas knowledge, customs and beliefs and heritage of ideas.

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According to Bidney, culture is the product of agro facts (product of civilization), artifacts (product of industry), sociofacts (social organization) and mentifacts (language, religion, art, etc.). According to Marett, culture is communicable intelligence. Robert Redfield, an American anthropologist and ethnolinguist, has emphasized a symbolic view of culture. According to him, culture is an organized body of conventional understanding, which is manifested in art and artifacts and characterizes a human group. For Redfield, culture is the complete conventional meaning which is embodied in artifacts, social structure and symbols.

Ruth Benedicts, an anthropologist of culture and personality, in her book, *Pattern of Culture* (1936), has defined culture from personality's point of view. According to her 'A culture, like an individual, is more or less consistent pattern of thought and action.' Thus, she has defined culture from a formal and aesthetic view point. Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown have proposed an instrumental and humanistic definition of culture. According to Malinowski, culture is an instrument for the satisfaction of the needs of man.

Malinowski defines culture as the tool that facilitates mankind to protect and realize his bio-psycho survival. This consequently results in more developed rational and logical mode of survival. All economic, social, religious and linguistic needs of mankind originate from one general and basic need, i.e., human need, hence they are all related to each other. Since all factors within a culture are interrelated, there are no loose strings. Thus, it is evident that any single trait cannot exist all by itself. Its identity emerges when it is seen as part of the whole and not in isolation. Malinowski stressed that culture has a broad range and is self-reliant. According to him, if a slight change occurs in any of the features of a culture, the whole of it will reflect a corresponding change. He was a staunch believer of cultural pluralism, in which the bio-physical requirements of individuals impact the growth of every culture. He recommended that culture can be studied on the basis of these requirements and not on the basis of any fixed standards. Sufficiency, based on basic requirements, is a quality of a culture in which many different parts are closely connected and work successfully together. This is a result of widespread knowledge.

On the other hand, Radcliffe Brown regards culture as a social heritage which perpetuates social life. Sociologists who belong to structural functional school have regarded the whole of culture as a unit of study. They assume a holistic view of the entire culture. R.H. Lowie said, 'culture is nothing but total or whole of social tradition.' Kluckhohn defined culture as all those designs which have been historically created for life. These designs may be, explicit, implicit, rational, irrational, or those which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behaviour of men.

Culture defines a typical way in which human beings live. This did not have a single point of origin. This means that no member of the human species emerged all of a sudden on this earth. The evolution of culture was as gradual, as was the conversion of primates to human beings. It is not possible to date the most primitive



tools accurately. Archaeological evidences point out towards creatures that were similar to humans and apes and existed over one million years ago. These creatures, known as Australopithecines, used weapons made of stone. This theory can be confirmed on the basis of the early stones which exhibit evidences of being shaped as tools, approximately 500,000 to 600,000 years ago. Fire came into use around 200,000 to 300,000 years ago. Around 100,000 BC, tools were made out of bones. The use of these tools emerged during the age of the Neanderthals. The Neanderthals also had developed a language of communication. They practiced a typical burial system to dispose off their dead. This points out towards the possibility of the existence of sacred rituals. The Cro-Magnons were the first primitive modern humans. Their existence dates to 35,000 years ago. In comparison to their predecessors, the Cro-Magnons had a superior culture. This can be evaluated from their cave paintings. They also used shells and teeth to make ornaments. Their artifacts exhibit carved statuettes of women which signified the state of being pregnant and fertile. Their arms were created out of bone, horn, and ivory. The use of needle for stitching clothes was also evident.

## NOTES

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### 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- List the characteristics and functions of culture
- Define the types of culture
- Explain the concept of cultural lag
- Discuss culture and personality
- Relate culture and civilization

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### 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTIONS OF CULTURE

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Culture can be characterized in the following ways:

- Culture is man-made
- Culture is learned
- Culture is transmitted
- Every society has its own culture
- Culture is social, not individualistic
- Culture is an ideal for a group
- Culture satisfies human need
- Culture has adaptability
- Culture has integrative quality
- Culture shapes human personality
- Culture is both super-individual and super-organic

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Culture is not a simple accumulation of folkways and mores; it is an organized system of behavior. Culture is always organized with cultural traits and complexes. Cultural traits are basically the smallest units of culture, for instance, shaking hands, offering prayer, saluting a flag, etc. Every culture includes thousands of traits. Culture complex is a combination of different elements like religious ceremonies, magical rites, a courtship activity and a festivity, etc. The culture complex is intermediate between the trait and the institution.

**Folkway**

William Graham Sumner, in his book, *Folkways* (1906), defined folkways as the usual, established, routine and regular way in which a group performs its activities. These activities can range from shaking hands, eating with knives and forks, driving in the left side of streets, etc.

Folkways are established ways in which a social group behaves. This pattern of behaviour is exhibited to counter the problems faced by a group which lives in a society. Life in society has many problems and different problems give rise to different efforts made by man, to tackle them. Various societies come up with a variety of operational models for resolving their problems. Social groups may achieve a probable set of solutions through an experimental approach or some strange observation, etc. Irrespective of the means by which they come upon a solution, its success establishes its acceptance as a normal way of behavior. It is inherited by successive generations and surfaces as a behavioural tendency of the group of the folk, thus it is known as a folkway. As stated by Sumner, psycho-physical traits have been transmitted genetically into men from their brutish ancestor's. These traits include skills, nature of character and temperament that provide a solution to the problem of food supply, sex, business and self-importance. The outcome of this is a collection of occurrences like, flows of likelihood, harmony and collective inputs, which result in folkways. Folkways are thus outcomes of continuous recurrences that are seemingly insignificant activities, generally in large numbers. These activities arise when similar needs are experienced by a group.

Lundberg agrees that folkways assign similarities in group behaviour to the way of life of individuals in that group. These are born out of recurring or occasional needs or happenings. In this manner, it is believed that the collection of instinctive behavioural patterns governs and protects the existence and development of a social group. This collection includes rituals and practices that have been transmitted from one generation to the other, along with alteration and addition of new features, corresponding to the fluctuating needs of time. These symbolize man's exclusive trait of changing himself to become accustomed to the environment. None of the individuals within the group is ever skeptical about a folkway nor is he required to introduce a folkway forcefully.

The concept of culture can be visualized as an ongoing repository, which keeps on adding material and nonmaterial elements that have been socially inherited by future generations, from past generations. Culture is incessant because its

patterns have surpassed the boundaries of time to recur in succeeding generations. Culture keeps on getting updated since every generation adds a new feature or quality to it. Accordingly, an outstanding equivalence comes into focus, which connects the evolution of Homo sapiens with the growth and prosperity of culture. This similarity cannot be elaborated upon, since most conclusions about the prehistoric period are based on material facts, which reveal only part of the way of life of the people of those times. In addition, the biological and cultural evolution should not be aligned next to each other. Cro-Magnon's ability to think was great, but other characteristics related to the development played an active role in restricting a visible growth in learned behaviour.

### **Diffusion**

Though invention contributed largely to cultural development, over a period of time, diffusion benefited it more. Diffusion means adopting the characteristics of culture from other societies, irrespective of their means of emergence in the source society.

For diffusion to prevail on a large scale, the societies should be segregated and their origin should be old enough so as to support the development of unique cultures. In addition to this, it is important for these societies to be in touch mutually. This would provide options for substantial borrowing. Such scenarios have gained momentum only in the later stages of evolution. Once the process of cultural borrowing began, it turned so persistent that a large number of elements of modern cultures were borrowed.

Both invention and diffusion have contributed to the development of culture. The initial start was slow, because it was mostly caused by invention. However, with the growth of the culture base, societies were further set apart. This caused an expanded increase in the diffusion of traits and a simultaneous increase in the growth factor. At present, the growth factor of culture has scaled spectacular heights, especially in the western countries:

### **Custom**

A habit, once formed, becomes a normal way of life. Customs usually comprise mutual give and take, accompanied by compulsive responsibilities. Additionally, customs also abide by the law, in the absence of which they would be worthless. According to Maclver and Page, custom sets up its own kind of social order which curbs the disagreements that rise between custom and law. Thus, customs streamline the entire social life of an individual. Law is not equipped enough to cover all activities of social behaviour. Practices of rituals and customs add to the harmony within a social group. Often, the effect of customs crosses the boundaries of one's own community. In certain cases, custom is the measure of the relations between two enemy communities, for instance, it is the custom of the Bedouins of the Arabian desert not to damage any water-well, even if it belongs to the enemy.

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However, a few of the customs have no impact on social control. These customs exist simply because they have been there since ancient times and people of all generations have been practicing them. A perfect example of this is the custom of people bathing in an unclean pond or lagoon simply because it has been an age-old religious practice. Although, in many traditional societies, religious rituals and customs are losing their significance. In other words, custom is viewed just like public opinion. It has a strong impact on life in social groups simply because it is the only factor which textually influences social behaviour.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. How did Sir Edward Tylor define culture?
2. What is culture, according to Marett?
3. How is culture complex related to trait and the institution?

**3.3 TYPES OF CULTURE****Cultural relativism**

This is a concept of analysing various societies of cultures in an objective way without comparing them with each other. It is not possible to study the activities of another group if they are analysed on the basis of our motives and values. Their activities must be analysed on the basis of their motives and values, for an unbiased understanding. Cultural relativism can be defined as the function that measures trait on the basis of its cultural environment. In an isolated form, a trait is neither positive, nor negative. It can be regarded as positive or negative only on the basis of the culture in which it exists and thrives, for instance, fur clothes are important in the Polar region, but serve no purpose in deserts. In some societies, being fat is considered to be a sign of health and prosperity. However, in other societies, being fat is not only a waste but it also signifies bad health and ugliness. Thus, the idea of cultural relativism does not make all customs equally important or harmful. It believes that some customs may be extremely beneficial in some places, and may be very harmful elsewhere. It is a phenomenon that is related to the environment. The most prominent feature of cultural relativism is that in a certain type of environment, specific traits are just right because they are beneficial to that environment. However, if the same traits are shifted to an entirely different setting, they may result in a disaster by colliding with other traits of that culture.

**Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is interrelated with cultural relativity. Ethno is derived from a Greek terminology which means, people, country, cultural bonding. Centric is derived from a Latin word, which means centre. Thus, ethnocentrism means the inclination of every society to place its own culture patterns at the centre of things. Ethnocentrism is the act of evaluating other cultural practices, in terms of one's



own and obviously rating them as inferior. It is the tendency of considering one's own culture superior. This converts one's own culture into a yardstick which can be used to gauge all other cultures and rate them as right or wrong.

Ethnocentrism is the way humans respond in every society, group and walk of life. It is a part of the growth of every individual. It is reflected in the possessive nature of a child, who learns the difference between the toys which belong to him and which do not belong to him. He exhibits a superiority complex when he feels that his toys are better than those of other children, unless corrected by his parents or elders. Though parents may not encourage such ideas in their children in public, but in the privacy of their homes, they may give him the feeling that his possessions are genuinely nice. The teaching of ethnocentrism may either be direct and intentional or indirect and unintentional. But at least a small part of it is purposeful. History has several evidences where it often teaches to place the accomplishments of one's own country higher than those of other countries. Religious, civic and other groups belittle their rivals in the most explicit ways. In the case of fully developed individuals, ethnocentrism simply translates as a reality of life.

As the awareness of ethnocentrism spreads, the urge to validate it in moral terms rises. By the way, this is also a variety of ethnocentrism. However, it is to be noted that ethnocentrism is one of the characteristics of culture. Thus, similar to the remaining part of culture, it can be appraised only on the basis of its involvement in the maintenance of social order and in the promotion of social change.

Ethnocentrism has largely contributed to the maintaining of social order than for promoting social changes. Similarly, the efforts of ethnocentrism for maintaining social order too are much obvious. It begins by consolidating the unity of the group. This is based on the level of faith between companions. Ethnocentrism has both, positive and negative influences. On the positive side, it brings about a steady status quo and on the negative side, it put off change.

Ethnocentrism also obstructs the importance of collaboration between different groups. It believes that if one group functions in the best way, it does not need to interact with other groups which have lower standards of functioning. In reality, this stimulates the mental outlook of skepticism, disregard and animosity. Generally disputes and clashes are caused by severe levels of ethnocentrism. This is evident by the historical details pertaining to wars and religious and racial conflicts.

Conflict brings about social changes through ethnocentrism, which in turn, promotes this change. There are cases when these changes are encouraged through peaceful evolution. In general, scientists advocate a peaceful evolution of social changes. They are against conflicts. As a result, they use diplomatic means to disregard ethnocentrism. They discourage their students to support and adopt ethnocentrism by defining it as a hindrance to the learning process. For this purpose, sociologists use a blend of the concepts of evolution and functionalism. On the other hand, ethnocentrism is used by radical groups (belonging to the downtrodden blacks, the poor, women and young people) to intensify their power and functioning. This is clearly visible in the form of slogans like 'black power', etc

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**Acculturation**

This is an expression that explains the manner in which different cultures interact with each other. It also defines the customs of such interactions. These interactive processes between cultures may either be socially interactive in a direct way or through media, or other forms of communication. As a result of these interactions, the identity and culture of the interacting groups change. In some cases, hostility between both the cultures may result in the emergence of a new form of culture. This new culture may adopt the characteristics of both the cultures.

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**3.4 CULTURAL LAG**

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According to William F. Ogburn, objective inventions (technology) have greatly influenced social changes. Ogburn played a key role in promoting the theory that the number of inventions within a society is directly proportional to the magnitude of the existent culture. He also observed that the number of material inventions was growing with the passage of time. Ogburn held that both material and nonmaterial cultures experience different changes. Changes that are affected in material culture have a particular direction and are dynamic in nature. This is because they have specific values of effectiveness, which are used as a base for estimating them. An instance of this can be seen in the use of airplanes. The development of airplanes involves continuous efforts to produce planes that can fly, higher and faster and can carry heavier cargo at minimum cost. Since these standards can be applied to the development of airplanes, all related inventions are directed to achieve these goals. On the contrary, in the case of nonmaterial culture, such accepted standards are not a general occurrence. For instance, a person interested in paintings may prefer the work of either M.F. Hussain, or Picasso, or Gainsborough, etc. This choice is a result of his like and preference. Additionally, it is not necessary for these choices to remain constant. Likewise, government or economic organizations comprise of contending forms of styles. These styles may be dictatorships, oligarchies, republics or democracies.

The economic system may have communist, socialist, feudal or capitalist style of functioning. Target-oriented changes, which are a feature of material culture, do not exist in most of the areas of nonmaterial culture. Thus, Ogburn and other sociologists were of the opinion that changes in material culture are more dynamic than those in nonmaterial culture. Surely, one of the most obvious highlights of modern life is the continuous growth of technology. Man's life has undergone tremendous changes with inventions like radio, TV, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, transistors, computers, etc. These changes are within material culture. On the other hand, transformations in governments, economic systems, family lives, education and religion have been very gradual. These changes are nonmaterial in nature. Ogburn introduced the concept of cultural lag after observing this disparity in the rates of cultural changes. According to him, material inventions promoted changes that required amendments to different domains of nonmaterial culture.

An invention like the automobile led to two different types of changes. On the one hand, it made traveling easier and on the other, it provided an easy escape for criminals.

Culture lag is the duration or gap of time that exists between the emergence of a new material invention and the process of adapting it to the corresponding nonmaterial culture. This duration is usually long, for instance, the period between the invention of the typewriter and its practical use in offices was fifty years. Even today, most of the family systems are more suited to an agricultural economy rather than an industrial one. Thus, the theory of cultural lag is related to the type of social problems that are associated with it. Academics have visualized an equilibrium and tuning between material and nonmaterial cultures. This tuning is disturbed when raw material objects appear. This disturbance results in a disproportion which is known as a social problem. This social problem continues till the nonmaterial culture adapts itself to the new technology.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Define cultural relativism.
5. What is ethnocentrism?
6. What is cultural lag?

## 3.5 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

Culture is the hallmark of every society. It is the distinguishing mark of human society. The term personality has been used in several terms, both popularly and psychologically. However, its comprehensive and satisfactory use is integrated. The dynamic organization of physical, mental and social qualities of an individual is apparent to others, in the exchange of social life.

One can define personality as the collection of habits, mindsets, behaviour and qualities of a person. These focus externally on specific and general roles and statuses. Internally, they are focused around self-consciousness and the concepts of self, ideas, values and purpose.

Following are the characteristics of personality:

- It is influenced by social interaction
- It is acquired
- It refers to persistent qualities of an individual
- It is an individual unit
- It is not related to bodily structure alone

The type of personality is generally defined by the culture which prevails in a specific social group. Culture plays a vital role in influencing the personality of a

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group. This has attracted the attention of the scholars of culture and various schools of thought that are concerned with personality.

The relationship between culture and personality involves on one side, the total social heritage available to the individual and to which he consciously and unconsciously responds and on other, the integral character of the individual being. It can be argued that personality is everything that makes an individual. Personality comprises of the total 'organized aggregate of psychological processes and states pertaining to the individual'. The culture personality focus is one that reminds us that the pattern of any culture basically determines the broad contours of individual personalities. These individual personalities, in turn, provide evidence of the culture pattern and tend to strive for its perpetuation.

#### Studies in culture and personalities

Ruth Fulton Benedict, in her famous book, *Patterns of Culture*, developed the concept of culture pattern. She has also focused on the significance of culture. The culture which is described in her book, illustrates Benedict's idea that culture can be viewed as consisting of cultural configurations. These configurations are integrated under the domination of one general matter pattern. Therefore, a culture is analogous to individual beings, such that it is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action. According to Benedict, integration of any culture is due to the arrangement of its content in a cotemporary or permanent style, or design. This arrangement is defined as pattern, by Benedict. There is a particular style or design in every part of a culture. These separate designs, together present a grand design of culture as a whole. This is the configuration of culture. The emergence of this reunion in culture is due to a common tendency to see all aspects of culture. Benedict termed this main tendency as a 'special genius' of culture. It is this 'genius of culture', that brings about its integration. This alone, is the basis of integration of form. Benedict proposed that two kinds of 'geniuses' are found in human society. One is 'Appollonian' and the other is 'Dionysian'. The word 'Appollonian' has been derived from the word Apollo, which means peaceful sun god. Greek people regarded sun as the god of peace, discipline, kindness and humanity. Therefore, in the Appollonian pattern of culture, one finds the existence of peace, discipline and kindness. Benedict has cited the example of Pueblo (a term used to describe modern and ancient communities of Native Americans). They are peace loving and disciplined. They extend help and cooperation to each other. Not only in Pueblo, but the Appollonian genius is found in all societies, which have peace and tranquility as their main qualities. These are the causes of their integration. The term 'Dionysian' has been derived from the Greek God Dionysius, who appeared to be connected to drinking and a luxurious way of life. In his way, the Dionysian genius is found in a culture, which experiences many storms and changes. Benedict cited the example of the Dobu and the Kwakitul cultures of the north-west coast of America as representatives of the Dionysian genius. Thus Benedict has accepted patterns or geniuses as an ideal or an induced theory, which determines the behaviour of human beings.



Benedict was also concerned with showing the influence of personality on culture. She argued that Appollonian and Dionysian geniuses are integrated personalities of two cultural groups. These groups are quite opposite in their behavior pattern. She also held how these two geniuses molded the personality of members of their cultural groups. The Appollonian personality compels the members of the group to behave peacefully and in a disciplined way. This ultimately forms special cultural characteristics of the concerned group. In the same way, the Dionysian personality shows its influence on the characteristics of the culture of a particular group. In this way, personality influences culture.

Margaret Mead, through her studies, has attempted to show the impact of culture on the formation of personalities. An individual is born in a particular culture and he or she enters into a preformed cultural environment, which plays a significant role in the formation of his or her personality. An individual adopts not only the material aspects of a culture, i.e., house, tool, furniture, art, etc., but also its nonmaterial aspects. The nonmaterial aspects may include parts of culture, such as, religion, tradition, custom, rituals, beliefs, norms, values, ideals, etc. It is culture, which teaches an individual to behave in society, in a systematic way. An individual adopts culture through the processes of enculturation and assimilation. Mead studied the impact of culture on the personality formation of three primitive groups of New Guinea. These groups were, Mundugumor, Arapesh and Tschambuli. Though these tribes lived in the same geographical region, they had different character and personalities. This was due to differences in their culture.

Ralph Linton, in his famous book, *Cultural Background of Personality* (1945), attempted to define and classify culture on the basis of behavior. He has also defined personality and attempted to show how it was formed in a given cultural situation. He also emphasized how personality influenced culture. According to Linton, 'culture may be defined as the sum total of knowledge, attitudes and natural behavior pattern, shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.' He divided culture into three groups, based on the behavior of their members. These groups are:

- (i) Real culture (Actual behaviour)
- (ii) Ideal culture (philosophical and traditional culture)
- (iii) Culture construct (what is written about culture)

Real culture is the aggregate of the behaviour of the members of a society, which are learned and shared in particular situation. It is the way of life of a community member. The ways of life differ from culture to culture. Ideal culture pattern is formed by philosophical traditions. In this, some traits of culture are regarded as ideals. When a culture is studied, it also reflects our understanding of that culture, which is to be written. This is known as culture-construct. Linton has also differentiated among cultural universals, cultural alternatives and cultural specialties. He argued that some cultural traits are necessary for all members of the society, while the other traits are shared only by some members. The traits, which are followed by all members, are called universals of culture. For instance,

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