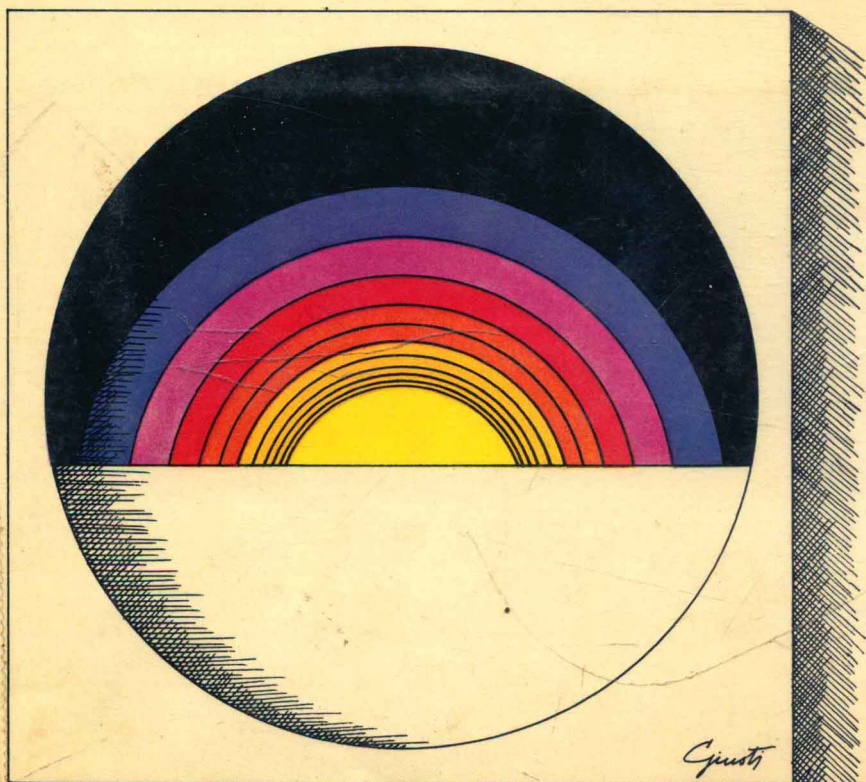


beyond culture

EDWARD T. HALL

"A fascinating book which stands beside THE HIDDEN DIMENSION and THE SILENT LANGUAGE
— to prove Hall one of the most original anthropologists of our era"

—Paul Bohannon



ISBN 0-385-08747-0

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 74-3550

Copyright © 1976 by Edward T. Hall

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made for permission to use excerpts from copyrighted material, as follows:

From pp. 100-1 of *A HIGH WIND IN JAMAICA*, by Richard Hughes. Copyright 1928, 1929, by Richard Hughes; renewed 1956, 1957, by Richard Hughes. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

From "Conceptual Categories in Primitive Languages," by Edward Sapir, *Science*, Vol. 74, 4 December 1931, p. 578. Reprinted by permission of *Science*.

From *LOLITA*, by Vladimir Nabokov. Copyright © 1955 by Vladimir Nabokov. Reprinted by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons, Publishers.

From pp. 16-17 of *THE FOX IN THE ATTIC*, by Richard Hughes. Copyright © 1961 by Richard Hughes. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

From *BILLY BUDD*, by Herman Melville. New York: The New American Library, 1961.

From *HOW CHILDREN FAIL*, by John Holt. New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1964. Reprinted by permission.

From "Paralinguistics, Kinesics and Cultural Anthropology," by Weston La Barre. In *APPROACHES TO SEMIOTICS*, by T. A. Sebeok, A. S. Hayes, and M. C. Bateson (eds.). The Hague: Mouton & Co., N.V., Publishers, 1962.

From *ECOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY*, by Roger G. Barker. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968.

From "Speaking of Books: Yasunari Kawabata," *New York Times Book Review*, 8 December, 1968, by Donald Keene. Copyright © 1968 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

From *THE UNEXPECTED UNIVERSE*, by Loren Eiseley. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1969.

From "The Functional Organization of the Brain," by A. R. Luria. Copyright © 1970 by Scientific American, Inc. All rights reserved.

From "The Origins of Taxonomy," by Peter H. Raven, Brent Berlin, and Dennis E. Breedlove, *Science*, Vol. 174, 17 December 1971, pp. 1210-13. Copyright 1971 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

From *IN THE SHADOW OF MAN*, by Jane Van Lawick-Goodall. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.

From *JOURNEY TO IXTLAN*, by Carlos Castaneda. Copyright © 1972 by Carlos Castaneda. Reprinted by permission of Simon and Schuster.

From "Neural Basis of Vision," by Peter Gouras and Peter O. Bishop, *Science*, Vol. 177, 14 July 1972, pp. 188-89. Copyright 1972 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

From "Dionysians and Apollonians," by A. Szent-Györgyi, *Science*, Vol. 176, 2 June 1972, p. 966. Copyright 1972 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

From "The Principle of Tolerance," by J. Bronowski. Copyright © 1973 by The Atlantic Monthly Company, Boston, Mass. Reprinted with permission.

From "Primate Field Studies and Social Science," by S. L. Washburn. In *CULTURAL ILLNESS AND HEALTH*, by Laura Nader and Thomas W. Maretzki (eds.). Reproduced by permission of The American Anthropological Association from *Anthropological Studies No. 9, Cultural Illness and Health*, p. 130, 1973.

Author's Preface

Writing a book is a co-operative effort; while the author is ultimately responsible for the content, form, style, and organization of ideas, he depends upon the assistance of others, without which his task would be immeasurably lengthened.

My first acknowledgment, therefore, with thanks and appreciation, is to Mildred Reed Hall, my friend, partner, and wife, whose unflagging faith in my work frequently kept me going when I might otherwise have given up. Despite full-time professional responsibilities, she made it possible for me to have time for writing by assuming many burdens and shielding me from the demands of others. She has also read and criticized several versions of this book. For editorial assistance, I am indebted to Roma McNickle, whose skill and experience were extremely helpful. My first editor at Doubleday, William Whitehead, provided an extensive and thoughtful critique of the first draft. The second draft of the book was reviewed and strengthened by Elizabeth Knappman. To both these Doubleday editors I express my thanks. My agent, Robert Lescher, also contributed invaluable assistance at many stages in the production of the manuscript.

Special thanks go to the following individuals who performed innumerable tasks essential to publication: Cornelia Lowndes, who deciphered my handwriting, typed several versions of the manuscript, and contributed many helpful suggestions; Lane Ittelson and Cynthia Peters, who helped with library research, checking footnotes and bibliographic references; and Ellen McCoy Hall, who contributed many cogent comments on the manuscript at various stages.

April 7, 1975
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. <i>The Paradox of Culture</i>	7
2. <i>Man as Extension</i>	22
3. <i>Consistency and Life</i>	36
4. <i>Hidden Culture</i>	49
5. <i>Rhythm and Body Movement</i>	61
6. <i>Context and Meaning</i>	74
7. <i>Contexts, High and Low</i>	91
8. <i>Why Context?</i>	102
9. <i>Situation—Culture's Building Block</i>	113
10. <i>Action Chains</i>	124
11. <i>Covert Culture and Action Chains</i>	135
12. <i>Imagery and Memory</i>	148
13. <i>Cultural and Primate Bases of Education</i>	165
14. <i>Culture as an Irrational Force</i>	187
15. <i>Culture as Identification</i>	196
<i>Notes</i>	212
<i>Bibliography</i>	231
<i>Index</i>	245

Introduction

There are two related crises in the world of contemporary man. The first and most visible is the population/environment crisis. The second, more subtle but equally lethal, is man himself—his relationship to himself, to his extensions, his institutions, his ideas, to those around him, as well as between the many groups that inhabit the globe; in a word, his relationship to his culture.

Both crises must be resolved or neither will be solved. For there are no technological solutions to the problems confronting man and his eternal conflicts. At the same time, technical solutions to environmental problems will never be applied rationally until man has begun to transcend the limitations imposed by his institutions, his philosophies, and his cultures. Particularly pressing are the world's hot spots, such as the Middle East.

Politics is part of life—beginning in the home and becoming more and more visible as power is manifest in the larger institutions on the local, the national, and the international levels. We should not be fooled by either politics or political institutions. What we are talking about here is power and its use. But there is more to life than sheer power; at least, one hopes that in time the power motive will diminish. Apart from power, culture still plays a prominent role in the relations between the Russians and the West. Culture has always been an issue, not only between Europe and Russia, but among the European states as well. The Germans, the French, the Italians, the Spanish, Portuguese and English, as well as the Scandinavian and Balkan cultures all have their own unique identity, language, systems of nonverbal communication, material culture, history, and way of

doing things. To argue that each culture is not unique is one of the irrationalities discussed in the chapters to follow. Europe is relatively calm now. But what about China and its neighbor Japan? Any Westerner who was raised outside the Far East and claims he really understands and can communicate with either the Chinese or the Japanese is deluding himself.¹ On the horizon are the multiple cultures of Africa and the emerging nations of Latin America demanding to be recognized in their own right. The future depends on man's transcending the limits of individual cultures. To do so, however, he must first recognize and accept the multiple hidden dimensions of the nonverbal side of life.

Exacerbating the world's political and cultural problems are environmental and economic crises. As Hardin² showed with wisdom and insight in an article titled "The Tragedy of the Commons,"³ mankind cannot continue to increase the consumption of the world's finite resources. The classical English pattern of using the village commons (communally owned and used land which was available for pasturing *private* livestock) did not involve a conflict between public and private welfare as long as there was enough land. However, as herds increased, the overgrazed land became less productive, so that herdsmen had to increase their stocks in order to stay even, and thus the commons were destroyed. The tragedy was that profits accrued to the opportunistic herdsmen who exploited the commons the most, while losses were shared by *all* the users. Those who exercised restraint were doubly penalized. Not only did they suffer losses from the overgrazing of neighbors, but they were unable to exploit the market by means of their own production.

Today, the sea, the air, the waterways, the earth, the land and what it produces have *all* become commons, and all are vulnerable to overuse. Appeals to altruism are futile and in one sense foolhardy. Technology alone will not get us out of this dilemma, because these are human problems. Hardin argues that the single-track, Newtonian approach will satisfy only the politicians and the big exploiters of the commons. What is needed, he feels, is a more comprehensive, Darwinian (Dionysian) approach that can be used as a basis for establishing priorities,

alternatives, and options. In a word, unless man can learn to pull together and to regulate his own consumption (and production) patterns, he is headed for disaster.

The tragedy of the commons is one of those irrationalities discussed in Chapter 14. The answer lies not in restricting man but in opening up new alternatives, new possibilities, new dimensions, new options, and new avenues for creative uses of man himself that do not use resources and are not ego-dependent. Ego needs, particularly if they are neurotic, almost inevitably are irrational, obsessional, compulsive, gained at the expense of others, and make extensive use of material resources.

This brings us to an important question that has grown in my mind in the process of living. It has to do with man's basic and underlying attitude toward himself. I am not speaking of something superficial, which can be easily observed or experienced, but something else, deeper and more subtle than surface man. The question is: *Why are most people so unnecessarily hard on themselves?* And why do they not make better use of their talents? Why is mankind so hard on mankind? It is as though we nurtured the child that is in all of us and, in being childish, were afraid of each other. This is not a simple problem, and it may be world-wide.

We see evidences of man's putting himself down in folklore, religions, philosophies, institutions, as well as in daily life. The processes certainly are not within the reach of conscious control but deep within us. Freud was so struck by these processes that he posited a death instinct and built his theories around the notion that man inevitably advances at the expense of himself. Freud believed that the basic energies, the libidinal forces of man, had to be repressed in order for man to live in groups, and that the libidinal energy was "sublimated" into the creative, cooperative drives that produced modern institutions. That is, creativity was a by-product of the necessity for man to repress his basic drives and to control himself. Like all of us, Freud was a product of his times, which were characterized by such thinking, and given the times, much of Freud's thinking made sense. Nevertheless, the study of man's past as well as his present—in

his many forms—fails to confirm Freud's view that man advances and builds his institutions through a process of sublimation of sexual energy; i.e., by suppressing sex in its widest possible connotation. I would suggest another alternative, namely that once man began evolving his extensions, particularly language, tools, and institutions, he got caught in the web of what I term extension transference (Chapter 2) and was both alienated from himself and incapable of controlling the monsters he had created. In this sense, he has advanced at the expense of that part of himself that he had extended, and as a consequence has ended up by repressing his nature in its many forms. Man's goal from here on out should be to rediscover that self.

Certainly, there are tremendous areas of conflict between Western man and his material as well as his non-material extensions. The instrument he has created is like an ill-fitting shoe. According to some of the most distinguished and thoughtful students of the mind, one of the most devastating and damaging things that can happen to anyone is to fail to fulfill his potential. A kind of gnawing emptiness, longing, frustration, and displaced anger takes over when this occurs. Whether the anger is turned inward on the self or outward toward others, dreadful destruction results. Yet, how man evolved with such an incredible reservoir of talent and such fantastic diversity is not completely understood. Man is not anywhere nearly enough in awe of himself, possibly because he knows so little and has nothing to measure himself against.

People get cast in molds (of status and roles) for which they are variously equipped. The problem lies between man's creativeness and diversity and the rather specific needs of his institutions, for most cultures and the institutions they engender represent highly specialized solutions to rather specific problems. For example, in England during the early days of the industrial revolution,⁴ villagers and field hands were brought into the factory to work. These first generations of mill hands were not conditioned to the whistle. Like all preindustrial peoples, when they earned enough to pay off their debts and keep them for a while they quit and went home. This situation could have continued indefinitely if there had not been a hidden trap—children.

There were no child labor laws and no one to care for the children at home, so the children worked with the parents in the factory and became imprinted by the whistle. They then brought up their own children accordingly.

If the totality of man's experiences with factory work and schedules means anything at all, and if current pressure on the part of workers to do something about the monotony is significant, industrialists could hardly have done better at creating an anti-human work situation if they had deliberately set out to do so. Man has put himself in his own zoo. He has so simplified his life and stereotyped his responses that he might as well be in a cage.

The result is that, since people can't fight the institutions on which their lives depend, they unconsciously first turn their anger inward and later outward against the "enemies" of the institutions to which they have sold their souls. Someday, man will no longer need ideological crutches. To coin a phrase, ideologies are the opiate of the people and have taken the place not of religion, but of religious institutions.

But, to continue with our basic theme, many people's sense of worth, the value they place on the image of the self, is directly related to the number of situations in which they are in control, which means that many people have a problem with their self-image, because they are in control of so little.⁵ The ultimate in human degradation and the subservience of human needs to institutional forms is shown in Kesey's⁶ novel *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*. Big Nurse, in Kesey's book, epitomizes all the anti-humanism and destructiveness, all the distortions of the communication process, all the violations of cultural norms that one finds in the bureaucracies that man has created. The book is a statement of the powerlessness and lack of self-affirmation so common in our times.

Powerlessness and lack of self-affirmation lead to aggression, as repeatedly asserted by psychologists and psychiatrists. Psychological powerlessness is the result of past events, but situational and cultural powerlessness are here and now. Blacks and students rioted in recent years not only because they were powerless to make the system work, but because *they saw themselves*

as *powerless*. There is no other way to explain the incredible outburst of rage triggered by the assassination of Martin Luther King or the "incursion" into Cambodia. The groundwork had been laid long before, but it was suddenly and overwhelmingly apparent to those concerned.

Things are quieter in the ghettos now because the rhythm of black life is in a quiet phase—they are taking a breather. It is quieter on the campus since the winding down of the Vietnam War. But a major and continuing source of frustration exists because the many gifts and talents of women, black people, Indians, Spanish Americans, and others are not only unrecognized but frequently denigrated by members of the dominant group. It is the corrosive daily and niggling frustration, the inability to communicate or to establish meaningful relationships that is so soul-shrinking.

The cultural and psychological insight that is important for man to accept is that denying culture can be as destructive as denying evil. Man must come to terms with both. It is man's powerlessness in the face of culture and the limitations placed on the development of self that result in aggression. Paradoxically, the only way that man can escape the hidden constraints of covert culture is to involve himself actively and quite consciously in those parts of his life that he takes most for granted.

What is called for is a massive cultural literacy movement that is not imposed but springs from within. Man can benefit from more as well as deeper knowledge of what an incredible organism he is. He can grow, swell with pride, and breathe better for having many remarkable talents. To do so, however, he must stop ranking either people or talents and accept the fact that there are many roads to truth and no culture has a corner on the path or is better equipped than others to search for it. What is more, no man can tell another how to conduct that search.

1. *The Paradox of Culture*

Two widely divergent but interrelated experiences, psychoanalysis and work as an anthropologist, have led me to the belief that in his strivings for order, Western man has created chaos by denying that part of his self that integrates while enshrining the parts that fragment experience. These examinations of man's psyche have also convinced me that: the natural act of thinking is greatly modified by culture; Western man uses only a small fraction of his mental capabilities; there are many different and legitimate ways of thinking; we in the West value one of these ways above all others—the one we call "logic," a linear system that has been with us since Socrates.

Western man sees his system of logic as synonymous with the truth. For him it is the only road to reality. Yet Freud educated us to the complexities of the psyche, helping his readers to look at dreams as a legitimate mental process that exists quite apart from the linearity of manifest thought. But his ideas were from the outset strenuously resisted, particularly by scientists and engineers, who were still wedded to a Newtonian model. When taken seriously, Freudian thinking shook the very foundations of conventional thought. Freud's followers, particularly Fromm and Jung, undeterred by popular stereotypes and the tremendous prestige of the physical sciences, added to his theories and bridged the gap between the linear world of logic and the integrative world of dreams.¹

Knowing that the interpretation of dreams, myths, and acts is always to some degree an individual matter,² I cannot help asking myself what a psychoanalytically sophisticated reader would

add to my own interpretation of a sequence of events reported in the New York *Times* concerning a police dog sighted on Ruffle Bar, an uninhabited island near New York.³ Visible only from a distance, the dog, nicknamed the King of Ruffle Bar, had sustained itself for an estimated two years, was apparently in good health, and presumably would have survived in his semi-wild state, barring accidents, for the rest of his natural life. However, some well-meaning soul heard about the dog and reported him to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, thereby setting the bureaucratic wheels in motion. Since the King could not be approached by people, a baited trap was set. According to the *Times* report: “. . . every day, a police launch from Sheepshead Bay takes off for Ruffle Bar, the uninhabited swampy island of the dog. Every day, a police helicopter hovers for a half hour or more over Ruffle Bar.” A radio report of the broadcast at the time described how the helicopter harassed the dog in futile efforts to “catch” (sic) him (he refused to enter the trap) or at least to get a better view of him. Police were quoted as saying the dog “looked in good shape.” When questioned, representatives of the ASPCA said: “When we catch the dog, we will have it examined by a vet, and if it is in good health, we will find a *happy* home for it.”⁴ (italics added)

If this story had been a dream or a myth instead of a news report, there is little doubt as to its interpretation. Both the latent and the manifest content are quite clear, possibly explaining why this local news item was given national coverage. I find, as I go over the story, that free associations come to mind on different levels. The story epitomizes the little man against the big bureaucracy. There is also a delusional side which cannot be overlooked. The ASPCA became obsessed with capturing the dog. Once triggered, the ASPCA involved the police with a remorseless, mindless persistence that is too terrifyingly characteristic of bureaucracies once they are activated. Interestingly enough, the police, having known about the dog for two years, had been content to leave him on the island. Emotionally, they sided with the King, even while carrying out their orders. “Why

don't they leave the dog alone?" said one policeman. Another observed, "The dog is as happy as a pig in a puddle."⁵

The delusional aspects have to do with the institutionalized necessity to control "everything," and the widely accepted notion that the bureaucrat knows what is best; never for a moment does he doubt the validity of the bureaucratic solution. It is also slightly insane, or at least indicative of our incapacity to order priorities with any common sense, to spend thousands of dollars for helicopters, gasoline, and salaries for the sole purpose of bureaucratic neatness.

Even more recently, a *New York Times* news item⁶ reported a U. S. Park Police campaign to stamp out kite flying on the grounds of the Washington Monument. Their charter to harass the kite fliers lay in an old law written by Congress supposedly to keep the Wright brothers' planes from becoming fouled in kite strings.

The psychoanalyst Laing is convinced that the Western world is mad.⁷ These stories of the dog and the kite fliers bolster Laing's view and symbolize man's plight as well as any recent events I know.⁸ However, it is not man who is crazy so much as his institutions⁹ and those culture patterns that determine his behavior. We in the West are alienated from ourselves and from nature. We labor under a number of delusions, one of which is that life makes sense; i.e., that we are sane. We persist in this view despite massive evidence to the contrary. We live fragmented, compartmentalized lives in which contradictions are carefully sealed off from each other. We have been taught to think linearly rather than comprehensively,¹⁰ and we do this not through conscious design or because we are not intelligent or capable, but because of the way in which deep cultural undercurrents structure life in subtle but highly consistent ways that are not consciously formulated. Like the invisible jet streams in the skies that determine the course of a storm, these hidden currents shape our lives; yet their influence is only beginning to be identified. Given our linear, step-by-step, compartmentalized way of thinking,¹¹ fostered by the schools and public media, it is impossible for our leaders to consider events comprehensively or to weigh priorities according to a system of common good, all of

which can be placed like an unwanted waif on culture's doorstep. Yet, paradoxically, few anthropologists are in agreement as to what to include under the general rubric of culture. While it will be denied by some, much depends on the anthropologist's own culture, which exerts a deep and abiding influence not only over how anthropologists think but over where they draw the boundaries in such matters. Frequently, the greater portion of contemporary culture will be excluded or referred to as "mere convention." In a practical sense, the conventions of the field and what one's peers are studying have more to do with what anthropologists define as culture than an appraisal of one's data might indicate. Like everyone else, anthropologists use models, and some models are more fashionable than others. Most of them are handed down and modified periodically.

The reader may well ask, "What is a model?" or "What kind of models are you talking about?" While models and how man uses them are just beginning to be understood, one thing is certain: many different models exist. Mechanical models, such as scale models of airplanes flown in wind tunnels, show how machines and processes work. Models for making molds can reproduce everything from machines to copies of works of art. Life models help the artist fill in gaps in a faulty visual memory. Parents and teachers may be models for the young.

Scientists use theoretical models, often mathematical in nature. These are used to symbolically express certain qualities, quantities, and relationships encountered in life. Econometricians, for example, use these models to investigate how the more measurable aspects of the economic system operate.

Anthropologists use predominantly non-mathematical theoretical models that are rooted in culture. Since culture is itself a series of situational models for behavior and thought, the models anthropologists use are frequently highly abstract versions of parts of models that make up the entire culture (kinship systems, for example).

Man is the model-making organism par excellence. His earliest intellectual endeavors resulted in monuments that mystified and puzzled twentieth-century man until they were figured out. Stonehenge, for example, is a model of the solar system that

enabled the early inhabitants of the Salisbury Plain to make accurate observations of celestial events and to keep track of the seasons, order their ceremonial life, and even predict eclipses at a time when no one would have thought such refined calculations and observations were possible (fifteen hundred to two thousand years B.C.!).

Grammars and writing systems are models of language. Any school child who has struggled to make sense of what he is taught knows that some fit reasonably well, others don't. Myths, philosophical systems, and science represent different types of models of what the social scientists call cognitive systems. The purpose of the model is to enable the user to do a better job in handling the enormous complexity of life. By using models, we see and test how things work and can even predict how things will go in the future. The effectiveness of a model can be judged by how well it works, as well as how consistent it is as a mechanical or philosophical system. People are very closely identified with their models, since they also form the basis for behavior. Men have fought and died in the name of different models of nature.

All theoretical models are incomplete. By definition, they are abstractions and therefore leave things out. What they leave out is as important as, if not more important than, what they do not, because it is what is left out that gives structure and form to the system. Models have a half life—some are ephemeral, others last for centuries. There are highly explicit models, while others are so much a part of life as to be unavailable for analysis except under very special circumstances.

In constructing their models of culture, most anthropologists take into account that there are different levels of behavior: overt and covert, implicit and explicit, things you talk about and things you do not. Also, that there is such a thing as the unconscious, although few are in agreement as to the degree to which the unconscious is influenced by culture. The psychologist Jung, for example, hypothesized a "collective" unconscious that was shared by all mankind (a concept many anthropologists might have trouble accepting). Paradoxically, studying the models that men create to explain nature tells

you more about the men than about the part of nature being studied. In the West, people are more concerned with the content or meaning of the model than they are with how it is put together, is organized, or performs, and the purpose it is supposed to fulfill.

Anthropologists have studied only those things people could or would talk to them about, with the result that many of the important things—culture patterns that make life meaningful and really differentiate one group from another—have gone unnoticed or been unreported and brushed aside as trivial. If one were to use a linguistic analogy, it would be as though there were data on the vocabulary of culture but very little on either the syntactic (grammar) or phonemic systems (alphabets are based on a phonemic analysis). It is not enough to say that the French believe this and the Spanish believe that. Beliefs can change. Beneath the clearly perceived, highly explicit surface culture, there lies a whole other world, which when understood will ultimately radically change our view of human nature. Writing forty years ago, the linguist Sapir started the ball rolling by demonstrating that in language (an important part of culture) man created an instrument that is quite different from what is commonly supposed. He states:

The relation between language and experience is often misunderstood . . . [it] actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience. . . . [L]anguage is much like a mathematical system, which . . . becomes elaborated into a self-contained conceptual system which *previsages all possible experience* in accordance with certain accepted formal limitations. . . . [C]ategories such as number, gender, case, tense, mode, voice, “aspect” and a host of others . . . *are not so much discovered in experience as imposed upon it.* . . . (italics added)¹²

Sapir’s work, which predates McLuhan by thirty-five years, not only makes a stronger, more detailed case than McLuhan that “the media is the message,” but can be extended to include