

stimulus passes through the cell-body and leaves it by the axis-cylinder—the law of dynamic polarisation. But each axis-cylinder is provided by many collaterals which impinge upon the dendrites of many cells, and hence the stimulus thus passing through many cell groups affects a very wide area, arousing impressions which are registered as it travels—the law of avalanche. In like manner an emotional condition arising peripherally may travel a long way. It will impinge upon the basal ganglia and in all probability upon the cortex simultaneously. The physical expression of emotion will be reflexly brought into action, anxiety will develop, the ductless glands will react to the stimulus, and the sympathetic and autonomic nervous mechanism will be thrown out of concord, with the physical results so familiar to us all, such as persistent tachycardia and tremor. It is those phenomena following emotion which show us so clearly the interdependence of the whole nervous system, and demonstrate the futility of concentrating on one part alone. The tendency to-day is to take a broader and more biological view of nervous disorders. Such would seem to be the surest foundation of future research.

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*Some Aspects of Sociology and their Psychiatric Application.*<sup>(1)</sup>

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I.

CULTURE AND ENDOWMENT.

WE attribute great psychopathic significance to the stresses incident to the adjustment of the individual to his culture. Everyone is supposed to bear the marks of this conflict. In fact, this disharmony is blamed for all human unhappiness and inefficiency not due to famine and disease. If this opinion is justified how is it that culture, the product of the mind, is not better adapted to the needs and natural capacities of its creator?

The reason is partly that culture, as an adaptation to reality and the exigencies of social existence, must in some sense be a discipline and a constraint. But even allowing for this and admitting the mechanisms described in *Totem and Tabu*, it remains that culture is not the natural and direct expression of the impulses of the people.

Cultural evolution is largely independent of germinal evolution. This is obvious in the case of language, and can be demonstrated of

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many other contents of tradition. We find cultures rise, stagnate and fall, diverge, fuse, graft and overlap in a way that cannot be attributed to germinal variation. For one thing cultural acquisitions are transmitted to and built upon by the succeeding generations in a way that does not hold for organic characters. Of course the physical basis, the inherited potentiality must pre-exist, but it is *not specific*. Though it sets a "quantitative" limit to the progress of culture, this may never be reached. In such a case inheritance has not played even a negative part in shaping the evolution of the culture concerned.

The relation of endowment to culture is, then, not a simple and causal one. Undoubtedly cultural tend to coincide with racial boundaries, but this is true even of languages which are not germinally transmitted, and the same causes (*e. g.* early upbringing) may account for the *racial* limitation of many other cultural *characters*. Cultures do overflow racial boundaries, and though necessarily, as affecting adults at first, superimposed upon the pre-existing cultures, they may in time permeate and fuse with or oust the latter (*e. g.* Negro adoption of American culture). Cultures can therefore be transmitted regardless of cortical endowment, and it is important to notice that it is precisely the highest and latest acquisitions that are most readily transmitted. If germinal and cultural differentiation of races had proceeded *pari passu* (if the former were the causal series), then surely cultures should more readily assimilate in their generic than in their specific features.

#### THE CONCEPTION OF A CULTURE.

Tradition consists of a great deal more than language. Conceptual thought and knowledge, logic, arts and crafts, law, economic life and social organisation, family usages and sex customs, religious belief, myth and ritual, all these and more form the social heritage. Even personal ideals and ambitions, attitudes, habits, tastes and interests are all powerfully or decisively influenced by social contacts.

Culture is not merely a sum, a collection of practices and lore. Under the dominance of a religious belief or some other sentiment it becomes relatively organised. Pride of race may not only keep the race pure, but may even confine a culture to a race, as to some extent is the case with the Jews. But the sentiment may refer to class sect, caste, or even to the culture itself, which thereby acquires great stability. On the other hand, the contact of two cultures leads to criticism, speculation and tolerance, and tends to produce a diversity of minds. In this way both may be fertilised and stimulated to rapid development and complication.

Certain homogeneous cultures are so "organised," integrated, preserve so truly a definite and characteristic form that some writers have conceived them as GROUP MINDS, attributing to them individuality and all the characters of mind as it is commonly understood. Others have been unjustly accused of this metaphysical speculation. With these controversies we have nothing to do, but they demonstrate the necessity for a clear conception of culture and of its relation to individual mind.

Culture is entirely composed of "mental contents." Apart from the minds in which it is embodied it has no existence. (This is clearly stated by many who use the term group mind.) Yet, as the tissues of an organism may be renewed throughout by waste and repair without affecting its "form" and individuality, so may a culture propagate itself indefinitely as a whole with *some* degree of integration. Its constituent minds are its vehicle or "body"; in itself it is no more than a "pattern" to which they conform. It has the same kind of existence as a vortex or eddy, assimilating the infant minds of the rising to make good the loss of the passing generation. These minds are formed, moulded to type, sometimes with a very narrow range of deviation. Homogeneous cultures are powerful social forces making for mental stereotypy and hence for their own unaltered persistence.

One factor of stability is obvious. Those (individual) endowments which are most apt to respond to the prevailing culture will be encouraged, stimulated, educated and improved in every way to the neglect of the less apt. Wide deviations from this arbitrary "optimum" will be to some extent isolated, atrophied from lack of harmonious intercourse, and thus denied their full potential development. Extreme deviations are coerced, repressed, or even actively eliminated, not because they are manifestly inferior, but simply as deviations from the norm. There is thus a sort of CULTURAL SELECTION of individuals which will tend to mould the innate (mental) dispositions of a race *to their culture*. Even to the small extent to which individual and independent thought, art, etc., is possible, it does not follow that it will be able in turn to influence culture. Mental development, therefore, not only tends to be moulded exclusively within the lines of the extant culture, but chance "improvements" on that culture as "strange" or "unintelligible" tend to be ignored and thus to leave no record of their existence. It is for these reasons that cultural development owes more to the influence of "other cultures" than to "supermen" of its own population; the latter factor is not sufficiently organised, wide-spread and persistent to affect its inertia, and is thus unable to survive.