2. Some Cultural Imperatives 1

As we look at human groups the world over we see that certain groups share in common the fact that all the activities in which they engage can be shown to function in the final analysis (1) to maintain the biologic functioning of the group members; (2) to reproduce new members for the group; (3) to socialize new members into functioning adults; (4) to produce and distribute goods and services necessary to life; (5) to maintain order within the group, and between itself and outsiders; and (6) to define the "meaning of life" and maintain the motivation to survive and engage in the activities necessary for survival.

These six categories are wide and broadly inclusive. They do not at all rep- resent the only possible way in which human activities can be classified. But they do state, perhaps as well as any other way, the underlying ends which the broadest range 0£ human activities tend to serve. They are at thc: same time sufficiently inclusive So that any concrete human action can be shown to serve ends in 'one, several, or all 0£ these six areas.

With regard to the activities so described, we can offer a hypothesis, evidence for which we will attempt to present in the next chapter, when we consider in some detail the range of concrete activities included in these various categories. This hypothesis states that these six classes of activities represent not only what various groups the world over actually do but, additionally, what these groups have to do i£ they are to survive and continue as human groups. Some human groups engage in a lesser number of activities. But of those whose activities serve all six of the ends listed- to these groups we here provisionally assign the term "societies"-our hypothesis contends that the ability to continue to achieve any one of these ends in an adequate and continuing way depends on the adequate performance 0£ all five other ends. Hypothetically and provisionally we may label these ends-to-be- achieved as the "functional prerequisites of societal survival and continuity."

Human societies follow a variety of approaches to achieve these prerequisites. Some societies conduct their affairs in such a way that their continued existence is always precariously in danger. Others organize the performance of the functional prerequisites So as to approximate the maximum possible. A fundamental premise here is that all societies can be shown to vary between a point where their survival and continuity chances are at a minimum and a contrasting point where their chances for continuity are at a maximum. "Maximum" is used in the sense that there is the fullest possible performance of the functional prerequisites within the limits of the available resources and the values in the society which govern what should be done with those resources.

We may shorten this proposition to read that all societies vary on a continuum whose two end points are (1) the least efficient use 0£ resources and (2) the most efficient use of resources.

The point of least efficient use is the point of least survival chances. The point of most efficient use is the point of max- imum survival chances. The factual question to be answered in deciding where on this continuum any society falls is: "To what extent is the group using its available resources in the most rationally efficient manner, given continuity 0£ the group as the desired end?"

Many complex theoretical issues are raised by the use 0£ the terms ..minimum" and "maximum" survival chances. This is not the place to discuss these in any detail. For present purposes it is per- haps sufficient to understand that any society can do little or much with its resources, that at certain observable points its own existence and continuity is threatened, while at other points it is functioning in such a way that far more than simple minimum needs are being met, far more than minimum satisfactions are being derived by its members, and its survival chances are there- fore far from being at a minimum.

Some students choose to use the "competitive ability" of a society as the measure of its survival value. This makes the "ability to fight successful wars" the practical measure of survival chances. But can we apply this criterion equally to great political powers, small national states, and nonliterate tribes? All three kinds of groups-great states, smaller national powers, and nonliterate tribes- represent types of continuing societies. The latter two obviously could not possibly fight a successful war against a major political power. Does this mean, then, that small national states and nonliterate tribes are not meeting minimum survival necessities? Since it is easily observable that they are meeting such requirements and continue to survive, it makes little sense to use "ability to compete" as the criterion. It does make considerable sense, however, to try to understand how different societies, with different degrees of resources and power, are all able to survive and continue as going social sys- terns. It is precisely for the purposes of such analysis

that it makes sense to com- pare societies with regard to the various ways in which they fulfill the functional prerequisites.

Finally, before considering the ranges)f activities included in the categories of functional prerequisites, one further assertion must be made. If the solutions to "he problems of the functional prerequisites are to be adequate guarantees of societal continuity, they must be societal solutions, more or less suitable to a relatively large number of people in the society. The more widely satisfactory the solutions, the closer does the society approximate the point of maximum survival chances. Conversely, the more widely unsatisfactory the solutions, the closer does the group approximate the point where its continuity is threatened.

To summarize these various assertions we may note that:
1. All societies engage in common activities which function to solve problems common to them all.
2. The *solution* of these problems is the prerequisite for societal continuity.
3. One measure of the efficiency of a solution is the extent to which the solution is satisfactory to a large or small number of members of the society.
4. The more rationally efficient the solutions, the more adequate the chance of survival and continuity, and vice versa.

Maintenance of Meaning and Motivation. Perhaps this is a master category which is present in and gives tone and support to all five preceding categories. We mean this in the sense that no human activity is possible unless humans are motivated to perform the activity in question. Therefore, when we speak of problems of production, reproduction, or socialization, there is the implication that a fundamental part of the problem is to motivate the members of the social group to produce, reproduce, and socialize their children in standard ways.

We should note that humans do not act randomly, but always in conformity with their definitions of the situation-they act in terms of their conceptions of what is and what they think ought to be. These definitions tend to fall within the restrictions imposed upon them by nature, by available human resources, and the definitions of the situation held by other men with whom they interact.

This says in effect that a prime element in the problem of feeding and clothing individuals in society" is that of motivating them to engage in the kind of activities which are prerequisite for the satisfaction of these needs. Perhaps the major task for any society, therefore is, to provide new members with a patterned set of life conditions which will make them want to continue to live in the first place (though some- times as in war a society must attempt to pattern its members to be willing to die). In the second place it must provide them with a patterned set of explanations of the "purpose of it all," in short, a sense of the worthwhileness of the whole human venture. Or it must attempt to reduce this question to an unimportant status in the realm of problems which confront man. Or as another alternative it must provide some means of securing respite from the disturbance which over- reflection on the problem of the mean- ing of human existence can bring. Drugs, alcohol, movies, entertainment of every description, culturally standardized re- wards for being insensitive, all ways that allow for the vicarious discharge of ten- sions-these can and do function as modes of maintaining psychic' equilibrium.

The problem of motivation is most clearly recognized by societies during times of crisis, especially times of crisis relations with other groups. In these situations the society is confronted with the task of *bringing to consciousness* the idea of the positive worthwhileness of maintaining the society. War slogans and propaganda are good examples of what societies do in this regard under such times of stress.

During times of relative noncrisis the problem of maintaining motivation is not usually explicitly or consciously dealt with. The human is so constructed that unless taught otherwise most of his reactions to stimuli are in terms of self-preservation. On the basis of this general self-preservative mechanism society builds motivation right into each of the major problems and the patterns of activities attendant upon them. Thus, the motivation to pursue survival activities is not an abstract and separate feature of our lives. It is built right into the very pat- tern of the activity itself. We are taught work habits, how to conduct our social relations, and the like, in such a way that their desirability and the reasons for engaging in them are not questioned but taken for granted. Or if questioned they are rationalized for us so that the answers are usually satisfactory and become part of our very innermost core of personality.

Certain types of institutional sanctions are found to function in any society to reinforce these motivations and conceptions of desirability of our patterned way of life. The religious institutions, with their appeal to ultimate values sanctioned by supernatural deities or forces, give to our everyday actions a sense of combined purpose and unity. The prevailing philosophical ideologies express the "over-all purposes" of our existence, and these are translated into everyday terms for us by the movies, the pulp and slick-paper magazines, and the bestsellers. Crises occur sufficiently periodically in Western European society-as well as other areas -so that all the apparatus which functions to sanction our "reason for existence" in a dramatic and spectacular way is brought to play upon us.

The very act of performing our every- day activities is itself a source of reinforcement of the values and meaning held to be implicit in them. We do what we do because this is what we are supposed to do. We think and feel what we think and feel for the same reasons.

The problem 0£ finding meaning for one's existence and motivation to continue it rather than end it becomes acute only for those members of the society who have through one means or another arrived on the margin of the society where they can at least in part see their society as a specimen. They become marginal men and observers rather than participators. For most of us, by contrast, there is rarely any question about the worthwhileness of it all. We are too occupied simply in doing what we are doing, without having adequate time, energy or equipment to reflect about the significance, if any, of our activities. Societies the world over count on this immersion in the business 0£ maintaining life as the best of guarantees that the immersion will continue.

Our daily social relations with others who are similarly desensitized help to reinforce our own desensitization. At the same time they also help to reinforce the idea of the rightness of pattern of customary activities, when and if it *is* ever brought into question. We acquire a sense of meaning in relation to those with whom we associate and to our notion of their opinions about us. It is not difficult for us to find others who make us feel that our lives are worthwhile. Part of the function of prejudice and discrimination is to insure the existence of a group with reference to which one can always acquire a sense of one's own esteem and significance.

All this is ritualized regularly in most societies by public festivals of one kind or another and by religious and magical reaffirmation of the worthwhileness of ultimate values. Patriotic holidays, Christmas, harvest festivals, Mother's Day, and what not, become occasions when we cast a special aura about a given value and reintegrate it and reinforce its integration in our value systems.

The ability of a society to concentrate and focus its energies in specified directions is dependent upon the members of that society agreeing on the worthwhile- ness of these various foci. The more unified the conception of what is desirable, the more unified the efforts and the greater the efficiency in the activities directed toward those ends. The more worthwhile the members of a group feel their group and their individual existences to be, the more energy will tend to be devoted to those activities which are considered essential for group survival.

Hence, finally, of this category of activities we may also assert that it fulfills the essential characteristics of a functional prerequisite.

Conclusions. In the foregoing section we have attempted to describe certain categories of activities engaged in by human societies, and to illustrate and demonstrate four contentions with regard to them:
1. These were categories 0£ activities in which all societies engaged.
2. These categories also described certain problems, the solutions to which were functionally prerequisite to societal continuity as defined.
3. The degree to which the patterns 0£ solution were generally accessible and acceptable conditioned the efficiency 0£ the solution.
4. The more rationally efficient the solution, the greater the survival chances 0£ the society.

We have not by any means made an exhaustive listing of the forms of concrete activities which are included in the described categories. But the reader may experiment in his own mind and will perhaps discover that any imaginable human social action can be shown to have as its functions some consequence, positive or negative, for the solution 0£ problems in anyone, several, or all 0£ these six basic areas. It is from the functional consequences of these activities that we infer these six areas to be the areas of problems common to all men in all societies. It is within the framework

of these six *generalized* problem areas that the culture or the "way of life" of a particular society or group is built. All acts of men, all rules of behavior, every situation of social interaction can be seen as directly or indirectly expressive of a desired solution for one of several of these problems. This interest in solution to problems may be highly conscious as it frequently is in the case of the inventor. Or as is most often the case, it may simply be an "unconscious," habitual form of behavior, as in the case of worshipping a particular god.

These six areas of problems are characteristic of all human social life. Within these areas there occurs all the social behavior which is distinctively human. Not any single area, but all of them taken together and viewed as a network of social activities constitute the frame- work of human society-the condition of man.