

COMMON HUMANITY AND DIVERSE CULTURES

by
Clyde Kluckhohn

Anthropology is the study of the similarities and the differences, both biological and behavioral, among the past and present, primitive and sophisticated peoples of the world. Nature having carried out many "experiments" in biological and cultural variation, the task of the anthropologist is to read off, analyze, and compare the results of these "experiments." Thus, the investigation of "primitive" groups is not an end in itself, but rather the equivalent of a laboratory. In principle, the anthropologist is as much concerned with Americans, Belgians, Chinese, and Russians as with the Ashanti, the Arunta, the Chukchee, and the Tupinamba. But "primitives" must be included to get the full range of variability of human nature.

Methodologically and conceptually, anthropology has borrowed from the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. Intellectually, the discipline has only four unifying factors:

1. A focus on man in all his variation and similarity.
2. A consistently comparative point of view.
3. A stubborn conviction that history, physique, environmental situation, way of life, and language are all related in discoverable patterns.
4. A premise that the nonrational and irrational aspects of human behavior must be investigated along with the rational.

These points of departure largely determine the specific characteristics of anthropology as opposed to the other disciplines concerned with man and his works. The unique and the general are equal concerns of anthropology. Its data (whether handaxes or blood pressure or values) are eventually seen in the perspective of similar data from various populations. In other words, the comparative perspective is as constantly dominant as is that of "holism." Anthropology, rather than restricting its attention to the purely biological, geographical, political, or whatever, considers phenomena in the widest feasible context. In contrast to economics, for example, anthropology emphasizes the nonrational and irrational factors as much as the rational. Indeed, it may be said that the primary specialty of cultural anthropology is the nonrational (i.e., customary) aspect of human conduct, whereas psychiatry and areas of psychology have taken the irrational factors as their specialty.

Anthropology, psychology, and sociology all deal with the same data or, at any rate, with data of the same order, though only the first two have an explicit and sustained concern with the biological dimensions. But the questions asked of the data, though overlapping, have characteristic stresses. Psychology devotes itself mainly to the individual as a unique organism: his maturation, learning, perception, and motivation. Anthropology and sociology take, as their primary point of reference, the individual as a member of a particular group. To differentiate further, the sociologist is most interested in interaction processes and in such topics as stratification, delinquency, and demography which have been abstracted from their total social and cultural contexts.

On the other hand, cultural anthropology—to which the remainder of this essay will be devoted—takes as its focus those forms and modes of behavior that are the resultants of universal human nature as affected by the accidents of history, precipitated in so many distinct cultures. The most specific quality of anthropological research arises from its preoccupation with culture. This concept (in the technical, anthropological sense) refers to those *selective* ways of feeling, thinking and reacting that distinguish one group from another—ways that are socially transmitted and learned (with, of course, some change through time) by each new generation. In the strict sense, we can speak of culture only when there are two or more objectively possible and functionally effective means or modes of meeting the same need (for example, shelter, choice and preparation of food, weaning of children), and a given group exhibits a consistent and stylized preference for one path to the goal among a number of alternatives that are—from the observer's point of view—all open.

A culture is not merely a congeries of customs. One cannot grasp the network of selective principles unless one understands the core values, the cognitive assumptions, and what the logicians call the "primitive categories." The way of life that is handed down as the social heritage of every people does more than supply a set of skills for making a living and a set of blueprints for human relations. Each different way of life makes its own assumptions about the ends and purposes of human existence, about ways by which knowledge may be obtained, about the organization of the pigeonholes in which each sense datum is filed, about what human beings have a right to expect from each other and from the gods, about what is "good" and "right" or "better" and "worse," about what constitutes fulfillment or frustration. Some of these assumptions are made explicit in the lore of the folk; others are tacit premises which the observer must infer by finding consistent trends in word and deed. The unstated assumptions (in particular) are ordinarily taken for granted as an ineradicable part of human nature, and naive participants in one culture find it hard to understand that normal persons could possibly conceive life in other terms. In other words, many cultural premises and categories are nonrational, and defensive attitudes related to them may be decidedly irrational.

Anthropology in Today's World

The hybrid monster, anthropology, is lusty these days. In a world in which educated men and women now recognize that the ways of other tribes and nations cannot remain matters of indifference or antiquarian curiosity, anthropology suddenly finds itself fashionable. Anthropologists have returned from the natives and are thinking and talking about the wide contemporary world. In the present situation the constancies and variations between peoples, and the reasons for them, are a matter of the most intense practical as well as intellectual concern. Hence anthropology is taught in the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State, lectured upon in the various war colleges, and studied—by requirement—by candidates for some sections of the British Civil Service.

The panorama of peoples and their ways constructed by recent anthropology has made a number of significant contributions to the modern temper, to the point of view held by educated men and women generally. The most specific is perhaps the demonstration, alike by physical and cultural anthropologists, that, although there may be meaningful biological differences between populations, "race," as judged by observation of a few outwardly visible features, is not a trustworthy guide. This conclusion rests, in part, on what is probably anthropology's broadest generalization: the necessity of taking into account the cultural dimensions in all understanding of human behavior. In generality and in explanatory power, "culture" is on a level with the categories of gravity in physics, disease in medicine, and gene in biology. Any particular culture of given locus in space or time is merely a specific manifestation of a greater phenomenon of which any one variant is only a temporary phase. For example, the culture of Classic Greece is seen as building upon prior civilizations of the Near East and the Mediterranean basin and also as one early climax in repeated strivings of men toward humanistic rationality. Thus, a dynamic conception of human social life replaces a static one.

But anthropological knowledge and the anthropological viewpoint are disturbing to many. In the first place, they seem to challenge "common sense" and threaten the stability of familiar, cherished values. They make enormously complex the question "What is human nature?"—to which the "practical" man and the traditional intellectual find it convenient to have a pat answer. In the second place, anthropology seems to some to open the way to a complete and chaotic relativism. The empirical data of anthropology do not warrant this fear. Yet it must be admitted that only recently have anthropologists begun to give the order and similarity in human cultures equal weight with their contrast and variability. In spite of this, anthropology has, directly and indirectly, made an important, if not the leading, contribution to the rebirth of a conception that was taken for granted by, say, Pascal and Burke—and perhaps Goethe—but which for a hundred years was obscured: namely, that the things all men hold in common bulk at least as large as those that separate them. Anthropology, as well as technology—especially in the realm of communication—has made physical appearance, language, and custom seem less relevant than humanity. The creation myths of the Polynesians take their place with those of the Hebrews. When T.S. Eliot juxtaposes Dante, Heraclitus, and a Sanscrit epic, or James Joyce draws words from a dozen languages and folklore from fifty cultures, when Igor Stravinsky and Karl Orff write music that is simultaneously "primitive" and Greek and Oriental, then we are living in an anthropologically sensitive world. The massive continuities of human experience

blend and cumulate more and more, rather than remain isolated and disparate.

There are some, also, who are not happy that anthropologists are now working in international relations and industry and studying contemporary civilizations generally. Anthropologists feel that a science that sees institutions and values in cross-cultural perspective has its necessary place in all investigations of mid-twentieth century problems. But those who are troubled by anthropology's new look doubt the applicability of anthropological methods to complex, dynamic cultures. It is true that some anthropologists have been too hasty and far-reaching in entering the "modern" arena. And one can point to a few irresponsible pronouncements suggesting that anthropology has *the* answer rather than a useful but partial and limited contribution to make to *some* contemporary problems. There are anthropologists who are undoubtedly a bit intoxicated by the heady wine of a little power over the here and now, for, until recently, they had drunk only the austere nectar of detached contemplation of the long ago and far away. On the other hand, it is only factual to point out that the great bulk of anthropological publication remains descriptive, detailed, and rigorous within the limits of the theoretical framework. Against the few messianically tinged books of too-facile generalization that have caught the public eye, one can name hundreds of solid monographs produced in the same time period.

Finally, some theologians and philosophers reproach anthropology with *exalting* the irrational and nonrational aspects of human behavior. Actually, anthropology has very seldom been "vitalist" in tone, urging a surrender to the forces of chaos and unreason. Rather, anthropology has been steadily committed to the search of discoverable regularities. Regularities are the common responses of diverse persons to similar situations; in discovering them, one finds both rational and nonrational components underlying personal choices, however individualistic, erratic, and irrational such choices may appear to be in particular cases. In this way, anthropology seeks to extend the areas which reason can understand and perhaps to some extent control. This may help a little to halt the flight to the irrational, the terrified retreat to the older orthodoxies which we have seen on a mass scale in this century. The hallmark of the good anthropologist must be a curious mixture of passion and reserve.

The Anthropologist and His Informants

Ideally, the anthropologist's attitude toward his informants is that of "attached-detachment." That is to say, he studies his fellow men not solely as a dispassionate observer but also as a participant observer. He tries to feel with them, to see things as they see them, to experience some portion of their life with them. On the other hand, he tries to balance his identifications with detached objectivity. He must avoid the sentimental, the romantic, the conscious or unconscious attempt to "go native." As an anthropologist, he recognizes that no adult can—or should want—to shed his own culture completely. One great contribution to anthropology is that of supplying some emancipation from the values of any single culture. Yet the qualified "some" must be emphasized. A person who views with complete detachment (emotional as well as intellectual) the designs for living of the group in which he was socialized is by definition rootless, disoriented, unhappy. He has lost the simple unselfconscious adhesion to those cognitive and moral norms that integrate the personality and constitute a necessary base for the understanding of other personalities and the comprehension of other norms that prevail in different social groups. An anthropologist who was truly and utterly free from his own culture would be no more competent to study other ways of life than an individual who has lost his memory is able to grasp all of what is going on around him.

Anthropologists, moreover, are aware that they are often unconsciously motivated by dislike of their own culture to escape into the exotic. Therefore the danger—which exists as a possibility for all men—of casting completely adrift from one's cultural moorings is particularly grave for the anthropologist, alike because of temperamental selectivity and because of training and experience. Anthropologists must, therefore, if they are to do successful scientific work, cling to their own cultural as well as personal identities. Their role as outsiders has other advantages comparable to those enjoyed by the psychiatrist with respect to his patients. What anthropologists refer to as "stranger value" means that the informant will be open to the outside investigator on matters on which he must preserve reticence with those who will be enduringly involved in the network of his life. But the

anthropologist does not go as far as the psychoanalyst in presenting himself as an aloof and impersonal screen upon which subjects may project their problems and conflicts. While remaining firmly a detached outsider in his total role, he nevertheless behaves with warmth and sympathy in immediate personal relations. Anthropological research demands that we not only observe our fellow men but also live with them. A tag from Walt Whitman could well serve as the motto of the anthropological field worker: "Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it." In short, the anthropologist must behave and see and feel from within the foreign cultural context and, at the same time, withdraw and analyze.

The anthropological conception is quite distinct from that which is most typical of American sociologists. Bennett and Wolff (1955, p. 334) correctly say:

Sociologists and anthropologists approach and perceive man differently; they have different *images of man*. In his search for laws and his interest in the abstract, the sociologist tends to view man as a technically "non-human" item, subject to many forces (including the sociologist's impersonal measurements). In this view, man is an element of nature, immersed in his environment—and the sociologist stands apart, observing and measuring man-in-environment.

For the anthropologist, man is not a figure within a ground, but rather a figure against that ground; he is a human phenomenon, everlastingly variable, predictable only within broad limits if at all, and knowable only on a series of virtually infinite levels of understanding. . . . While the sociologist proposes to stand away, to perceive man "objectively," not to involve his own feelings and reactions, the cultural anthropologist has often striven to know man through his own feelings and reactions, to view the human beings he studies as "fellow men," not as "subjects."

The sociologist stresses distance, the anthropologist an equilibrium of involvement and detachment.

The anthropological premise is that (if I may paraphrase Zola) science is nature *vue a travers d'un temperament*. The anthropologist deliberately uses his own feelings and reactions as one of his instruments of research. This means that he must acquire some measure of understanding and control over this instrument whether by a personal psychoanalysis or simply through professional training and experience. Otherwise his work will be altogether at the mercy of unconscious pressures to select only certain kinds of informants, to be blind to much of what goes on about him, to be anaesthetized to sizable sectors of the culture. Self-understanding will not eliminate all distortions, though it will minimize some of them. Yet it will remain largely the case that we see things "not as they are, but as we are." All science is invention rather than discovery, as Bergson remarked in his introduction to the French translation of William James's *Pragmatism*.

However, so long as scientists face and take systematic account of the active role of the observer, these "inventions" are not disparate and irreconcilable monads created by the scientific imagination. No two anthropologists will ever see "the same" culture in identical terms any more than one can step twice into the same river. At the same time, science acquires wider and deeper knowledge of cultures precisely because of the variabilities in the natures and temperaments of different observers. Richness is gained at the sacrifice only of an illusion—namely that cultural reality in its infinite variation can ever be completely captured and recorded with perfect objectivity. Nevertheless, most of what is essential and perduring can be reconstructed, given sufficient data from the culture in its own terms (artifacts, texts, accurate records of observed behavior), by doing a "triangulation" of views of the culture obtained from the different angles of vision supplied by the varying backgrounds and temperaments of independent investigators. This view presupposes both that there are varying perspectives and that there is a discoverable "objective reality." Father T.V. Moore (1933, p. viii) has put the matter well: "One might view a landscape from various mountain peaks and every height would give a different picture, but the lakes and rivers that stretched out beneath one's gaze could in no case be arbitrarily arranged in relation to the point of view."

The observed is no more passive and inert than the observer. This fact, in turn, supplies advantage as well as difficulty. Each unexpected reaction from a new informant is likely to reveal a fresh facet of the culture as well as an idiosyncratic response of personality. The anthropologist must systematically

exploit the variabilities in interaction—to himself as representative of a foreign culture, to himself as an individual, between participants in the culture in terms of their individualities and their culturally specified roles—in order to factor out least-common denominators that give the culture its distinctive form. This he must do as well as be the patient student of his “native” teachers.

The difficulty—and I think it is one that cannot be completely resolved—arises primarily from the circumstance that the intervention of the observer instigates acts which otherwise would never have occurred. The presence of the anthropologist not only evokes sequences of behavior which lay bare cultural structure but also causes change. Cultures are, not closed, but open systems. Hence, the very process of field work may invalidate a well-conceived research design. This I know from experience. More than twenty years ago my associates and I began a longitudinal study of a carefully selected sample of Navaho Indian babies. These we observed and tested much more intensively than our control groups, who included siblings of the core sample. When, after an absence from the field for some months, I visited a little girl who had reached the age of ten, she became sulky and finally angry because for an hour or more I engaged in general conversation with her family. At last she screamed and struck her older sister, saying: “You know perfectly well he doesn’t come here to see you and the others. He comes to see *me*. All the rest of you stop talking to him.” Our research objective had been to discover the ordinary course of personality formation among the Navaho, but, obviously, the course of this child’s development had been altered to some degree by the research itself.

Perhaps the only cultural studies wherein the anthropologist does not alter somewhat by his very presence the materials that he is investigating are those of archaeology and linguistics. Nevertheless, if one conceives—as I do—of the ultimate aim of cultural anthropology as enquiry into the nature of human nature (with the depiction of the distinctive features of separate cultures as a means to this end and also an intrinsically worthwhile by-product), then changes brought about by the introduction of the observer are instructive even when they lead to the appreciable modification, or even the destruction, of the original culture.

.....

Cultural Constants and Variants

Anthropology—along with psychology and psychiatry—is building a model of “raw” human nature, a general conception of man, of human limits and potentialities. The anthropologist’s special contribution is that of documenting empirically the constants and the variants in the human record. The constants presumably reflect our common humanity; they arise out of the biological nature of the species and the necessities imposed by the universal aspects of the human condition (generalities of the physical environment, helplessness of infants, family life, and the like). The variants mirror cultural differences, for cultures in their uniqueness represent precipitates of the accidents of history, including the variations in the physical environments to which peoples have had to adapt. But the variants equally reveal at least a part of the range of the response potentialities of our species. If practitioners of the Yoga cult attain to voluntary control of their anal sphincters, then we can no longer say this is biologically impossible for men. Or, we can take Aztec human sacrifice or Hindu asceticism and introspection or Polynesian-Melanesian cannibalism and say: “Of these extremes, at least, human beings are capable.”

But while a model of human nature is being constructed, anthropologists must work with a provisional theory which has developed from fact and analysis thus far available. These postulates, whether explicitly or implicitly held, enter in fact into all anthropological field work. I shall first list them briefly in a form to which I believe most anthropologists would give assent. I shall then explicate the grounds for holding them.

1. The logic (i.e., the fundamental processes of reasoning) of all peoples is the same, but the premises and basic categories are somewhat different. Different premises likewise lead to different epistemologies.

2. Human nature is in some sense the same throughout space and time. This does not signify, however, as common sense tends to assume, that similar stimuli will regularly produce similar responses.

Marcel Mauss has called the anthropologist "the astronomer of human constellations:" *Il faut, avant tout, dresser le catalogue le plus grand possible de categories; il faut partir de toutes celles dont on peut savoir que les hommes se sont servis. On verra alors qu'il y a encore bien des lunes mortes, ou pales, ou obscures au firmament de la raison.* It was—and is—an indispensable scientific requirement that the gamut of human variability be explored exhaustively in order to know the empirically determinable range of human nature. But in their fascination—almost obsession—with the staggeringly extensive spectrum of actualized possibilities, anthropologists tended for long to see only the outward forms, the somewhat external trappings of custom. They lost sight of the likenesses. And yet the fact of a common human nature is demonstrated by an elementary and exceptionless induction from anthropological field experience. However masked the human beings of another culture may strike the observer at first, however much they may initially present themselves simply as players of unfamiliar roles defined by new culture, the anthropologist eventually—but inevitably—recognizes similarities to personalities he has known elsewhere. As Robert Redfield has written:

One must get beyond the culture to those elements in the behavior of the people which are, after all, the same as one's own. For as one comes to understand people who live by institutions and values different from one's own, at the same time one comes to see that these people are, nevertheless, like one's own people. The alien culture at first appears to us as a mask, enigmatic or repugnant. On close acquaintance we see it as a garment for the spirit; we understand its harmonies and appreciate them. Finally, as acquaintance goes deeper still, we do not see or for a time forget, the culture, but look only to the common humanity of the men and women underneath.

The investigator, even before he has learned the language, can "understand" much of what he observes because his subjects manifest hostility, altruism, pride, shame, sorrow, and need. It is true that when he learns the language he will discover that the terms for these are not minutely synonymous with those in his own tongue—the conceptual terrains will differ in extent, in relationships to other concepts, and in shadings. What will evoke these universal human feelings and the ways in which they are expressed may differ drastically. However, he will and must recognize their affinities, see that they are so many phenotypes of a prototypical, pan-human genotype. Field work would be possible under no other conditions. The stranger would either flee or be killed or quite literally go mad. If I may quote once again from the luminous writing of Redfield:

It may be asserted that all (normal) men and women have the same human nature. . . . But it cannot be asserted that all men have the same personality or that all groups have the same culture; although it is properly asserted that all men have personalities, and that all continuing groups of people who communicate with one another are characterized by culture. By human nature we mean that nature which everyone (after infancy) of our species has, if provided with the usual capacities, when he is brought up in a society characterized by culture. It is the nature we assume we shall meet in every man or woman, no matter where we meet him, or her. We assume, and rightly, that every human being has something of which he may be proud, and something of which he may be ashamed. Before we have even tried to communicate with him, we know that if we hit upon what he finds amusing or shocking, he will be amused or shocked; that he will desire praise, and that he will give up present pleasures for some deferred good which he values highly. . . . The anthropologist demonstrates the existence of human nature whenever he finds out what an exotic people are thinking and feeling. He can do this only by supposing that they have in common with him certain acquired propensities of attitude; these are human nature. To be able to find out what it is that a Zuni Indian is ashamed of, one must first know what it is to be ashamed. Although anthropologists commonly make assertions to the effect that "human nature is infinitely malleable," or speak of "the refutation of human nature," as an achievement of their science, they

in fact recognize its existence every day.

There is a generalized framework that underlies the more apparent and striking facts of cultural relativity. All cultures constitute so many somewhat different answers to essentially the same questions posed by human biology and by the generalities of the human situation. Every society's patterns for living must provide for approved and sanctioned ways of dealing with such universal circumstances as the existence of two sexes; the helplessness of infants; the need for satisfaction of the elementary requirement of food, warmth, and sex; the presence of individuals of different ages and of differing physical and other capacities. The basic similarities in human biology the world over are vastly more massive than the variations. Equally, there are certain necessities in social life for this kind of organism, regardless of where life is carried on or in what culture. Co-operation to obtain subsistence and for other ends requires a certain minimum of reciprocal behavior, a standard system of communication and indeed of mutually accepted values. The broad outlines of the ground plans of all cultures are and have to be about the same, because always and everywhere men are faced with certain unavoidable problems which arise out of the situation "given" by nature.

Some aspects of culture and some manifestations of human nature take their specific forms as a consequence of historical accidents; others are shaped by forces which can properly be regarded as universal. . . . Incest regulations contrasted with couvade and cannibalism serve as a good example. The essential psychological and behavioral possibilities for all three are present among humans. But the latter two present a sporadic occurrence, whereas the incest taboo (though the details differ) is absolutely universal. Nevertheless, it has its cultural dimensions. Highly similar stimuli and highly similar situations do not produce identical responses. The universality of incest avoidance is, as Freud and others have pointed out, related to the nuclear family and other ubiquitous factors. Yet this accounts neither for the extension of such taboos beyond the nuclear family nor for the diverse ways in which different cultures define the categories of prohibited relatives.

I have said that in a certain deep sense the logic (which means the modes of interpreting relationships between phenomena) of all members of the human species is the same. The differences in thinking and reacting arise from the value premises and existential conceptions about the nature of the external world and of human nature. These premises are learned as part of a cultural tradition. Such degree of synthesis as exists within a culture is achieved partly through the overt statements of dominant conceptions, assumptions, and aspirations of the group in its religious beliefs, secular thought, and ethical and legal codes, and partly through unconscious apperceptive habits—ways of perceiving and evaluating the stream of events that are so taken for granted as seldom or never to be verbalized explicitly except when challenged from without.

While the habits of men's minds, the habitual ways of begging certain questions that are distinctive of cultures, influence or determine much differentiated behavior, some values, as well as some modes of thinking, characterize the species as a whole. Every culture has a concept of murder, distinguishing this from execution, killing in war, and other kinds of "justifiable homicide." Some societies are callous to suffering. Some justify suffering as a means to the ends of the society (e.g., punishment) or as a means to the ends of the individual mystical exaltation or purification.) No society values human suffering as an end in itself. The notions of prohibitions upon untruth under defined circumstances, of restitution and reciprocity, of mutual obligations between parents and children—these and many other moral concepts are altogether universal. And these values which are a part of human nature are as much "in" the organism as those standards of biological normality of which Canguilhem writes: *S'il existe des normes biologiques c'est parce que la vie, étant non pas seulement soumission au milieu mais institution de son milieu propre, pose par là-même des valeurs non seulement dans le milieu mais aussi dans l'organisme même.*

In sum, cultures are distinct yet similar and comparable. The features that lend uniqueness are the secondary or variable ones. There is a proper analogy between cultures and personalities. Each human being is unique in his concrete totality, but he resembles all other human beings in certain respects and some particular human beings a great deal. Some similarities are the consequence of

common learning experiences; others are the result of genetically controlled biological tendencies. It is no more correct to limit each way of life to its distinctive features and organization than to deny to each personality those aspects that derive from cultural heritage and from participation in common humanity. The common understandings between men of different cultures are very broad, very general, very easily obscured by languages and other immediately apparent symbols. True universals or near universals are apparently few in number. But they seem to be as deep-going as they are rare. Anthropology's facts attest that the phrase "a common humanity" is in no sense meaningless. Indeed, it is an essential pre-condition of our being able to study each other.

To discover something about the limits and potentialities of human nature, to see how this universal nature is molded by varying cultures, and especially to learn something about those nonrational cultural responses which appear to the naive view to possess almost the automatic character of "instinctive" reactions—this is no mere academic query. The fate of our Western civilization and perhaps of civilization in general may hang upon humanity's gaining some orderly and systematic insight into the nonrational or irrational factors in human behavior. E.R. Dodds, Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford, has expressed all this more eloquently than I can:

We . . . have experienced a great age of rationalism, marked by scientific advances beyond anything that earlier times has thought possible, and confronting mankind with the prospect of a society more open than any it has ever known. And in the last forty years we have also experienced something else—the unmistakable symptoms of a recoil from that prospect. It would appear that, in the words used recently by Andre Malraux, "Western civilisation has begun to doubt its own credentials."

What is the meaning of this recoil, this doubt? Is it the hesitation before the jump, or the beginning of a panic flight? I do not know. On such a matter a simple professor of Greek is in no position to offer an opinion. But he can do one thing. He can remind his readers that once before a civilised people rode to this jump—rode to it and refused it. And he can beg them to examine all the circumstances of that refusal.

Was it the horse that refused, or the rider? That is really the crucial question. Personally, I believe it was the horse—in other words, those irrational elements in human nature which govern without our knowledge so much of our behavior and so much of what we think is our thinking. And if I am right about this, I can see in it grounds for hope . . . the men who created the first European rationalism were never—until the Hellenistic Age—"mere" rationalists: that is to say, they were deeply and imaginatively aware of the power, the wonder, and the peril of the Irrational. But they could describe what went on below the threshold of consciousness only in mythological or symbolic language; they had no instrument for understanding it, still less for controlling it; and in the Hellenistic Age too many of them made the fatal mistake of thinking they could ignore it. Modern man, on the other hand, is beginning to acquire such an instrument. It is still very far from perfect, nor is it always skilfully handled; in many fields, including that of history, its possibilities and its limitations have still to be tested. Yet it seems to offer the hope that if we use it wisely we shall eventually understand our horse better; that, understanding him better, we shall be able by better training to overcome his fears; and that through the overcoming of fear horse and rider will one day take that decisive jump, and take it successfully.

from *The Human Meaning of the Social Sciences*, edited by Daniel Lerner, Meridian M64.