

Morgan, Lewis Henry (1877) *Ancient Society*, Preface and Chap. 1.

In “Ancient Society”, Morgan argues that human progress and development is uniform and occurs in the same process every time. Working to discredit the assumption that the people in the West and more primitive societies are fundamentally different, Morgan claims that every society present is just in a different stage of development while all humans share these universal traits and ideas. Morgan studied current and historical primitive tribes as well as archeological data in order to ground his ideas and establish the different ethnical periods that define the developmental process. These were Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization, with Lower, Middle and Upper stages also being distinguished within the first two. Each stage requires a specific trait to be present to move on to the next, such as invention of tools, agricultural techniques, and the phonetic alphabet. There were also other key elements to show progress towards civilization such as a property-based government, speech, monogamous family, and religious ideas. Morgan describes human progress as going in a single direction toward the improved living and increased domestic conveniences of the West, meaning that one could study a tribe in an earlier stage to better understand the origins of progress for a later stage. All of these claims rest on the assumption that all human societies develop in a predetermined manner through the same origin of traits.

Boas, Franz (1944 [1896]) “The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology.” *Race, Language and Culture*

In his essay on the “Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology”, Boas argues that the comparative method of studying culture, where the anthropologist compares societies with a focus on the presence of a universal human idea, fails to understand the true origin of the traits being studied. Boas is responding to the trend in anthropology that Morgan discusses about using the comparative method to discover the universal ideas of humanity and the common origins of the people, under the assumption that these universal traits will arise independently in all societies (271). Boas uses general examples of studies to show that while many different societies have common customs, such as wearing masks, having totems, or using geometric designs, these customs have different meanings and origins for each of the societies studied (274). Boas argues that the flaw of the comparative method is the assumption that the “human mind obeys the same laws everywhere” and that the “same features must always have developed from the same causes”, which in turn is the claim that all humans had evolved uniformly (275). Boas claims that anthropologists should study the “processes by which certain stages of culture had developed”, by collecting more empirical data from geographical, psychological and historical study of the total culture of a people (276-7). As well as establishing that anthropological study should be an inductive process to determine definitive phenomena rather than examining traits through the lens of a preset theory (277).

Sapir, Edward (1927) *"The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society."* *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality*.

In the "Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society", Sapir argues that people's behavior in a social group have complex unconscious patterns that can be attributed to the group's customs and traditions. Sapir explains that social behavior is basically individual's behaviors from the larger perspective, with patterns demonstrating the "norms of conduct that are developed by humans in association" (116). The individuals presenting the behavior are often unconscious of the significance or larger patterns of the behaviors that they are presenting, the behaviors learned and intuitive for them (122). Sapir explains that patterns are defined by the form of the behavior and the function, with the functions sometimes holding significance or being created by tradition. Sapir gives examples of the unknown complex social behavior by discussing linguistic forms, and how an individual in the culture would not specifically understand the significance of the different elements of their speech, such as the different forms of plurality or conjugations (126-8). Sapir also uses this to demonstrate that only a very carefully trained observer can overcome their own unconscious tendencies and view others (136). These unconscious patterns create a idea that the behavior is the true nature of things as wells as allowing for the society to run smoothly and organized (141-2).

*Benedict, Ruth (1934) Patterns of Culture*

In Benedict's "Patterns of Culture", Benedict establishes that culture is not biologically predetermined. Benedict discusses how because of how widespread Western civilization is, there was a belief that the Western customs were simply human nature (6). Benedict is working to address the idea with the cultural difference, distinguishing it from race and biological predeterminism(15). Benedict establishes that heredity is only family lines, rather than overall racial heredity, meaning the ideas and culture are learned and conditioned rather than inherited (15-17). She argues against Morgan's idea of one cultural history by establishing that primitive cultures do not display the original traits of the past and cannot be seen as a developing step towards Western culture. The primitive societies studied can only really give insight into basic cultural forms and processes of today (18-20). Benedict uses studies of primitive cultures puberty rites and ideas toward warfare in order to better illustrate how cultural identity is established by selecting specific traits and customs to focus on, similar to how a language is developed by selectively choosing phonetics (23). Benedict discredits the idea that there are traditional forms that all humans possess, rather the cultures each have their own forms that they focus on (36-7). She establishes that a culture is not one idea, but made of many different traits integrated together that hold significance and complexity(42,47). She ends the essay reiterating the

importance of studying the more primitive cultures not as a way to see our own origins, but rather to better understand our own cultural processes (56).