IV

FIELDWORK AND THE EMPIRICAL TRADITION

In my last two lectures I gave you some account of the development of theory in social anthropology. Theory has changed its direction with the increase in knowledge about primitive peoples which it has in each generation been largely responsible for bringing about. It is about this growth of knowledge that I shall speak tonight.

There has always been a popular, though not unhealthy, prejudice against theory as contrasted with experience. However, an established theory is only a generalization from experience which has been again confirmed by it, and a hypothesis is merely an unconfirmed opinion that, judging by what is already known, it is reasonable to assume that further facts will be found by research to be of a certain kind. Without theories and hypotheses anthropological research could not be carried out, for one only finds things, or does not find them, if one is looking for them. Often one finds something other than what one is looking for. The whole history of scholarship, whether in the natural sciences or in the humanities, tells us that the mere collection of what are called facts unguided by theory in observation and selection is of little value.

Nevertheless, one still hears it said of anthropologists that they go to study primitive peoples with a theoretical bias and that this distorts their accounts of savage life, whereas the practical man of affairs, having no such bias, gives an impartial record of the facts as he sees them.

The difference between them is really of another kind. The student makes his observations to answer questions arising out of the generalizations of specialized opinion, and the layman makes his to answer questions arising out of the generalizations of popular opinion. Both have theories, the one systematic and the other popular.

In fact the history of social anthropology may be regarded as the substitution, by slow gradations, of informed opinion about primitive peoples for uninformed opinion, and the stage reached in this process at any time is roughly relative to the amount of organized knowledge available. In the end it is the volume, accuracy, and variety of well authenticated fact which alone counts; and it is the function of theory to stimulate and guide observation in the collection of it. Here, however, I am not so much concerned with popular opinion as with that held by writers about social institutions.

There seems to have been a pendulum swing from extreme to extreme in speculations about primitive man. First he was a little more than an animal who lived in poverty, violence, and fear; then he was a gentle person who lived in plenty, peace, and security. First he was lawless; then he was a slave to law and custom. First he was devoid of any religious feelings or belief; then he was entirely dominated by the sacred and immersed in ritual. First he was an individualist who preyed on the weaker and held what he could; then he was a communist who held lands and goods in common. First he was sexually promiscuous; then he was a model of domestic virtue. First he was lethargic and incorrigibly lazy, then he was alert and industrious. In seeking to change a received opinion it is, I suppose, natural that in the selection and massing of evidence against it an opposite distortion is made.

The dependence of theory on available knowledge in these speculations and the shaping of each by the other may be seen throughout the development of social anthropology. The prevailing opinion about primitive man in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that his life was 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short', lacked foundation in fact; but it is difficult to see what other conclusion could have been reached from the accounts of contemporary travellers, who for the most part described the primitives they saw in such terms as they have 'nothing that can entitle them to humanity but speech'—this is Sir John Chardin speaking of the Circassians whose country he traversed in 1671[1]—or that they 'differ but little from beasts'—this is Father Stanislaus Arlet speaking about the Indians of Peru in 1698.[2] These early travel accounts, whether they portrayed the savage as brutish or noble, were generally fanciful or mendacious, superficial, and full of inappropriate judgments.

However, it is only fair to say that much depended on the refinement of the traveller and on his temperament and character, and that from the sixteenth century onwards there are not lacking accounts which give sober and factual, if limited, descriptions of native life, such, to mention a few names besides those I have referred to earlier, as the writings of the Englishman Andrew Battel on the natives of the Congo, of the Portuguese Jesuit Father Jerome Lobo on the Abyssinians, of the Dutchman William Bosman on the peoples of the Gold Coast, and of Captain Cook on the natives in the South Seas. They wrote in the spirit of Father Lobo, of whom Dr. Johnson, his translator in *Pinkerton's Voyages*, remarks: 'He appears by his modest and unaffected narration to have described things as he saw them, to have copied

[1] *Pinkerton's Voyages*, vol. IX, 1811, p. 143.
[2] John Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits*, vol. I, 1743, p. 93.

nature from the life, and to have consulted his senses not his imagination.'[1]

When these early European travellers went beyond description and personal judgments it was generally to establish parallels between the peoples of whom they wrote and the ancients with whom they were familiar from literature, often with the purpose of showing that there must have been some historical influence of the higher cultures on the lower. Father Lafitau thus makes many comparisons between the Huron and Iroquois Redskins and the Jews, the early Christians, the classical Spartans and Cretans, and the ancient Egyptians. In the same manner de la Crequinière, a French traveller to the East Indies in the seventeenth century, sets out to find parallels in India to certain Jewish and classical customs and thus help towards a better understanding of the Scriptures and of the classical writers, for, he says, 'the knowledge of the customs of the Indians, is in no ways useful in itself . . .'[2]

Between the heyday of the moral philosophers and the earliest anthropological writings in a strict sense, between, that is, the middle of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century, knowledge of primitive peoples and of the peoples of the Far East was greatly increased. The European colonization of America had been widely expanded, British rule had been established in India, and Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa had been settled by European emigrants. The character of ethnographic description of the peoples of these regions began to change from travellers' tales to detailed studies by missionaries and administrators who not only had better opportunities to observe, but were also men of greater culture than the gentlemen of fortune of earlier times.

[1] *Pinkerton's Voyages*, vol. XV, 1814, p. 1.
[2] *Customs of the East Indians*, 1705, p. viii. (Translated from *Conformité des Coutumes des Indiens Orientaux*, 1704, p. viii.)

Much of accepted opinion about primitive peoples was seen to be wrong or one-sided in the light of this new information, and, as I mentioned in an earlier lecture, the new information was sufficient in bulk and quality for Morgan, McLennan, Tylor, and others to build out of it a self-contained discipline devoting itself primarily to the study of primitive societies. There was at last a sufficient body of knowledge for speculations to be tested and for new hypotheses to be put forward on a solid basis of ethnographic fact.

When it is said that in the end it is the facts which have decided the fate of theories it must be added that it is not the bare facts but a demonstration of their distribution and significance. Allow me to give you an instance. The matrilineal mode of tracing descent had been recorded for a number of primitive societies by ancient and mediaeval historians, for example, Herodotus for the Lycians and Maqrizi for the Beja, and also by modern observers; Lafitau for the North American Redskins, Bowdich for the Ashanti of the Gold Coast, Grey for the Australian Blackfellows, and other travellers for other peoples;[1] but these records were passed over as mere curiosities till Bachofen and McLennan drew attention to their great importance for sociological theory. Had the material been brought together and its importance thereby established before Maine wrote *Ancient Law*, he could hardly have taken the certain line he took in that book and which he was forced to modify in his later writings in the light of this organized evidence.

McLennan is a very instructive example of the relation of a body of knowledge to theories based on it. He was under no illusion about the value of many of his authorities, whose accounts he criticized as thin and vitiated by every kind of personal prejudice, but had he been more cautious than he was he could hardly have avoided some of the errors which led him into a succession of false constructions. On the evidence at his disposal he had every reason for being satisfied that matriliny prevailed universally among the Australian aborigines. We now know that this is not the case. It is also not the case, as he thought, that matriliny prevails among the great majority of existing rude races. He also thought that polyandry had the widest possible distribution, whereas in fact its distribution is very limited. He was also wrong in supposing that female infanticide is widely prevalent among primitive peoples.

[1] Joseph François Lafitau, ***Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains***, 1724; T. H. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, 1819; George Grey, ***Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia***, 1841.

The most serious error into which McLennan's authorities led him was to suppose that among the most primitive peoples the institutions of marriage and the family are not found or exist only in a very rudimentary form. Had he known, as we now know, that they are found without exception in all primitive societies he could not have reached the conclusions he arrived at, for they depend absolutely on the dogma that neither marriage nor the family exist in early society, a belief not dispelled till quite recently when Westermarck, and after him Malinowski, showed it to be insupportable in fact.[1]

It could be shown with equal facility that most of the theories of other writers of the time were wrong or inadequate on account of the inaccuracy or insufficiency of the observations then recorded. But even where they went most astray these writers at least put forward hypotheses about primitive societies which provided lines of inquiry for those whose vocations and duties necessitated residence, often very lengthy residence, among

[1] Edward A. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, 1891; B. Malinowski, *The Family among the Australian Aborigines—A Sociological Study*, 1913.

simple peoples; and we get from this time onwards an exchange between scholars at home and a few missionaries and administrators living in backward parts of the world. These missionaries and administrators were anxious both to make contributions to knowledge and to make use of what anthropology could teach them in seeking to understand their wards. They were made aware by their reading of the literature of anthropology that even those peoples lowest in the scale of material culture have complex social systems, moral codes, religion, art, philosophy, and the rudiments of science, which must be respected and, once understood, can be admired.

The influence of anthropological theories of the time is very evident, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, in the accounts they wrote. Not only were they acquainted with theoretical problems being discussed by scholars, but they were often directly in touch with those who propounded them. It became customary for those at home who wanted information to send out lists of questions to those living among primitive peoples. The first of these was that drawn up by Morgan to elicit kinship terminologies, and sent by him to American agents in foreign countries. It was on the basis of their replies that he published in 1871 his famous *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*. Later Sir James Frazer drew up a list of questions, *Questions on the Manners, Customs, Religion, Superstitions, etc., of Uncivilized or Semi-Civilized Peoples*,[1] and sent it to people all over the world in order to obtain information which went into one or other volume of *The Golden Bough*. The most comprehensive of these questionnaires was *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*, first published for the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1874 and now in its fifth edition.

Scholars at home sometimes corresponded regularly with those brought into touch with them through their

[1] No date. Probably in the 'eighties.

writings, for example, Morgan with Fison and Howitt in Australia, and Frazer with Spencer in Australia and Roscoe in Africa. In much more recent times administrative officers have taken courses of anthropology in British universities, a development I speak of more fully in my last lecture. Throughout, a most important link between the scholar at home and the administrator or missionary abroad has been the Royal Anthropological Institute which has since 1843, when it was founded as the Ethnological Society of London, provided a common meeting-place for all interested in the study of primitive man.

Many accounts written about primitive peoples by laymen were excellent, and in a few cases their descriptions have hardly been excelled by the best professional fieldworkers. They were written by men with lengthy experience of the peoples, and who spoke their languages. I refer to such books as Callaway's *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1870), Codrington's *The Melanesians* (1891), the works of Spencer and Gillen on the Aborigines of Australia,[1] Junod's *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912–13, French edition, 1898), and Smith and Dale's *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (1920). Just as the observations of travellers continued to provide valuable information throughout this period when detailed monographs on primitive peoples were being written by missionaries and administrators, so these detailed studies by laymen continued to have great value for anthropology long after professional fieldwork had become customary.

Nevertheless it became apparent that if the study of social anthropology was to advance, anthropologists would have to make their own observations. It is indeed surprising that, with the exception of Morgan's study of

[1] B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1899; *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 1904; *The Arunta*, 1927.

the Iroquois,[1] not a single anthropologist conducted field studies till the end of the nineteenth century. It is even more remarkable that it does not seem to have occurred to them that a writer on anthropological topics might at least have a look, if only a glimpse, at one or two specimens of what he spent his life writing about. William James tells us that when he asked Sir James Frazer about natives he had known, Frazer exclaimed, 'But Heaven forbid!'[2]

Had a natural scientist been asked a similar question about the objects of his study he would have replied very differently. As we have noted, Maine, McLennan, Bachofen, and Morgan among the earlier anthropological writers were lawyers. Fustel de Coulanges was a classical and mediaeval historian, Spencer was a philosopher, Tylor was a foreign languages clerk, Pitt-Rivers was a soldier, Lubbock was a banker, Robertson Smith was a Presbyterian minister and a biblical scholar, and Frazer was a classical scholar. The men who now came into the subject were for the most part natural scientists. Boas was a physicist and geographer, Haddon a marine zoologist, Rivers a physiologist, Seligman a pathologist, Elliot Smith an anatomist, Balfour a zoologist, Malinowski a physicist, and Radcliffe-Brown, though he had taken the Moral Sciences Tripos at Cambridge, had also been trained in experimental psychology. These men had been taught that in science one tests hypotheses by one's own observations. One does not rely on laymen to do it for one.

Anthropological expeditions began in America with the work of Boas in Baffin Land and British Columbia, and were initiated in England shortly afterwards by Haddon of Cambridge, who led a band of scholars to

[1] *The League of the Iroquois*, 1851.

[2] Ruth Benedict, 'Anthropology and the Humanities', *American Anthropologist*, 1948, p. 587.

conduct research in the Torres Straits region of the Pacific in 1898 and 1899. This expedition marked a turning-point in the history of social anthropology in Great Britain. From this time two important and interconnected developments began to take place: anthropology became more and more a whole-time professional study, and some field experience came to be regarded as an essential part of the training of its students.

This early professional fieldwork had many weaknesses. However well the men who carried it out might have been trained in systematic research in one or other of the natural sciences, the short time they spent among the peoples they studied, their ignorance of their languages, and the casualness and superficiality of their contacts with the natives did not permit deep investigation. It is indeed a measure of the advance of anthropology that these early studies appear today to be quite inadequate. Later studies of primitive societies became increasingly more intensive and illuminating. The most important of these was, I think, that of Professor Radcliffe-Brown, a pupil of Rivers and Haddon. His study of the Andaman Islanders from 1906 to 1908[1] was the first attempt by a social anthropologist to investigate sociological theories in a primitive society and to describe the social life of a people in such a way as to bring out clearly what was significant in it for those theories. In this respect it has perhaps greater importance in the history of social anthropology than the Torres Straits expedition, the members of which were interested in ethnological and psychological problems rather than in sociological ones.

We have noted how theoretical speculation about social institutions was at first only incidentally related to descriptive accounts of primitive peoples, and how later social anthropology may be said to have begun when in

[1] A. R. Brown, *The Andaman Islanders—A Study in Social Anthropology*, 1922.

the nineteenth century these peoples became the chief field of research for some students of institutions. But the research was entirely literary and based on the observations of others. We have now reached the final, and natural, stage of development, in which observations and the evaluation of them are made by the same person and the scholar is brought into direct contact with the subject of his study. Formerly the anthropologist, like the historian, regarded documents as the raw material of his study. Now the raw material was social life itself.

Bronislaw Malinowski, a pupil of Hobhouse, Westermarck, and Seligman, carried field research a step further. If Professor Radcliffe-Brown has always had a wider knowledge of general social anthropology and has proved himself the abler thinker, Malinowski was the more thorough fieldworker. He not only spent a longer period than any anthropologist before him, and I think after him also, in a single study of a primitive people, the Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia between 1914 and 1918, but he was also the first anthropologist to conduct his research through the native language, as he was the first to live throughout his work in the centre of native life. In these favourable circumstances Malinowski came to know the Trobriand Islanders well, and he was describing their social life in a number of bulky, and some shorter, monographs up to the time of his death.[1]

Malinowski began lecturing in London in 1924. Professor Firth, now in Malinowski's chair in London, and I were his first two anthropological pupils in that year, and between 1924 and 1930 most of the other social anthropologists who now hold chairs in Great Britain and the Dominions were taught by him. It can be fairly said that the comprehensive field studies of modern anthropology directly or indirectly derive from

[1] *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922; *The Sexual Life of Savages*, 1929; *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, 1935.

his teaching, for he insisted that the social life of a primitive people can only be understood if it is studied intensively, and that it is a necessary part of a social anthropologist's training to carry out at least one such intensive study of a primitive society. I shall discuss what this means when I have drawn your attention in a few words to what I think is an important feature of the earlier field studies by professional anthropologists.

These studies were carried out among very small-scale political communities—Australian hordes, Andamanese camps, and Melanesian villages—and this circumstance had the effect that certain aspects of social life, particularly kinship and ritual, were inquired into to the neglect of others, especially of political structure, which was not given the attention it deserved till African societies began to be studied. In Africa autonomous political groups often number many thousands of members, and their internal political organization as well as their inter-relations forced the attention of students to specifically political problems. This is a very recent development, for professional research in Africa was not opened till the visit of Professor and Mrs. Seligman to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in 1909–1910, and the first intensive study in Africa by a social anthropologist was that carried out by myself among the Azande of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, starting in 1927. Since then, most intensive studies of primitive peoples have been made in Africa, and political institutions have received the attention they require, as, for example, in Professor Schapera's account of the Bechuana, Professor Fortes's account of the Tallensi of the Gold Coast, Professor Nadel's account of the Nupe of Nigeria, Dr. Kuper's account of the Swazi, and my own account of the Nuer of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

I will now tell you, so that you may understand better what is meant by intensive fieldwork, what is today

required of a person who wishes to become a professional social anthropologist. I speak particularly of our arrangements at Oxford. There a man comes to us with a degree in another subject, and he first spends a year working for the Diploma in Anthropology, a course which gives him a general knowledge of social anthropology, and also, as I explained in my first lecture, some acquaintance with physical anthropology, ethnology, technology, and prehistoric archaeology. He spends a second year, and perhaps longer, in writing a thesis from the literature of social anthropology for the degree of B.Litt. or B.Sc. Then, if his work has been of sufficient merit and if he is lucky, he obtains a grant for field research and prepares himself for it by a careful study of the literature on the peoples of the region in which he is to conduct it, including their languages.

He then usually spends at least two years in a first field study of a primitive society, this period covering two expeditions and a break between them for collating the material collected on the first expedition. Experience has shown that a few months' break, preferably spent in a university department, is essential for sound fieldwork. It will take him at least another five years to publish the results of his research to the standards of modern scholarship, and much longer should he have other calls on his time; so that it can be reckoned that an intensive study of a single primitive society and the publication of its results take about ten years.

A study of a second society is desirable, because otherwise an anthropologist is likely to think for the rest of his life, as Malinowski did, in terms of one particular type of society. This second study usually takes a shorter time because the anthropologist has learnt from his previous experience to conduct research quickly and to write with economy, but it will certainly be several years before his researches are published. To stay this

long course of training and research demands great patience.

In this sketch of an anthropologist's training, I have only told you that he must make intensive studies of primitive peoples. I have not yet told you how he makes them. How does one make a study of a primitive people? I will answer this question very briefly and in very general terms, stating only what we regard as the essential rules of good fieldwork and omitting any discussion of special techniques of inquiry. What special techniques we have are in any case very simple and amount to little; and some of them, like questionnaires and censuses, cannot fruitfully be employed unless the people being studied have reached a higher degree of sophistication than is found among simple peoples before their traditional way of life has been much altered by trade, education and administration. There is indeed much to be said for Radin's contention that 'most good investigators are hardly aware of the precise manner in which they gather their data.'[1]

Nevertheless, experience has proved that certain conditions are essential if a good investigation is to be carried out. The anthropologist must spend sufficient time on the study, he must throughout be in close contact with the people among whom he is working, he must communicate with them solely through their own language, and he must study their entire culture and social life. I will examine each of these desiderata for, obvious though they may be, they are the distinguishing marks of British anthropological research which make it, in my opinion, different from and of a higher quality than research conducted elsewhere.

The earlier professional fieldworkers were always in a great hurry. Their quick visits to native peoples sometimes lasted only a few days, and seldom more than a

[1] Paul Radin, *The Method and Theory of Ethnology*, 1933, p. ix.

few weeks. Survey research of this kind can be a useful preliminary to intensive studies and elementary ethnological classifications can be derived from it, but it is of little value for an understanding of social life. The position is very different today when, as I have said, one to three years are devoted to the study of a single people. This permits observations to be made at every season of the year, the social life of the people to be recorded to the last detail, and conclusions to be tested systematically.

However, even given unlimited time for his research, the anthropologist will not produce a good account of the people he is studying unless he can put himself in a position which enables him to establish ties of intimacy with them, and to observe their daily activities from within, and not from without, their community life. He must live as far as possible in their villages and camps, where he is, again as far as possible, physically and morally part of the community. He then not only sees and hears what goes on in the normal everyday life of the people as well as less common events, such as ceremonies and legal cases, but by taking part in those activities in which he can appropriately engage, he learns through action as well as by ear and eye what goes on around him. This is very unlike the situation in which records of native life were compiled by earlier anthropological fieldworkers, and also by missionaries and administrators, who, living out of the native community in mission stations or government posts, had mostly to rely on what a few informants told them. If they visited native villages at all, their visits interrupted and changed the activities they had come to observe.

This is not merely a matter of physical proximity. There is also a psychological side to it. By living among the natives as far as he can like one of themselves the anthropologist puts himself on a level with them. Unlike the administrator and missionary he has no authority and

status to maintain, and unlike them he has a neutral position. He is not there to change their way of life but as a humble learner of it; and he has no retainers and intermediaries who obtrude between him and the people, no police, interpreters, or catechists to screen him off from them.

What is perhaps even more important for his work is the fact that he is all alone, cut off from the companionship of men of his own race and culture, and is dependent on the natives around him for company, friendship, and human understanding. An anthropologist has failed unless, when he says goodbye to the natives, there is on both sides the sorrow of parting. It is evident that he can only establish this intimacy if he makes himself in some degree a member of their society and lives, thinks, and feels in their culture since only he, and not they, can make the necessary transference.

It is obvious that if the anthropologist is to carry out his work in the conditions I have described he must learn the native language, and any anthropologist worth his salt will make the learning of it his first task and will altogether, even at the beginning of his study, dispense with interpreters. Some do not pick up strange languages easily, and many primitive languages are almost unbelievably difficult to learn, but the language must be mastered as thoroughly as the capacity of the student and its complexities permit, not only because the anthropologist can then communicate freely with the natives, but for further reasons. To understand a people's thought one has to think in their symbols. Also, in learning the language one learns the culture and the social system which are conceptualized in the language. Every kind of social relationship, every belief, every technological process—in fact everything in the social life of the natives —is expressed in words as well as in action, and when one has fully understood the meaning of all the words of their

language in all their situations of reference one has finished one's study of the society. I may add that, as every experienced fieldworker knows, the most difficult task in anthropological fieldwork is to determine the meanings of a few key words, upon an understanding of which the success of the whole investigation depends; and they can only be determined by the anthropologist himself learning to use the words correctly in his converse with the natives. A further reason for learning the native language at the beginning of the investigation is that it places the anthropologist in a position of complete dependence on the natives. He comes to them as pupil, not as master.

Finally, the anthropologist must study the whole of the social life. It is impossible to understand clearly and comprehensively any part of a people's social life except in the full context of their social life as a whole. Though he may not publish every detail he has recorded, you will find in a good anthropologist's notebooks a detailed description of even the most commonplace activities, for example, how a cow is milked or how meat is cooked. Also, though he may decide to write a book on a people's law, on their religion, or on their economics, describing one aspect of their life and neglecting the rest, he does so always against the background of their entire social activities and in terms of their whole social structure.

Such, very briefly and roughly, are the essential conditions of good anthropological fieldwork. We may now ask what are the qualifications required for it. Obviously, in the first place the fieldworker must have had an academic training in social anthropology. He must have a good knowledge both of general theory and of the ethnography of the region in which he is to work.

It is true that any educated, intelligent and sensitive person can get to know a strange people well and write an excellent account of their way of life, and I would say

that he often gets to know them better and writes a better book about them than many professional anthropologists do. Many excellent ethnographic accounts were written long before social anthropology was even heard of, for example Dubois's *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1816) and Lane's *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). This cannot be denied, but I think that it is also certainly true that, even on the level of translation from one culture into another, without taking structural analysis into account, a man who in addition to his other qualifications has been trained in social anthropology will make a much deeper and fuller study, for one has to learn what to look for and how to observe.

When we come to the stage of structural analysis the layman is lost, because here a knowledge of theory, of problems, of method, and of technical concepts is essential. I can go for a walk and come back and give you an account of the rocks I have seen. It may be an excellent description, but it will not be a geological one. Likewise, a layman can give an account of the social life of a primitive people but, however descriptively excellent, it will not be a sociological account. The difference here is, of course, that in the geologist's study of rocks only scientific knowledge and technical skills and tools are required, whereas in the anthropological study of peoples all sorts of personal and human qualities are involved which the layman may possess and the anthropologist lack. It is possible to put oneself in the position of a man of alien culture, but not of a rock.

Anthropological fieldwork therefore requires in addition to theoretical knowledge and technical training a certain kind of character and temperament. Some men cannot stand the strain of isolation, especially in what are often uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions. Others cannot make the intellectual and emotional

transference required. The native society has to be in the anthropologist himself and not merely in his notebooks if he is to understand it, and the capacity to think and feel alternately as a savage and as a European is not easily acquired, if indeed it can be acquired at all.

To succeed in this feat a man must be able to abandon himself without reserve, and he must also have intuitive powers which not all possess. Most people who know what and how to observe can make a merely competent study of a primitive people, but when one has to estimate whether a man will make a study which will be on a deeper level of understanding one looks for more than intellectual ability and technical training, for these qualities will not in themselves make a good anthropologist any more than they will make a good historian. What comes out of a study of a primitive people derives not merely from intellectual impressions of native life but from its impact on the entire personality, on the observer as a total human being. It follows that successful fieldwork may in some degree depend on the suitability of a particular man for the study of a particular people. A man who might fail in the study of one people might succeed in the study of another people. If he is to succeed, his interest and sympathy must be aroused.

If the right kind of temperament is not always found with ability, special training, and love of careful scholarship, it is rarely combined also with the imaginative insight of the artist which is required in interpretation of what is observed, and the literary skill necessary to translate a foreign culture into the language of one's own. The work of the anthropologist is not photographic. He has to decide what is significant in what he observes and by his subsequent relation of his experiences to bring what is significant into relief. For this he must have, in addition to a wide knowledge of anthropology, a feeling for form and pattern, and a touch of genius. I am not

suggesting that any of us have all the qualities which make the perfect fieldworker. Some are gifted in one way and some in another, and each uses as best he can what talents he has.

Since in anthropological fieldwork much must depend, as I think we would all admit, on the person who conducts it, it may well be asked whether the same results would have been obtained had another person made a particular investigation. This is a very difficult question. My own answer would be, and I think that the evidence we have on the matter shows it to be a correct one, that the bare record of fact would be much the same, though there would, of course, be some individual differences even at the level of perception.

It is almost impossible for a person who knows what he is looking for, and how to look for it, to be mistaken about the facts if he spends two years among a small and culturally homogeneous people doing nothing else but studying their way of life. He gets to know so well what will be said and done in any situation—the social life becomes so familiar to him—that there ceases to be much point in his making any further observations or in asking any further questions, Also, whatever kind of person he may be, the anthropologist is working within a body of theoretical knowledge which largely determines his interests and his lines of inquiry. He is also working within the limits imposed by the culture of the people he is studying. If they are pastoral nomads he must study pastoral nomadism. If they are obsessed by witchcraft, he must study witchcraft. He has no choice but to follow the cultural grain.

But while I think that different social anthropologists who studied the same people would record much the same facts in their notebooks, I believe that they would write different kinds of books. Within the limits imposed by their discipline and the culture under investigation

anthropologists are guided in choice of themes, in selection and arrangement of facts to illustrate them, and in judgment of what is and what is not significant, by their different interests, reflecting differences of personality, of education, of social status, of political views, of religious convictions, and so forth.

One can only interpret what one sees in terms of one's own experience and of what one is, and anthropologists, while they have a body of knowledge in common, differ in other respects as widely as other people in their backgrounds of experience and in themselves. The personality of an anthropologist cannot be eliminated from his work any more than the personality of an historian can be eliminated from his. Fundamentally, in his account of a primitive people the anthropologist is not only describing their social life as accurately as he can but is expressing himself also. In this sense his account must express moral judgment, especially where it touches matters on which he feels strongly; and what comes out of a study will to this extent at least depend on what the individual brings to it. Those who know anthropologists and their writings as well as I do, would, I think, accept this conclusion. If allowances are made for the personality of the writer, and if we consider that in the entire range of anthropological studies the effects of these personal differences tend to correct each other, I do not think that we need worry unduly over this problem in so far as the reliability of anthropological findings is in question.

There is a broader aspect to the question. However much anthropologists may differ among themselves they are all children of the same culture and society. In the main they all have, apart from their common specialist knowledge and training, the same cultural categories and values which direct their attention to selected characteristics of the societies being studied. Religion, law, economics, politics, and so forth, are abstract categories

of our culture into which observations on the life of primitive peoples are patterned. Certain kinds of fact are noticed, and they are seen in a certain kind of way, by people of our culture. To some extent at any rate, people who belong to different cultures would notice different facts and perceive them in a different way. In so far as this is true, the facts recorded in our notebooks are not social facts but ethnographic facts, selection and interpretation having taken place at the level of observation. I cannot now discuss, but only state, this general question of perception and evaluation.

I must say in conclusion that, as you will have noted, I have been discussing anthropological field research and the qualities and qualifications required for it in the light of the opinion I expressed in my last lecture that social anthropology is best regarded as an art and not as a natural science. Those among my colleagues who hold the opposite opinion might have discussed the questions with which I have been concerned in this lecture in a rather different way.

"Social Anthropologist is regarded as an art and not as a natural Science" — Evans Pritchard.