

# Our Locus in the Universe: Worldview and Intercultural Communication

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Worldview shapes cultures and serves to distinguish one culture from another. Its importance stems from the role it plays in defining reality or explaining the purpose of human life. Worldview thus represents one of the most fundamental qualities of culture, affecting all aspects of how a culture perceives the environment. Nurius (1994) reflects that the propensity for individuals to establish and sustain an image of a comprehensive, orderly, and predictable world fulfills one of the most fundamental human needs. Pennington (1985) proclaims that worldview must be given high, if not first, priority in the study of culture because it permeates all other components of culture. She further suggests that by understanding a culture's worldview, it is possible to attain reasonable accuracy in predicting behaviors and motivations in other dimensions. As such, worldview becomes a critical element of successful intercultural communication.

The worldview concept deserves the comprehension of communication scholars; in this paper we delineate its qualities, types, and religious perspectives.

## WORLDVIEW DEFINED

Although the term *worldview* probably originated in German philosophy as *Weltanschauung*, literally

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"worldview," it has come to represent a variety of approaches to understanding the underpinnings of cultural diversity. It consists of the most general and comprehensive concepts and unstated assumptions about life.

Anthropologists Spradley and McCurdy (1980) define worldview as the way people characteristically look out on the universe. To communication educationalists Paige and Martin (1996), worldview is one of the lenses through which people view reality and the rest of the world. Sociologists Cosner, Nock, Steffan, and Rhea (1987) define it as a definition of reality. The psychologist Harriman (1947) relates worldview's association with *Weltanschauung* and considers it to be a total frame of reference.

Reflecting a religious perspective, Helve (1991) characterizes worldview as a systemized totality of beliefs about the world. In the same vein, Emerson (1996) conceives it as a set of assumptions about how the world is and ought to be organized. Nurius (1994), operating from a social work orientation, takes a tack at odds with other worldview advocates. She uses the term *assumptive worlds* to describe clusters of fundamental assumptions that individuals hold about themselves and the world around them. And, in the simplest of terms, psychologist Furnham (1993) describes worldview as "just world beliefs."

Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998) offer a more inclusive view in their definition: "Worldview is culture's orientation toward God, humanity, nature, questions of existence, the universe and cosmos, life, death, sickness, and other philosophical issues that influence how its members see the world."

Klopff (1998) also offers an inclusive perspective that relates to many fields of study. He perceives worldview as providing a frame of reference for understanding a culture's ways of perceiving, thinking, and speaking—a system of beliefs about the nature of the universe and its effects on the environment. Worldview deals with a culture's orientation toward ontological matters such as God, humankind, lower forms of life, inanimate objects, supernatural beings, nature, and matters concerning the relations of humans to one another. Worldview thus serves to explain how and why things got to be the way they are and why they continue that way. It assists people during crises and helps them adjust to environmental conditions.

from Samovar et al (2006)

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## ELEMENTS OF WORLDVIEW

What constitutes worldview? The definitions given above included some of the elements. We add others, beginning with an anthropological analysis extended by Redfield (1953). He argues that the framework is the same for every culture's interpretation of worldview. His system includes 12 general conceptions of these elements:

1. The self or principal actor on humankind's stage
2. The others, those within the purview of the self
3. Other people, the unidentifiable mass
4. Differences between men and women
5. Distinctions between "we" (our own people) and "they" (other people)
6. Distinctions between what is human and what is not
7. Invisible beings, forces, principles
8. Animals
9. Concepts of human nature
10. A spatial orientation
11. A temporal orientation
12. Ideas about birth and death

Pennington's (1985) conception of worldview elements appear in the form of ten questions. The salient characteristics of her list are:

1. The culture's dominant beliefs and attitudes about a human's place in nature and society
2. The general pattern of relationships between humans and nature
3. The relationship between humans and the culture's supreme being
4. The supreme being's power over life and events
5. Humans' competitive or cooperative nature
6. Humans' expressions of their beliefs
7. Humans' myths about the origins of people
8. Humans' beliefs in the supernatural
9. The living patterns as group practices
10. The ways a group uses rituals, prayers, and other ceremonies

Psychologists Gilgen and Cho (1979) perceive worldview in an East-West dichotomy, the East based on religions associated with the Eastern world, and the West with European and American thought. These are compared as follows.

East	West
Humans are one with nature and perceive the spiritual and physical as one.	Humans are separate from nature and overshadowed by a personal God.
Mind and body are one.	Humans consist of mind, body, and soul.
Humans should accept their basic oneness with nature rather than try to control it.	Humans have to manipulate and control nature to survive.
Humans are one with nature; they should feel comfortable with anyone.	Humans should reward actions competitive in spirit.
Science and technology create an illusion of progress.	Science and technology provide the good life.
Enlightenment causes differences to disappear and brings oneness with the universe through meditation.	No such belief.

Dodd (1987) categorizes worldview elements into nine groupings, some of which tend to contrast the East and West.

**Shame/Guilt.** An Easterner bringing shame to a group is likely to be cast out of it. Westerners consider the individual more important than the group. Saving face is essential in the East; not so in the West.

**Task/People.** The East accentuates people relationships. The West stresses task accomplishment.

**Secular/Spiritual.** Eastern spiritual cultures rely on intuition and introspection. Secular Western cultures are analytical and logical.

**Dead/Living.** The East believes the dead can influence the living, bringing them luck or harm. The West is less prone to think that way.

**Humans/Nature.** Humans are either subject to nature, in harmony with nature, or should control nature. The East favors harmony; the West control.

**Doing/Being.** The East prefers harmonious relations, being rather than doing. The West wants to do things.

**Linear/Cyclical.** In the East, life is birth, life, death, and rebirth. In the West, life is birth, life, death.

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**Good/ Evil.** Humans are either good or evil, or a mix of good and evil.

**Fatalism/Control.** To the fatalist, what happens is beyond a person's control, which tends to be an Eastern view. In the control view, people are masters of their own destiny, which tends to be a Western view.

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## FORMATION OF WORLDVIEWS

Worldview is implicit, implied but not verbally expressed. Helve (1991) believes it is improbable that people would be aware of their worldview. How it is formed, therefore, is a matter of speculation.

Worldview evidently develops in early childhood. Helve determined through empirical research that its actual growth can be comprehended by applying one or all of the theories identified as *cognitive development*, *social learning*, and *socialization*. She concluded each extended a sensible explanation.

Rubin and Peplau (1975) credit the child's parents, religious instruction, and instruction in the schools attended as contributors. Each child's maturation, experiences in the physical environment, and activities in the social environment contribute to worldview's formation. Then, too, children draw conclusions from their own experiences about what the world is like. Each child is a product of a social community, and the child's way of seeing the world is shaped by shared images and constructions of the child's social group or class.

Children and young people conceptualize the world in various ways at different stages in their growth according to their own mental development. Infancy, childhood, and adolescence involve distinct stages in thinking and learning. The shaping of their needs, values, beliefs, and attitudes varies from stage to stage, and so too will their worldview undergo change as they mature.

Emerson (1996) places stress on religion in developing worldview. By outlining what ought to be and by creating and reinforcing group norms through interaction, religion has a substantial influence on a person's worldview. Religion shapes reasoning. It also provides the meaning, importance, and properness of different social arrangements and institutions. Religion infuses all of these with universal if not transcendent significance.

Religious beliefs and practices differ, of course, and that is why, Emerson contends, people possess

different worldviews. Those with conservative worldviews base their moral authority in the transcendent. Those holding more liberal views participate in the religious and secular cultures that root moral authority in humans. They stress reason and revelation.

Even though Emerson emphasizes religion's role in worldview development, he recognizes a person's position in the social structure as significant, even though he perceives it as only secondary. Reasonable people who live in dissimilar parts of the world are exposed to unlike realities. This dissimilar exposure leads each to arrive at separate worldviews.

Emerson's point is substantiated by Cooke (1992), who measured worldview among university students in Japan, Korea, Puerto Rico, and the United States. Her findings reveal significant differences among the four groups. Each group arrived at different conceptions of the worldview.

Chamberlain and Zika (1992) attribute the meaning of worldview to numerous sources, religion being just one. They argue that worldview stems from a variety of sources and that it is inappropriate to constrain it to a purely religious dimension.

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## TYPES OF WORLDVIEW

Helve (1991) classifies worldview into three types. In doing so, she appears to endorse the Chamberlain and Zika position. Helve's types are *scientific*, *metaphysical*, and *religious*.

The *scientific* worldview is based on the rules laid down by the exact sciences. It is open and self-correcting in accordance with new systematic and methodical findings. Helve found it to appear most clearly among scientific scholars. A quasi-scientific worldview results from television, magazine, and newspaper influences, she notes; it is more "information based" than scientific. Those with a scientific bent do not harbor this quasi-scientific worldview.

A *metaphysical* worldview tends to be based on abstract general reasoning without an empirical base. For example, the metaphysical worldview of young children may contain beliefs in imaginary beings such as Santa Claus, ghosts, witches, fairies, and elves. Older children may include elements of magic and superstition. Teenagers might construct their worldviews around horoscopes and act in accordance with the advice they give. The metaphysical worldview is apt to

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consist of certain types of unnatural beings, their characteristics, and their relationships. These beings originate partly in the traditions of religion and partially in folklore, some of which is created by the mass media.

The third type of worldview is *religious*. For most people, religion serves as the foundation of their worldview. The content of their beliefs will vary from person to person depending upon their religious perspective. A Catholic's worldview will undoubtedly differ from that of a Jew, a Protestant's from a Buddhist's, a Muslim's from a Taoist's, and a Shintoist's from a Confucianist's.

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## DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

Religion, as we have related, is a deep and pervasive determinant of worldview. Even the most secular of people feel religion's influence. Those who reject religious faith still follow much of the religious heritage that influences their culture. Most people, theists and atheists alike, adhere to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill"—a tenet virtually all cultures respect.

Religion, Emerson (1996) attests, is multidimensional. He conceptualizes it along two dimensions, religiosity and orthodoxy, each with two subdivisions, public and private. Religiosity refers to the intensity and consistency of religious practices. Orthodoxy is the degree to which one's beliefs center on a guiding authority—for example, the Scriptures of the Church.

Private religiosity is one's own personal, undisclosed religious practice. Examples include the frequency of prayer and holy scripture reading as well as a doubt-free faith. Public religiosity describes the religious activities practiced with other people. It is manifest in frequent church attendance and participation in membership functions.

Private orthodoxy refers to held beliefs that rely on a transcendent authority, a god, or a supernatural being. Heavy reliance on Holy Scripture while verbalizing and making decisions is an example. Public orthodoxy is the sharing of beliefs in the company of others.

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## EASTERN AND WESTERN RELIGIONS

As a more manageable way of thinking about the world's diverse faiths, Smart (1988) groups them into two major divisions: Eastern and Western. Each can

help increase an understanding of the impact religion has on the content and development of one's worldview. Eastern and Western religious traditions account for about 90% of the world's population. The remaining 10% consists of shamanists, animists, atheists, and the like.

### Religious Similarities

Although the two divisions have few common teachings, they do possess similarities typical of all religions. Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998) identify five such similarities, the most important being *sacred writings*. All of the world's major religions have writings revered by believers. These writings are the vehicles for dissemination of the religion's knowledge and wisdom. Included are the Bible, the written centerpiece for the Christian religion; the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, the sacred book of the Jews; the Koran, the Muslim writings; the Vedas, the sacred writings of the Hindus; and the Pali Canon, where the teachings of the Buddha are inscribed.

Another similarity is an *authority figure*. God, Allah, Jesus as the Son of God, or the Buddha is an authority figure who is someone greater than the religion's members, one they turn to for guidance.

*Rituals* are the third similarity. They are practices required of the membership or acts that are forbidden to the members. For example, believers must be baptized or circumcised. They must fast on certain days or pray at special times. They may not eat pork or perhaps beef. These acts embody humility, restraint, and awareness, behaviors of great significance.

*Speculation* typifies all religions. Humans seek answers to life's mysteries—what is life, death, suffering, origins of the universe—and religions supply answers, speculative at best.

Religion also includes an *ethic*, a set of moral principles for the membership to observe. For most religions, the set contains items such as marital fidelity, paying honor to mother and father, and prohibitions against killing, stealing, and lying.

### Eastern

The countries of Eastern and Southern Asia (Korea, China, Japan, India, and others) embrace religious traditions that feature harmony as the ultimate good (Smart, 1988). Harmony is the major tenet found in

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Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

Although these religions differ considerably, their foundations are similar. Deity is in every place in every form, rather than in a single place or form. Harmony affects behavior because everything is benign, nothing is worth worrying about. True believers respond to crucial issues with a smile. Being pleasant helps keep things in perspective because nothing is going to mean much in the long run anyway.

Ethically, Eastern religions do not hold with an absolute right. Everything is relative to the situation. Then, too, life is circular. One's essence takes another form at death, termed *reincarnation*. This goes on and on without end. What is desirable is in every thing in the world, not just in special places or acts called sacred. What is important is the here and now.

In Figure 1, Ishii (1990) characterizes Eastern and Western worldviews. The polytheistic represents the East and the monotheistic the West. In the polytheistic view, the gods/goddesses/deities, human beings, and natural beings are all relative to each other. They are changeable, not absolute or rigid. Deities can reside anywhere, in rocks, animals, and humans. In the figure, the triangular relationship of the three entities symbolizes this relative relationship. No hierarchy is present among the three. Their domains are relative and flexible, as implied by the broken ovals connected by lines within the world/universe circle.

## Western

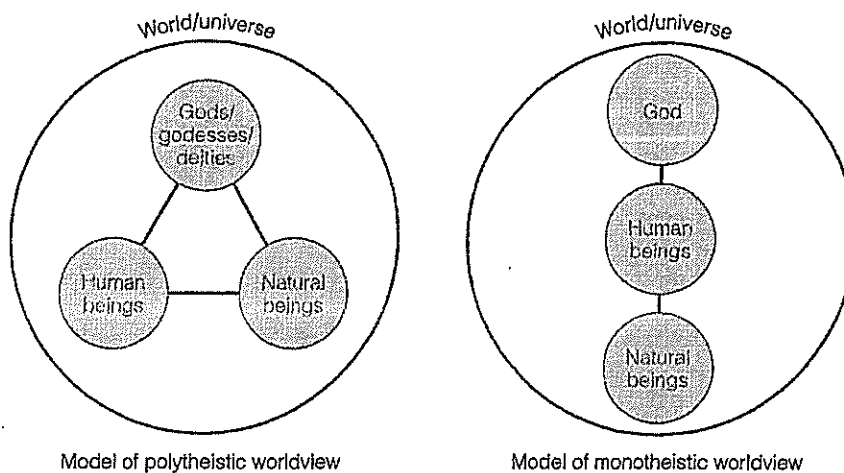
The West's capsulation of religion, and hence worldview, is in sharp contrast to the Eastern. The Western religions perceive the ultimate good as transformation. Members of the Jewish, Islamic, and Christian faiths believe that divine grace is the desired end, whether in this life or the next. Differences among these religions are obvious, yet they have a common foundation. They are monotheistic, believing in one God who is "out there" and everything else is here, with a great gulf in between. The world is split in two—the way it was intended to be versus the way it is. There is the good and desirable, and there is sin.

In the Western religions, Smart (1988) informs us, everything is headed somewhere, to the Kingdom of God or to heaven, to an end. At the end of an individual's life will be an accounting or payoff, either life or death or resurrection of the body. At the end of all human life will be an apocalypse, a disclosure.

The things that belong to God and religion are sacred. They are special, to be treated with awe and reverence. What is important is felicity—happiness or bliss—beyond this earthly life.

In Figure 1, the monotheistic worldview depicts the existence of one almighty God who ranks first above all else. Human beings rank next in the hierarchy, and natural beings last. These rankings are absolute and unchangeable, as shown by the solid circles

**Figure 1** Contrastive Worldviews (Ishii, 1990)



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vertically aligned within the world/universe circle. The domains of the three are not related one to the other.

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### COLLIDING WORLDVIEWS

Figure 1 also reveals two distinct worldviews, ones clearly at odds with each other. The separation is immortalized in the words of Rudyard Kipling: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." The two are so unlike they will never be capable of sharing their ideas and feelings about anything. Nevertheless, Kipling's next lines in his *Ballad of East and West* extend hope. He thinks that strong men and women when standing face to face regardless of their breed, birth, or border can interact successfully. Whether one's view is Eastern or Western, Kipling holds out hope for satisfying verbalizing.

Unfortunately, fruitful intercultural relations are not always the norm even when strong men and women meet together. Too often, imbroglios like Captain Cook's Hawaiian adventure bring out the worst in people. Misunderstandings and occasional serious consequences result.

No less contentious are the frequent encounters between developers and environmentalists, those who want to conquer and direct the forces of nature and those who maintain that humans are subject to nature. Those conflicts are being fought at every level, local, national, and international.

Clark (1998) warns us that environmental destruction is accelerating, not decelerating. At the local level, the loss of forests, soil erosion, and overdrafts of groundwater are common occurrences. Increased yields of timber and food crops are unsustainable. People worldwide are mining nature's resource base. Human-induced global warming, overgrazing, and deforestation are compounding droughts. Pollution problems are multiplying as waters are poisoned or salinated, as forests and lakes are decimated by acid rain, and as cities worldwide suffer from foul air.

Recall that Dodd (1987) reminded us about our relationship with nature. Either we are subject to nature, in harmony with it, or should control it. Today's state suggests that harmony is absent, control is not working, and soon we will be subject to total natural disaster. Worldviews are colliding as we communicate more and more closely with our fellow humans throughout the world.

Clark (1989) points a finger at the Western worldview, placing blame for environmental conditions directly on the West. Although major polluters, soil eroders, and deforesters are prevalent in the East as well, Clark believes it is the Western worldview that is destroying the environment. She suggests that the Western worldview lacks proper values and goals and has grown obsolete. All worldviews, she claims, require adjustment if humans are to survive. But the most in need of redoing is that of the West, whose enormous military, technological, and economic power impinges upon the entire globe.

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### UNTYING THE GORDIAN KNOT

In her book, *Ariadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking* (1989), Clark gives us a thread with which we might find our way out of the labyrinth created by colliding worldviews. Her way may help untie the Gordian knot in which disparate worldviews are enmeshed as they attempt to exist together in the 21st century.

In ages past, she argues, worldviews evolved gradually, often imperceptibly. With today's enormous powers unleashed by science and technology from the Western worldview creating excessive environmental change, humankind can no longer rely on the old, indiscernible thinking. Human goals need to be reordered.

All worldviews require some degree of adjustment if the species is to survive. Tracing the beliefs and assumptions underlying them is the first step in making social change possible. This first step is one that students of communication can undertake, learning to understand the differences in worldview globally and to comprehend the beliefs and assumptions on which they are based.

Clark cautions that imposing a new worldview will certainly fail unless it comes from within the cultural context. A culture's people must actively participate in the change making. For a new worldview to evolve, everyone must participate in the change process.

In her 1998 *Zygon* article, Clark expounds on her new worldview in detail. Her plan may be far too esoteric for students in intercultural courses to consider. They can exit their courses with the rudiments of the worldview concept. If they do, as Pennington (1985) believes, reasonable preciseness can be reached in predicting behaviors and motivations in the social, economic, and

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political lives of the globe's cultures. As Smart (1988) prompts us, we ignore at our peril the worldview dimensions of our interactions with other cultures.

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## Concepts and Questions

1. Ishii, Klopf, and Cooke assert that worldview shapes culture. How does your worldview contribute to your culture?
2. What is the most significant aspect of worldview? How does cultural diversity in this dynamic lead to differing worldviews?
3. Sumarize in general terms how worldview differs between Eastern and Western cultures.
4. How does shame/guilt affect worldview? In which cultures might this factor be most prevalent?
5. How is worldview formed? Are there cultural differences in the mechanisms by which worldview is formed?
6. What is a scientific worldview? What cultures are most likely to have a scientific-based worldview?
7. What does a metaphysical view tend to contribute to a worldview?
8. What is religiosity? How does it contribute to shaping a worldview?
9. Differentiate between Eastern and Western religious perspectives regarding ethics.

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### Concepts and Questions

1. What does Andersen mean when he writes that "the primary level of culture is communicated implicitly, without awareness, and chiefly by nonverbal means"?
2. Do you agree with Andersen that two of the most fundamental nonverbal differences in intercultural communication involve space and time? From your experiences, what two nonverbal areas have you found most troublesome when interacting with people from different cultures?
3. From your personal experiences, can you think of different ways in which people in various cultures greet, show emotion, and beckon?
4. Do you believe that intercultural communication problems are more serious when they involve nonverbal communication or verbal communication?
5. What is kinesic behavior? How does it vary from one culture to another? What types of communication problems can be caused by cultural differences in kinesic behavior?
6. The term *haptics* refers to patterns of tactile communication. How does tactile communication differ between cultures? Can you think of examples of how tactile communication differs among members of co-cultures? What type of communication problems might arise when people with different touching orientations interact?
7. How does physical appearance affect first impressions during interaction? How are expectations of physical appearance related to the informal-formal dimension of culture?
8. How does immediacy affect interpersonal interaction? What differences in behaviors would you expect from high- and low-contact cultures? In what way would violations of immediacy expectations affect intercultural communication?
9. How is the degree of individualism within cultures manifested in nonverbal behavior?

from

Samovar, L et al (2009)

Intercultural Comm [a reader] 11th ed. Southbank,

Thomson pp 266-274

## Japanese Nonverbal Communication: A Reflection of Cultural Themes

EDWIN R. MCDANIEL

Modern technological advances have made the world a much smaller place, promoting increased interactions between peoples of different nations and cultures. Growing international economic interdependencies and expanding multinational security alliances have significantly increased the importance of effective intercultural encounters. Individuals from diverse cultures are interacting with each other more and more frequently—in professional, diplomatic, and social venues.

The most critical aspect of this burgeoning transnational intercourse is, of course, communication. The ability to understand and be understood is central to successful cross-cultural activities. Comprehension, however, must go beyond a topical awareness of another culture's communicative practices and behaviors. An appreciation of the cultural antecedents and motivations shaping an individual's communication conventions is necessary for understanding *how* and *why* a particular practice is used.

An established method of explaining the cultural motivations of human behavior is to identify and isolate consistent themes among a social grouping. Anthropological writings have posited that each culture manifests a "limited number of dynamic affirmations" (Opler, 1945, p. 198), referred to as *themes*. According to Opler, these cultural themes promote and regulate human behavioral activities that are societally encouraged and condoned. To illustrate this approach, Opler used an examination of the social relations of the Lipan Apaches to demonstrate how thematic study could provide insight into cultural beliefs and behaviors.

This essay first appeared in the eighth edition. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint must be obtained from the publisher and the author. Edwin R. McDaniel teaches in the Department of Language Communication at Aichi Shukutoku University, Aichi, Japan.

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ner, Mildred Reed Hall. Her contribution to anything I have done has always been substantial.

As an anthropologist and a scientist I owe a tremendous debt to my colleagues, but especially to the late Ralph Linton, under whom I studied at Columbia University. We spent many pleasant hours together as he tried out ideas he was developing in an amazing range of subjects. As a student I found it difficult to communicate with professors, but with Linton the gulf experienced with other professors was never present. He always seemed able to communicate clearly and enjoy a real exchange of ideas. While the content of this book is different from anything Linton would have written, I feel that he would have understood at least some of the ideas. In the world of ideas he was innovative and particularly free from the constraints that bind many intellectuals, and his contributions to anthropology were considerable.

Three other colleagues who provided encouragement and stimulation over the years are the late Erich Fromm, David Riesman, and John Useem. Although I never knew her well, Ruth Benedict also provided an intellectual role model in her excellent innovative books *Patterns of Culture* and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

Many of my observations on other cultures are the direct result of fieldwork with the Spanish-Americans in New Mexico and Latin America, the Navajo, Hopi, Trukese, Western Mediterranean Arabs, and Iranians. Needless to say, the anthropologist always owes a great debt to the people he or she works with, because it is what the anthropologist learns about their cultures that makes his or her own culture more meaningful.

Clarkson N. Potter first urged me to write this book and provided the necessary encouragement and understanding for its completion. I wish to express my appreciation for significant editorial assistance to Richard K. Winslow and Kermit Lansner.

—from Hall Edward 7 — (1959)  
*The Silent Language*  
 Anchor Doubleday  
 NY - pp 1-19



I

## THE VOICES OF TIME

Time talks. It speaks more plainly than words. The message it conveys comes through loud and clear. Because it is manipulated less consciously, it is subject to less distortion than the spoken language. It can shout the truth where words lie.

I was once a member of a mayor's committee on human relations in a large city. My assignment was to estimate what the chances were of non-discriminatory practices being adopted by the different city departments. The first step in this project was to interview the department heads, two of whom were themselves members of minority groups. If one were to believe the words of these officials, it seemed that all of them were more than willing to adopt non-discriminatory labor practices. Yet I felt that, despite what they said, in only one case was there much chance for a change. Why? The answer lay in how they used the silent language of time and space.

Special attention had been given to arranging each interview. Department heads were asked to be prepared to spend an hour or more discussing their thoughts with

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me. Nevertheless, appointments were forgotten, long waits in outer offices (fifteen to forty-five minutes) were common, and the length of the interview was often cut down to ten or fifteen minutes. I was usually kept at an impersonal distance during the interview. In only one case did the department head come from behind his desk. These men had a position and they were literally and figuratively sticking to it!

The implication of this experience (one which public-opinion pollsters might well heed) is quite obvious. What people do is frequently more important than what they say. In this case the way these municipal potentates handled time was eloquent testimony to what they inwardly believed, for the structure and meaning of time systems, as well as the time intervals, are easy to identify. In regard to being late there are: "mumble something" periods, slight apology periods, mildly insulting periods requiring full apology, rude periods, and downright insulting periods. The psychoanalyst has long been aware of the significance of communication on this level, and can point to the way patients handle time as evidence of "resistances" and "transference."

Different parts of the day, for example, are highly significant in certain contexts. Time may indicate the importance of the occasion as well as on what level an interaction between persons is to take place. In the United States if you telephone someone early in the morning, while he is shaving or she is having breakfast, the time of the call usually signals a matter of utmost importance and extreme urgency. The same applies for calls after 11:00 P.M. A call received during sleeping hours is apt to be taken as a matter of life and death, hence the rude joke value of these calls among the young. Our realization that time talks is even reflected in such common expressions as, "What time does the clock say?"

An example of how thoroughly these things are taken

for granted was reported to me by John Useem, an American social anthropologist, in an illuminating case from the South Pacific. The natives of one of the islands had been having a difficult time getting their white supervisors to hire them in a way consistent with their traditional status system. Through ignorance the supervisors had hired too many of one group and by so doing had disrupted the existing balance of power among the natives. The entire population of the island was seething because of this error. Since the Americans continued in their ignorance and refused to hire according to local practice, the head men of the two factions met one night to discuss an acceptable reallocation of jobs. When they finally arrived at a solution, they went en masse to see the plant manager and woke him up to tell him what had been decided. Unfortunately it was then between two and three o'clock in the morning. They did not know that it is a sign of extreme urgency to wake up Americans at this hour. As one might expect, the American plant manager, who understood neither the local language nor the culture nor what the hullabaloo was about, thought he had a riot on his hands and called out the Marines. It simply never occurred to him that the parts of the day have a different meaning for these people than they have for us.

On the other hand, plant managers in the United States are fully aware of the significance of a communication made during the middle of the morning or afternoon that takes everyone away from his work. Whenever they want to make an important announcement they will ask: "When shall we let them know?" In the social world a girl feels insulted when she is asked for a date at the last minute by someone whom she doesn't know very well, and the person who extends an invitation to a dinner party with only three or four days' notice has to apologize. How different from the people of the Middle

East with whom it is pointless to make an appointment too far in advance, because the informal structure of their time system places everything beyond a week into a single category of "future," in which plans tend to "slip off their minds."

Advance notice is often referred to in America as "lead time," an expression which is significant in a culture where schedules are important. While it is learned informally, most of us are familiar with how it works in our own culture, even though we cannot state the rules technically. The rules for lead time in other cultures, however, have rarely been analyzed. At the most they are known by experience to those who lived abroad for some time. Yet think how important it is to know how much time is required to prepare people, or for them to prepare themselves, for things to come. Sometimes lead time would seem to be very extended. At other times, in the Middle East, any period longer than a week may be too long.

How troublesome differing ways of handling time can be is well illustrated by the case of an American agriculturalist assigned to duty as an attaché of our embassy in a Latin country. After what seemed to him a suitable period he let it be known that he would like to call on the minister who was his counterpart. For various reasons, the suggested time was not suitable, all sorts of cues came back to the effect that the time was not yet ripe to visit the minister. Our friend, however, persisted and forced an appointment which was reluctantly granted. Arriving a little before the hour (the American respect pattern), he waited. The hour came and passed, five minutes—ten minutes—fifteen minutes. At this point he suggested to the secretary that perhaps the minister did not know he was waiting in the outer office. This gave him the feeling he had done something concrete and also helped to overcome the great anxiety that was

stirring inside him. Twenty minutes—twenty-five minutes—thirty minutes—forty-five minutes (the insult period)

He jumped up and told the secretary that he had been "cooling his heels" in an outer office for forty-five minutes and he was "damned sick and tired" of this type of treatment. This message was relayed to the minister, who said, in effect, "Let him cool his heels." The attaché's stay in the country was not a happy one.

The principal source of misunderstanding lay in the fact that in the country in question the five-minute-delay interval was not significant. Forty-five minutes, on the other hand, instead of being at the tail end of the waiting scale, was just barely at the beginning. To suggest to an American's secretary that perhaps her boss didn't know you were there after waiting sixty seconds would seem absurd, as would raising a storm about "cooling your heels" for five minutes. Yet this is precisely the way the minister registered the protestations of the American in his outer office! He felt, as usual, that Americans were being totally unreasonable.

Throughout this unfortunate episode the attaché was acting according to the way he had been brought up. At home in the United States his responses would have been normal ones and his behavior legitimate. Yet even if he had been told before he left home that this sort of thing would happen, he would have had difficulty not *feeling* insulted after he had been kept waiting forty-five minutes. If, on the other hand, he had been taught the details of the local time system just as he should have been taught the local spoken language, it would have been possible for him to adjust himself accordingly.

What bothers people in situations of this sort is that they don't realize they are being subjected to another form of communication, one that works part of the time with language and part of the time independently of it.

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The fact that the message conveyed is couched in no formal vocabulary makes things doubly difficult, because neither party can get very explicit about what is actually taking place. They can only say what they think is happening and how they feel about it. The thought of what is being communicated is what hurts.

### AMERICAN TIME

People of the Western world, particularly Americans, tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something around us and from which we cannot escape, an ever-present part of the environment, just like the air we breathe. That it might be experienced in any other way seems unnatural and strange, a feeling which is rarely modified even when we begin to discover how really differently it is handled by some other people. Within the West itself certain cultures rank time much lower in over-all importance than we do. In Latin America, for example, time is treated rather cavalierly. In Mexico one commonly hears the expression, "Our time or your time?" "*Hora americana, hora mejicana?*"

As a rule, Americans think of time as a road or a ribbon stretching into the future, along which one progresses. The road has segments or compartments which are to be kept discrete ("one thing at a time"). People who cannot schedule time are looked down upon as impractical. In at least some parts of Latin America, North Americans (their term for us) find themselves annoyed when they have made an appointment with somebody, only to find a lot of other things going on at the same time. An old friend of mine of Spanish cultural heritage used to run his business according to the "Latino" system. This meant that up to fifteen people were in his office at one time. Business which might have been finished in a quarter of an hour sometimes took a whole day. He realized, of

course, that the Anglo-Americans were disturbed by this and used to make some allowance for them, a dispensation which meant that they spent only an hour or so in his office when they had planned on a few minutes. The American concept of the discreteness of time and the necessity for scheduling was at variance with this amiable and seemingly confusing Latin system. However, if my friend had adhered to the American system he would have destroyed a vital part of his prosperity. People who came to do business with him also came to find out things and to visit each other. The ten to fifteen Spanish-Americans and Indians who used to sit around the office (among whom I later found myself after I had learned to relax a little) played their own part in a particular type of communications network.

Not only do we Americans segment and schedule time, but we look ahead and are oriented almost entirely toward the future. We like new things and are preoccupied with change. We want to know how to overcome resistance to change. In fact, scientific theories and even some pseudo-scientific ones, which incorporate a striking theory of change, are often given special attention.

Time with us is handled much like a material, we earn it, spend it, save it, waste it. To us it is somewhat immoral to have two things going on at the same time. In Latin America it is not uncommon for one person to have a number of simultaneous jobs which he or she either carries on from one desk or moves between, a small amount of time spent on each.

While we look to the future, our view of it is limited. The future to us is the foreseeable future, not the future of the South Asian that may involve centuries. Indeed, our perspective is so short as to inhibit the operation of a good many practical projects, such as sixty- and one-hundred-year conservation works requiring public support and public funds. Anyone who has worked in indus-

try or in the government of the United States has heard the following: "Gentlemen, this is for the long term Five or ten years."

For us a "long time" can be almost anything—ten or twenty years, two or three months, a few weeks, or even a couple of days. The South Asian, however, feels that it is perfectly realistic to think of a "long time" in terms of thousands of years or even an endless period. A colleague once described their conceptualization of time as follows: "Time is like a museum with endless corridors and alcoves. You, the viewer, are walking through the museum in the dark, holding a light to each scene as you pass it. God is the curator of the museum, and only He knows all that is in it. One lifetime represents one alcove."

The American's view of the future is linked to a view of the past, for tradition plays an equally limited part in American culture. As a whole, we push it aside or leave it to a few souls who are interested in the past for very special reasons. There are, of course, a few pockets, such as New England and the South, where tradition is emphasized. But in the realm of business, which is the dominant model of United States life, tradition is equated with *experience*, and experience is thought of as being very close to if not synonymous with know-how. Know-how is one of our prized possessions, so that when we look backward it is rarely to take pleasure in the past itself but usually to calculate the know-how, to assess the prognosis for success in the future.

Promptness is also valued highly in American life. If people are not prompt, it is often taken either as an insult or as an indication that they are not quite responsible. There are those, of a psychological bent, who would say that we are obsessed with time. They can point to individuals in American culture who are literally time-ridden. And even the rest of us feel very strongly about time because we have been taught to take it so seriously.

We have stressed this aspect of culture and developed it to a point unequaled anywhere in the world, except, perhaps, in Switzerland and north Germany. Many people criticize our obsessional handling of time. They attribute ulcers and hypertension to the pressure engendered by such a system. Perhaps they are right.

#### SOME OTHER CONCEPTS OF TIME

Even within the very borders of the United States there are people who handle time in a way which is almost incomprehensible to those who have not made a major effort to understand it. The Pueblo Indians, for example, who live in the Southwest, have a sense of time which is at complete variance with the clock-bound habits of the ordinary American citizen. For the Pueblos events begin when the time is ripe and no sooner.

I can still remember a Christmas dance I attended some twenty-five years ago at one of the pueblos near the Rio Grande. I had to travel over bumpy roads for forty-five miles to get there. At seven thousand feet the ordeal of winter cold at one o'clock in the morning is almost unbearable. Shivering in the still darkness of the pueblo, I kept searching for a clue as to when the dance would begin.

Outside everything was impenetrably quiet. Occasionally there was the muffled beat of a deep pueblo drum, the opening of a door, or the piercing of the night's darkness with a shaft of light. In the church where the dance was to take place a few white townfolk were huddled together on a balcony, groping for some clue which would suggest how much longer they were going to suffer. "Last year I heard they started at ten o'clock." "They can't start until the priest comes." "There is no way of telling when they will start." All this punctuated by

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chattering teeth and the stamping of feet to keep up circulation.

Suddenly an Indian opened the door, entered, and poked up the fire in the stove. Everyone nudged his neighbor: "Maybe they are going to begin now." Another hour passed. Another Indian came in from outside, walked across the nave of the church, and disappeared through another door. "Certainly now they will begin. After all, it's almost two o'clock." Someone guessed that they were just being ornery in the hope that the white men would go away. Another had a friend in the pueblo and went to his house to ask when the dance would begin. Nobody knew. Suddenly, when the whites were almost exhausted, there burst upon the night the deep sounds of the drums, rattles, and low male voices singing. Without warning the dance had begun.

After years of performances such as this, no white man in his right mind will hazard a guess as to when one of these ceremonial dances will begin. Those of us who have learned now know that the dance doesn't start at a particular time. It is geared to no schedule. It starts when "things" are ready!

As I pointed out, the white civilized Westerner has a shallow view of the future compared to the Oriental. Yet set beside the Navajo Indians of northern Arizona, he seems a model of long-term patience. The Navajo and the European-American have been trying to adjust their concepts of time for almost a hundred years. So far they have not done too well. To the old-time Navajo time is like space—only the here and now is quite real. The future has little reality to it.

An old friend of mine reared with the Navajo expressed it this way: "You know how the Navajo love horses and how much they love to gamble and bet on horse races. Well, if you were to say to a Navajo, 'My friend, you know my quarter horse that won all the races at Flagstaff

last Fourth of July?' that Navajo would eagerly say 'yes, yes,' he knew the horse, and if you were to say, 'In the fall I am going to give you that horse,' the Navajo's face would fall and he would turn around and walk away. On the other hand, if you were to say to him, 'Do you see that old bag of bones I just rode up on? That old hay-bellied mare with the knock-knees and pigeon toes, with the bridle that's falling apart and the saddle that's worn out? You can have that horse, my friend, it's yours. Take it, ride it away now.' Then the Navajo would beam and shake your hand and jump on his new horse and ride away. Of the two, only the immediate gift has reality, a promise of future benefits is not even worth thinking about."

In the early days of the range control and soil conservation programs it was almost impossible to convince the Navajo that there was anything to be gained from giving up their beloved sheep for benefits which could be enjoyed ten or twenty years in the future. Once I was engaged in the supervision of the construction of small earth dams and like everyone else had little success at first in convincing Navajo workmen that they should work hard and build the dam quickly, so that there would be more dams and more water for the sheep. The argument that they could have one dam or ten, depending on how hard they worked, conveyed nothing. It wasn't until I learned to translate our behavior into their terms that they produced as we know they could.

The solution came about in this way. I had been discussing the problem with a friend, Lorenzo Hubbell, who had lived on the reservation all of his life. When there were difficulties I used to find it helpful to unburden myself to him. Somewhere in his remarks there was always a key to the underlying patterns of Navajo life. As we talked I learned that the Navajo understood and respected a bargain. I had some inkling of this when I

noticed how unsettled the Indians became when they were permitted to fall down on the job they had agreed to do. In particular they seemed to be apprehensive lest they be asked to repay an unfulfilled obligation at some future time. I decided to sit down with the Navajo crew and talk to them about the work. It was quite useless to argue about the future advantages which would accrue from working hard, linear reasoning and logic were meaningless. They did respond, however, when I indicated that the government was giving them money to get out of debt, providing jobs near their families, and giving them water for their sheep. I stressed the fact that in exchange for this, they must work eight hours every day. This was presented as a bargain. Following my clarification the work progressed satisfactorily.

One of my Indian workmen inadvertently provided another example of the cultural conflict centering around time. His name was "Little Sunday." He was small, wiry, and winning. Since it is not polite to ask the Navajo about their names or even to ask them what their name is, it was necessary to inquire of others how he came to be named "Little Sunday." The explanation was a revealing one.

In the early days of the white traders the Indians had considered difficulty getting used to the fact that we Europeans divided time into strange and unnatural periods instead of having a "natural" succession of days which began with the new moon and ended with the old. They were particularly perplexed by the notion of the week introduced by the traders and the missionaries. Imagine a Navajo Indian living some forty or fifty miles from a trading store that is a hundred miles north of the railroad deciding that he needs flour and maybe a little lard for bread. He thinks about the flour and the lard, and he thinks about his friends and the fun he will have trading, or maybe he wonders if the trader will give him credit or

how much money he can get for the hide he has. After riding horseback for a day and a half to two days he reaches the store all ready to trade. The store is locked up tight. There are a couple of other Navajo Indians camped in the hogan built by the trader. They say the trader is inside but he won't trade because it's Sunday. They bang on his door and he tells them, "Go away, it's Sunday," and the Navajo says, "But I came from way up on Black Mesa, and I am hungry. I need some food." What can the trader do? Soon he opens the store and then all the Navajo pour in. One of the most frequent and insistent Sunday visitors was a man who earned for himself the sobriquet "Big Sunday." "Little Sunday," it turns out, ran a close second.

The Sioux Indians provide us with another interesting example of the differing views toward time. Not so long ago a man who was introduced as the superintendent of the Sioux came to my office. I learned that he had been born on the reservation and was a product of both Indian and white cultures, having earned his A.B. at one of the Ivy League colleges.

During a long and fascinating account of the many problems which his tribe was having in adjusting to our way of life, he suddenly remarked: "What would you think of a people who had no word for time? My people have no word for 'late' or for 'waiting,' for that matter. They don't know what it is to wait or to be late." He then continued, "I decided that until they could tell time and knew what time was they could never adjust themselves to white culture. So I set about to teach them time. There wasn't a clock that was running in any of the reservation classrooms. So I first bought some decent clocks. Then I made the school buses start on time, and if an Indian was two minutes late that was just too bad. The bus started at eight forty-two and he had to be there."

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He was right, or course. The Sioux could not adjust to European ways until they had learned the meaning of time. The superintendent's methods may have sounded a bit extreme, but they were about the only ones that would work. The idea of starting the buses off and making the drivers hold to a rigid schedule was a stroke of genius, much kinder to the Indian, who could better afford to miss a bus on the reservation than lose a job in town because he was late.

There is, in fact, no other way to teach time to people who handle it as differently from us as the Sioux. The quickest way is to get very technical about it and to make it mean something. Later on these people can learn the informal variations, but until they have experienced and then mastered our type of time they will never adjust to our culture.

Thousands of miles away from the reservations of the American Indian we come to another way of handling time which is apt to be completely unsettling to the unprepared visitor. The inhabitants of the atoll of Truk in the Southwest Pacific treat time in a fashion that has complicated life for themselves as well as for others, since it poses special problems not only for their civil and military governors and the anthropologists recording their life but for their own chiefs as well.

Time does not heal on Truk! Past events stack up, placing an ever-increasing burden on the Trukese and weighing heavily on the present. They are, in fact, treated as though they had just occurred. This was borne out by something which happened shortly after the American occupation of the atoll at the end of World War II.

A villager arrived all out of breath at the military government headquarters. He said that a murder had been committed in the village and that the murderer was running around loose. Quite naturally the military gov-

ernment officer became alarmed. He was about to dispatch M.P.s to arrest the culprit when he remembered that someone had warned him about acting precipitously when dealing with "natives." A little inquiry turned up the fact that the victim had been "fooling around" with the murderer's wife. Still more inquiry of a routine type, designed to establish the place and date of the crime, revealed that the murder had not occurred a few hours or even days ago, as one might have thought, but seventeen years before. The murderer had been running around loose in the village all this time.

A further example of how time does not heal on Truk is that of a land dispute that started with the German occupation in the 1890s, was carried on down through the Japanese occupation, and was still current and acrimonious when the Americans arrived in 1946.

Prior to Missionary Moses' arrival on Uman in 1867 life on Truk was characterized by violent and bloody warfare. Villages, instead of being built on the shore where life was a little easier, were placed on the sides of mountains where they could be better protected. Attacks would come without notice and often without apparent provocation. Or a fight might start if a man stole a coconut from a tree that was not his or waylaid a woman and took advantage of her. Years later someone would start thinking about the wrong and decide that it still had not been righted. A village would be attacked again in the middle of the night.

When charges were brought against a chief for things he had done to his people, every little slight, every minor graft would be listed, nothing would be forgotten. Damages would be asked for everything. It seemed preposterous to us Americans, particularly when we looked at the lists of charges. "How could a chief be so corrupt?" "How could the people remember so much?"

Though the Truk islanders carry the accumulated bur-



den of time past on their shoulders, they show an almost total inability to grasp the notion that two events can take place at the same time when they are any distance apart. When the Japanese occupied Truk at the end of World War I they took Artie Moses, chief of the island of Uman, to Tokyo. Artie was made to send a wireless message back to his people as a demonstration of the wizardry of Japanese technology. His family refused to believe that he had sent it, that he had said anything at all, though they knew he was in Tokyo. Places at a distance are very real to them, but people who are away are very much away, and any interaction with them is unthinkable.

An entirely different handling of time is reported by the anthropologist Paul Bohannan for the Tiv, a primitive people who live in Nigeria. Like the Navajo, they point to the sun to indicate a general time of day, and they also observe the movement of the moon as it waxes and wanes. What is different is the way they use and experience time. For the Tiv, time is like a capsule. There is a time for visiting, for cooking, or for working; and when one is in one of these times, one does not shift to another.

The Tiv equivalent of the week lasts five to seven days. It is not tied into periodic natural events, such as the phases of the moon. The day of the week is named after the things which are being sold in the nearest "market." If we had the equivalent, Monday would be "automobiles" in Washington, D.C., "furniture" in Baltimore, and "yard goods" in New York. Each of these might be followed by the days for appliances, liquor, and diamonds in the respective cities. This would mean that as you traveled about the day of the week would keep changing, depending on where you were.

A requisite of our own temporal system is that the components must add up: Sixty seconds have to equal

one minute, sixty minutes one hour. The American is perplexed by people who do not do this. The African specialist Henri Alexandre Junod, reporting on the Thonga, tells of a medicine man who had memorized a seventy-year chronology and could detail the events of each and every year in sequence. Yet this same man spoke of the period he had memorized as an "era" which he computed at "four months and eight hundred years' duration." The usual reaction to this story and others like it is that the man was primitive, like a child, and did not understand what he was saying, because how could seventy years possibly be the same as eight hundred? As students of culture we can no longer dismiss other conceptualizations of reality by saying that they are child-like. We must go much deeper. In the case of the Thonga it seems that a "chronology" is one thing and an "era" something else quite different, and there is no relation between the two in operational terms.

If these distinctions between European-American time and other conceptions of time seem to draw too heavily on primitive peoples, let me mention two other examples—from cultures which are as civilized, if not as industrialized, as our own. In comparing the United States with Iran and Afghanistan very great differences in the handling of time appear. The American attitude toward appointments is an example. Once while in Tehran I had an opportunity to observe some young Iranians making plans for a party. After plans were made to pick up everyone at appointed times and places everything began to fall apart. People would leave messages that they were unable to take so-and-so or were going somewhere else, knowing full well that the person who had been given the message couldn't possibly deliver it. One young woman was left stranded on a street corner, and no one seemed to be concerned about it. One of my informants explained that he himself had had many

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similar experiences. Once he had made eleven appointments to meet a friend. Each time one of them failed to show up. The twelfth time they swore they would both be there, that nothing would interfere. The friend failed to arrive. After waiting for forty-five minutes my informant phoned his friend and found him still at home. The following conversation is an approximation of what took place:

"Is that you, Abdul?" "Yes." "Why aren't you here? I thought we were to meet for sure." "Oh, but it was raining," said Abdul with a sort of whining intonation that is very common in Parsi.

If present appointments are treated rather cavalierly, the past in Iran takes on a very great importance. People look back on what they feel are the wonders of the past and the great ages of Persian culture. Yet the future seems to have little reality or certainty to it. Businessmen have been known to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in factories of various sorts without making the slightest plan as to how to use them. A complete woolen mill was bought and shipped to Tehran before the buyer had raised enough money to erect it, to buy supplies, or even to train personnel. When American teams of technicians came to help Iran's economy they constantly had to cope with what seemed to them an almost total lack of planning.

Moving east from Iran to Afghanistan, one gets farther afield from American time concepts. A few years ago in Kabul a man appeared, looking for his brother. He asked all the merchants of the market place if they had seen his brother and told them where he was staying in case his brother arrived and wanted to find him. The next year he was back and repeated the performance. By this time one of the members of the American embassy had heard about his inquiries and asked if he had found his brother.

The man answered that he and his brother had agreed to meet in Kabul, but neither of them had said what year.

Strange as some of these stories about the ways in which people handle time may seem, they become understandable when they are correctly analyzed. To do this adequately requires an adequate theory of culture. Before we return to the subject of time again—in a much later chapter of this book—I hope that I will have provided just such a theory. It will not only shed light on the way time is meshed with many other aspects of society but will provide a key to unlock some of the secrets of the eloquent language of culture which speaks in so many different ways.

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