



History of Anthropology Newsletter

Volume 7
Issue 2 1980

Article 8

January 1980

Correction(s)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/han>

 Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), and the [History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(1980) "Correction(s)," *History of Anthropology Newsletter*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/han/vol7/iss2/8>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/han/vol7/iss2/8>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

gical processes which are of individual location and presumptive or "as if" psychological pictures which may be abstracted from cultural phenomena and which may give significant direction to individual development. To speak of a whole culture as having a personality configuration is, of course, a pleasing image, but I am afraid that it belongs more to the order of aesthetic or poetic constructs than of scientific ones.

The only critical reaction that I have had in reading your pages is a certain misgiving as to whether you were not stretching the idea of cultural relativity too much. Like many young people who are obviously exhilarated by symbols of revolt and seem to tend to fear the establishment of universals in behavior, you tend to hold off the establishment of the "normal" as much as possible. I am sure that this is a healthy tendency at the beginning of one's scientific career, but I think you will find that it may lead in the long run to superficiality. In this very sphere patient psychiatric work is destined to give us a more and more profound respect for the recognition of certain fundamental normalities regardless of cultural differences. Meanwhile it is perfectly true that anthropology has had a healthy effect in forcing the psychiatrist not to identify his ill-defined conception of normality with specific cultural forms. It will be our not too easy task to redefine normality on a broader cultural and psychiatric basis. There is one point that may possibly not have escaped your observation, and that is that there is often an unconscious or at least an unacknowledged motive for the denial of normalities which transcend the compulsions of culture. . . . One could write a very interesting paper on the usefulness of the concept of cultural relativity as a sophisticated form of what the psychiatrist somewhat brutally refers to as a flight from reality. Certainly this is not the whole story, but I have come to feel that there is far more in it than a liberal intelligence might wish to grant in the first place.

Anyway, I want to congratulate you on your intelligent grasp of the problems that you discuss and to thank you for giving me the opportunity of reading your interesting essay. Under another cover I am sending you a few reprints that you may be interested in.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Sapir

ES:MZ

CORRECTION(S).

We apologize for a number of errors of proof-reading in HAN VII:1. Gallatin's Synopsis (p. 5) was published in 1836, not 1846 as printed. In addition, there were some minor mistakes in German, Danish and Russian entries in the Bibliographica Arcana. We will try to avoid errors in the future, but make no guarantees.