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ALFRED IRVING HALLOWELL

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A Biographical Memoir by
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Biographical Memoir

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BY ANTHONY F. C. WALLACE

IN THE YEARS immediately following World War II, the University of Pennsylvania committed itself to the expansion of its Department of Anthropology. At the war's end, Frank G. Speck remained as the sole senior professor, aided on a part-time basis by graduate student instructors and sundry curators from the University Museum. Speck called back his former student, Loren Eiseley, from Oberlin, as chairman, and Eiseley and Speck together persuaded their former colleague, A. Irving Hallowell, to return from Northwestern. Speck, Eiseley, and Hallowell then set out to create what has become one of the country's major departments of anthropology.

The few graduate students who were in residence at the time of Hallowell's arrival in 1948 knew him primarily as one of the founders of the new field of "culture and personality." He was particularly noted for his use of the Rorschach, or ink-blot, test to assess the personality structures of American Indian populations. This innovation in the use of projective techniques made him something of a controversial figure, for many anthropologists—including his own mentor, Speck—were not especially in favor of the kind of clinical approach to the study of human society that the use of such tools as the Rorschach seemed to imply. But as we came to know him as

a teacher and advisor, we students realized that "the Rorschach" was only a single aspect of Hallowell's extraordinarily rich mode of approach to the study of man. He brought to bear on his chosen subjects—the Ojibwa Indians of the United States and Canada—not only the concepts and tools of clinical psychology, but also the traditional ethnographic and linguistic skills he had learned from Speck and other teachers in the school of Franz Boas, the techniques of functional analysis that were being introduced by the social anthropologists, and a trained capacity for historical and scholarly analysis. This variety of intellectual resources made his explorations of Ojibwa society at once precisely descriptive and richly evocative models for emulation by others working in other communities. Hallowell was, indeed, one of the principal figures in the development of modern ethnography, which is distinguished by its effort to combine detailed description in standardized categories of overt observable behavior (the "etic" approach) with careful attention to the need to infer the more-or-less covert cognitive and emotional structures of the people being observed (the "emic" approach).

EDUCATION

The diversity of professional abilities that Hallowell brought to bear in teaching and research was partly owing to an eclectic sort of educational career. His parents, Edgar Lloyd and Dorothy Edsall Hallowell, were (according to Hallowell) of a "conservative" inclination, and perceiving in their son "no outstanding talents" or "professional" interest, sent him to a three-year manual training high school and then to college at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. The Wharton School at that time, before World War I, offered a broad curriculum not only in business courses but also in the social

sciences, and furthermore required its students to take liberal arts courses outside the school itself. So Hallowell studied, in addition to technical subjects necessary to a business education, all the courses in economics and sociology that were offered and sampled such topics as chemistry, history, English literature, and Italian Renaissance painting. This exposure to the liberal arts and to the atmosphere of social reform fed the fires of rebellion against conservative family values and cultivated what he later characterized as his "socialistic inclinations." Plans to enter upon a business career were laid aside, and unable to find funds to finance a graduate education in sociology, Hallowell went into social work as a case-worker for the Family Society. This experience brought him into contact with poverty and into the houses of unfamiliar ethnic groups, black and white.

During his social work years Hallowell continued to take courses in sociology. He was also exposed to the new ideas of psychoanalysis through the lectures of the anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work. And he took some courses with an old friend and fellow fraternity member from undergraduate days, Frank G. Speck, who was now teaching anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. Speck's lectures opened his eyes to a wide vista of cultures, "far beyond the ethnic groups in my own back yard," and he decided to leave social work for anthropology. He took an M.A. in anthropology in 1920 and a Ph.D. in 1924. He entered upon the stage as a full-fledged follower of the school of Franz Boas, who had briefly taught both Speck and Hallowell in his seminar at Columbia and whose abstract conception of anthropology as the Science of Man in all his aspects, physical, psychological, linguistic, and cultural seemed to provide that broad base that was required to transcend provincial American culture and address the basic problems of social reform.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Hallowell's doctoral dissertation was "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere" and was published as a whole issue of the *American Anthropologist* in 1926. This work brought together data from northern Europe, Asia, and North America to reveal the existence of a complex system of beliefs and ceremonies about the bear which were, in varying local expressions, almost universally practiced among primitive peoples in the circumboreal culture area. He also drew attention to archaeological remains from the paleolithic which indicated an extraordinary antiquity, on the order of tens of thousands of years, for this widely-diffused culture complex. The work remains a classic contribution to culture history.

But Hallowell was not satisfied with the role of comparative ethnologist, which would require more work in the library than in the field, and so after some casting about, in the late 1920's he began that series of studies of northern Algonkian life and culture which he was to continue for the remainder of his professional career. His works on the Abenaki of Quebec, the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador, and particularly the Sauteaux or Ojibwa of the Lake Winnipeg region were significant not merely in providing a rich and intimate portrait of one of the few remaining hunting-and-gathering cultures in North America, but also because the Ojibwa papers and monographs revealed his theoretical and methodological innovations which, because they could be applied in any ethnographic setting, were of general interest to anthropologists. One of the tragedies of his professional life was the loss in the mails of the only copy of the final summary of the Ojibwa ethnology which Hallowell wrote during his emeritus years and which his deteriorating health prevented him from doing over again.

The Ojibwa series (which followed one paper on the Abenaki and one on the Montagnais-Naskapi) began in 1934 and by the time of Hallowell's death amounted to about forty individual papers, articles, chapters, and one monograph (*The Role of Conjuring in Saulteaux Society*, 1942). The works cover virtually all aspects of Ojibwa culture—kinship and social organization, economics and technology, ecological relationships (particularly as they affected land tenure), social control, values and morality, medicine, religion, folklore, temporal and spatial orientation, dreams, sexual behavior—and deal in addition with factors of personality structure, mental health, and culture change. Taken together, they constitute one of the most complete recordings of the changing way of life of a hunting-and-gathering population that is available in the ethnographic record.

The theoretical and methodological issues addressed in the Ojibwa series shifted, over the years, from strictly ethnological matters to those involving psychological considerations. The initial stimulus was a classic—but conventional—question concerning the relation between kinship terminology and rules of marriage. The older evolutionary theorists of the nineteenth century had postulated a close connection between the two, but more recent opinion, as advanced by Boas and his students, questioned the tightness of the coupling and suggested that changes in kin terms were linguistic rather than sociological phenomena. After discovering evidence in some old dictionaries to suggest that the northern Algonkians might in fact once have practiced cross-cousin marriage (as their surviving cousin terminology would have suggested to an evolutionist), Hallowell read a paper asking, "Was Cross-Cousin Marriage Practiced by the North-Central Algonkian?" This paper received no support and a very critical appraisal. But learning that another ethnologist had recently found Naskapi men actually marrying their mother's

brother's daughters, Hallowell was spurred to visit a related Algonkian group, the Saulteaux (Ojibwa) of the Lake Winnipeg region to learn for himself. In his brief autobiography (1972), Hallowell recorded one of the classic native answers to a field worker's apparently naive question:

I well remember an early conversation with William Berens, my closest collaborator. I hesitatingly asked him whether a man could marry a woman he called *nimam* (female cross-cousin). His reply was, "Who the hell else would he marry?"

And throughout the series occur reports on material culture, the size of hunting territories as a function of ecological adjustment, the role of conjuring and the decline of native ceremonies, folktales, and various other necessary, if conventional, parts of standard ethnography.

But increasingly the topics dealt with psychological questions. Hallowell's interests in this area included, but extended beyond, the field of "personality and culture," which concerns itself primarily with the relation between the motivational structure of individuals, couched more or less in the language of psychoanalysis and clinical psychology, and the culture of their group as the ethnographer describes it. In his view, the entire field of psychology was potentially relevant to the concerns of anthropology, and so he was eager to take advantage of the findings and methods of learning theory, of gestalt psychology, of the test-and-measurement field, and of the newer work in perception which emphasized the importance of the social and cultural characteristics of the perceiver in determining what is perceived and known. His writings on the phenomenology of perception of space and time among the Ojibwa were read and cited frequently by psychologists who were eager for confirmation of their findings in cross-cultural research. In a very real sense, Hallowell completed one of the tasks which Boas, with great prescience, had fore-

seen as theoretically central not only for anthropology but also for science as a whole. The early physicist Boas, trained in psychophysics to study how the observer's characteristics determine his perception of experimental phenomena, had generalized this Kantian view of epistemology to include a concern with the way in which the "genius of a people" determines their perception of the material world, of the cultural repertoire presented to them for acceptance by their neighbors, and even of themselves. In his work on the cultural determinants of perception, Hallowell thus carried forward the investigation of one of the great problems of epistemology and of the philosophy of science.

With his abiding interest in the subject of perception, it is perhaps not surprising that Hallowell should turn to tests of perception—the so-called projective techniques—and particularly to the Rorschach test as his favored technique of assessing individual Ojibwa personalities. He collected a series of 266 Rorschach records from various Ojibwa communities, and although he never prepared an over-all summary of the results in the form of a sketch of typical Ojibwa personality structures, he used the data in a number of papers, including both those descriptive of Ojibwa cases and those explicating the use of the Rorschach test in cross-cultural research. He encouraged his students to use the Rorschach for comparative studies; my own dissertation research involving the use of Rorschach protocols was conducted under his guidance.

Undoubtedly the best known and most controversial of Hallowell's works on Ojibwa personality were those in which he described an aboriginal personality type—an isolated, tightly controlled, atomistic individual well adapted to the hunter's life—failing to change, except pathologically, under the stress of acculturation, particularly in reservation circumstances. This notion of "psychological lag" is, in a formal way, not unlike the so-called "doctrine of survivals," which in

more sophisticated form is sometimes invoked in analyzing the functional relations among changes in kinship terminology, marriage rule, and rules of residence and descent. Critical attacks on the idea of the aboriginality of the family hunting territory among the northern Algonkians (which Speck had originated and to which he had contributed) and a wholesale assault on the image of the northern hunters as "atomistic," resting in part on the claim that his views were based on a refusal to accept the Marx/Engels theory of cultural evolution, left him unmoved.

In his mature years, Hallowell developed further his ideas about the nature of the human personality and began to construct a theory of psychological evolution. Invoking again the theme of the self as perceiver, he posed the problem: at what point in human cultural evolution did man become an object to himself? Such a transformation he viewed as crucial, for only with this perceptual reflexivity is a moral, and therefore human, social order conceivable. Anthropology itself he finally came to view as one more step in the long evolutionary process of man becoming aware of man.

POSITIONS, SERVICES, AND HONORS

Hallowell's initial academic appointment was as instructor in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania from 1923 to 1928. Successive promotions followed; he became full professor in 1939. Thereafter, apart from the years spent at Northwestern from 1944 to 1947, Hallowell remained in residence as Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania until his retirement in 1963. And even after that he maintained a busy office in the department, where he conducted business for the National Academy of Sciences and counseled students and colleagues. During his emeritus years he was sought after as a teacher on a number of campuses, including Wisconsin and Chatham College, and

formed a particularly strong connection at Bryn Mawr, where he taught regularly and helped to supervise dissertations until a few years before his death.

He also served various institutions in other capacities. At the University of Pennsylvania he held the positions of Curator of Social Anthropology in the University Museum and of Professor of Anthropology in Psychiatry in the Medical School. He served as Chairman of the Division of Anthropology and Psychology in the National Research Council from 1946 to 1949, as President of the American Anthropological Association in 1949, and as President of the American Folklore Society and the Society for Personality Assessment. He edited the Wenner-Gren Foundation's monographs series, the Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, from 1950 to 1956.

Among his honors and awards may be mentioned his election to the National Academy of Sciences in 1961 and to the American Philosophical Society in 1963. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940, received the Viking Medal for outstanding achievement in anthropology in 1956, and was accorded an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Pennsylvania on his retirement in 1963. In 1965 a Festschrift was published in his honor, edited by Melford Spiro and entitled *Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology*.

PERSONAL STYLE

During the years when I knew him as student and colleague, Hollowell lived in a comfortable old frame house in a woodsy suburb of Philadelphia. There he and his wife, Maude, on occasion entertained students, faculty, and visitors to the area at small gatherings where the talk revolved around personality structure and its assessment, psychocultural evolution, and other psychologically oriented aspects of

anthropology. Hallowell was enthusiastic in conversation and encouraged students to argue and debate him. On occasion he could be testy, however, and it was said by awed graduate students that he invariably took a negative position to any new proposal submitted to his judgment but that he generally worked his way around to approval of it two days later. In lecturing, as in writing, Hallowell liked to surround the points he made in clear academic prose with a thicket of allusions to the literature, so that lecture notes and published papers alike bristled with footnotes and bibliographical asides. The style of all this was, however, more sprightly than pedantic, and in personal conversation the apparatus of scholarship was replaced by a fund of humorous but illustrative anecdotes. Although he set high standards of scholarship for himself and his students, he regarded the machinery of examinations and dissertations more as a developmental process than as a series of hurdles to exclude the unworthy. I well recall his remark after I had completed my dissertation (under his supervision): "I'm going to tell you what Frank told me when I finished *my* dissertation. Now that you've got that out of the way, you can get to work."

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