Prehistoric Art and Ideology
Author(s): Morton H. Levine
Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 59, No. 6 (Dec., 1957), pp. 949-964
Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/666458
Accessed: 09/07/2013 17:24

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

http://www.jstor.org

Wiley and *American Anthropological Association* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Anthropologist.*

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Prehistoric Art and Ideology[1]

MORTON H. LEVINE
Harvard University

INTRODUCTION

> *"The material remains of past civilizations are like shells beached by the retreating sea. The functioning organisms and the milieu in which they lived have vanished, leaving the dead and empty forms behind . . . understanding . . . of ancient societies must be based upon these static molds which bear only the imprint of life."*
>
> GORDON R. WILLEY 1953

THE material remains of past civilizations sometimes include art. Where this is so, as in the spectacular case of Upper Paleolithic art in Western Europe, we may be able to add an ideological dimension to our understanding of the ancient people.

Traditional anthropological interest in art treated the subject as an isolated ethnographic category, focused almost exclusively on the technique of art-making, on the iconography, and on the uses to which art is put. But attention has turned increasingly to questions about the ties between art and other aspects of culture. For example, monographs by Mills (1953) and McAllester (1954), produced under the aegis of the Harvard Values Study project, have looked for relationships between esthetic values in Navaho art and music and Navaho value culture as a whole. Malraux's *Voices of Silence* (1953) exhibits a convergent trend in art history. These and similar studies are laying the foundation on which efforts to interpret prehistoric art must rest.

Translating into achievement the prospect of reconstituting prehistoric "idea culture" through the study of prehistoric art depends upon finding ways and means for archeologists to ask, however indirectly, the same questions which ethnologists increasingly pursue among recent and living art-makers. If relationships between art and other parts of culture can be discerned and described in individual cultures and compared across cultures so as to yield generalizations, if we can make a reasonable case for the idea that a people's art is patterned by the point of view of their culture, if we can suggest the ways in which art exhibits this patterning, we might hope to put the lessons learned to work in behalf of a plausible reconstruction of the attitudes and outlook of a prehistoric people. We might gain a means of narrowing the gap between that span of time for which we know something of man as an economic animal and that much shorter period for which we are acquainted with him as a thinking, believing, feeling creature.

The concern of this paper is two-fold: What kind of controls on interpretation can we derive from the study of ethnographic materials? And, what problems can we approach fruitfully through the analysis of art style? The crucial general issues about the "nature of artistic behavior" and the character of the "relationship between Art and Culture" are not confronted directly.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

The present discussion moves beyond ground already taken by anthropological field forces. This has its obvious advantages and disadvantages. The attempt was stimulated by studies in the art of the Upper Paleolithic and in aboriginal Australian art. In pursuing the concerns of this paper, we will have recourse to the former to exemplify problems in reconstruction of ideology, and to the latter for examples of what ethnographic materials can provide by way of suggestions for and limitations on interpretation. Further, we will deal solely with painting and sculpture, the only arts common to the ethnographic and archeological record.

THE ARCHEOLOGICAL RECORD AND ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPARISON

Drawing on material survivals and on the data of paleo-studies in geology, geography, and zoology, archeology develops a picture of the life of Upper Paleolithic man in broad terms of habitat-economy-society:

He was a cold climate big game hunter. His environment was at once bountiful and threatening. Animal and plant resources abounded; but bringing down game, even with the refined and varied arsenal then at hand, was extremely difficult if not dangerous. The natural setting which enveloped the Ice Age hunter was uncommonly labile and must have seemed brutally capricious: the weather in Würm times was fairly drastic, and the landscape was tortured by tectonic upheavals. But life appears to have been relatively sedentary. Small local societies may have migrated with the change of season; but evidence for a plentiful food supply and the elaborate art in the caves refute any suggestion of incessant wandering. The existence of art of such a high level of achievement points to specialization of some sort within the groups; but we can only wonder whether the artistic function was or was not combined with religious or chiefly roles. Stylized, intentional burials appear in the record to suggest not only some sort of funeral exercise, but an explicit recognition of life and death as opposed and remarkable states.

These people or peoples left for posterity one of the great art collections of all time. It was a refined and varied art, produced over many millennia. Taken as a whole, the artistic universe of the Upper Paleolithic offers large animal "portraits," animal figures bearing geometric designs, other beasts studded with darts, sculptured women in the round and in relief—the famous "Venuses"—anthropomorphs of which the best known is the "Sorcerer" at Les Trois Frères, profusely superposed engravings on the walls of caves and on pebbles, handprints on the cave walls, some of which betray mutilation of the fingers, geometric figures and dots and club-shaped forms, and the vivacious meanders dug into the then soft clay with the fingers or with hafted animal teeth—the so-called "macaroni."

Archeology gives us a sense of the character of existence and the realistic problems which confronted these ancient hunters. We are presented, too, with a rich corpus of art. The "missing link" is what these early men thought and believed—how they perceived reality, what they valued and what they took as problematic. This is precisely what we hope to recover to some extent from

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

a sensitive, systematic study of the art. But we cannot do this by unaided recourse to the art itself. Granting the assumption that values and world view reach expression in art, this general confidence is of no help in the enterprise of specific interpretation. If we want to eschew impressionistic insights and reconstitute the "missing link" in a way which is communicable and subject to restudy and confirmation or revision by others, then we will have to base our work quite explicitly on the clues and limits afforded by researches among living peoples. To illustrate the potential advantages of exploiting ethnographic materials, let us begin with a brief summary of elements in the life situation, thought and belief, and art of the aboriginal Australians. But not without first entering a caveat:

The material here is a compilation, a summary of and selection from diverse researches pursued among various regions and cultures of Australia. The data on art tend to emphasize that which is characteristic of the Oenpelli district of Arnhem Land in particular and north central and northwest Australia in general. The items on ecology and general culture are more widely eclectic. An effort has been made to avoid gross mismatch in coupling material about various aspects of aboriginal life and art; but error or simplistic generalization is built into this kind of summary.[2] This "lumping" is justified, if at all, from the standpoint of our illustrative purpose and does not pretend to be a satisfactory review of the Australian situation as such. Such a summing up must await many more studies like the recent Mountford volume, *Art, Myth and Symbolism* (1956), in which we are provided with a specific account of aboriginal art and belief in Arnhem Land which discriminates three artistic subcultures (Groote Eylandt, Oenpelli, and Yirrkalla) and details the corresponding ideology. Pending the availability of such material from many regions of Australia, the generalizations which are offered below must be regarded as at least highly tentative.

The ungenerous character of the Australian ecology, the utter dependence of the aborigine upon the environment, and the intensity and intimacy of his relationship with it form a classical syndrome in the literature. It is vividly and systematically described by Birdsell (1953); and Tindale (1940) and other writers going back to Spencer and Gillen have given witness to the picture of a people who live in groups of less than 50, wander constantly within their tribal territory, and sustain themselves on a diet which reads virtually like a biological inventory of their locality.

The life situation of the Australian aborigine is not merely reflected in but rather imprinted on his belief and behavior. Basic is the perception of a profound connection between human life and that of plants and animals—and between all life and the rain. Mythology extends this to the notion of a common origin of men and other natural species (Fry 1933:256; Elkin 1954:133). Anxiety, induced by dependence upon the environment and its parsimony, is expressed in various ways: there is a whole complex of belief and action associated with fertility and increase, a theme which pervades mythology and forms one of the main bases for ritual and underlies the exuberant ramification

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of sexual symbolism (Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950:3–4; Berndt and Berndt 1951:148–9; Elkin, 1954:238–9). The unpredictability of the environment echoes in the belief in benign and malevolent spirits, as well as sorcery, as causal agents. And there are rituals of atonement and propitiation which function to redress the feeling of being vulnerable to retribution for the killing of animals (Marrett 1934:205–07; Roheim 1938:150). Marrett describes such ritual as a "composition in the matter of blood revenge."

Some of the themes in art and artistic behavior among the Australians are:

1. Art-making as one of the principal forms of ritual and ceremonial action. The Australians hold many designs sacred and, further, believe that a design *is* what it represents. For example, the painted actor in ceremonial *becomes* the mythological personage whose role he enacts by virtue of the ritualistic application ("singing on") of the design.

2. Several other forms of ritual art-making include the palimpsest, or repetitive superposition of engraved and painted forms at certain places; the periodic ritual retouching of the *Wondjina* in the Kimberley caves to "reactivate" their power; ground painting as part of the ceremonial and the remaking or at least repainting of ceremonial objects for each use.

3. The affiliation between men and other living things is a frequent theme in Australian art, especially exemplified in anthropomorphic figures.

4. "X-ray" art is a popular motif, often showing pregnancy or the inner "works" of men and animals, all of this explicitly reflecting an intense concern with life and, more to the point, with fertility and increase. The emphasis on sexual motifs and the outsize portrayal of genitalia in both X-ray and non-X-ray art is another manifestation of this emphasis.

5. The Australian landscape is familiar to the inhabitants on the most intimate level; and features of the landscape are often invested with sacred meaning. The Australians leave their handprints at sacred places as a ritual of personal identification. Elsewhere in this paper we shall have occasion to discuss footprints in the caves and the animal track motif in art as a reflection of elements of the life situation in style.

How much of Australian belief (and its manifestation in art) refers to the particulars of the Australian situation and what may be referred to aspects in which the Australian and Upper Paleolithic situations are comparable? This important stage of analysis requires recourse to material from other living peoples.[3] As an example, let us consider the question of whether the importance of the food quest to the Australian modes of belief is related to the sheer fact of scarcity.

The Chukchee, Gilyak, Lapps, Eskimo, and other hunting peoples of the world live in ecological circumstances which are by no means as adverse as those faced by the Australians; some of the environments may even be described as relatively bountiful. Yet, in one way or another, these people exhibit anxiety in the face of nature, perceive the world in animistic terms, and take various steps to propitiate the spirits and to compensate nature for what has been taken in the hunt.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Sverdrup (1938:202, 205) offers this revealing account of the Chukchee world view:

> The Chukchi concept of nature is fundamentally based on the fear of unexpected and unavoidable events. To them the regularly repeated natural phenomena . . . represent no problem. . . . The hostile nature manifests itself in the unexpected event, in the catastrophes, the storms, the heavy snowfalls . . . disease.
>
> . . . the Chukchi . . . have formed a system of their own which explains nature to their satisfaction, and which they think protects them against the catastrophes. They have populated nature with spirits and consider every unforeseen happening as evidence of the direct action of evil spirits, but . . . they can approach them and negotiate with them—they can hope that their sacrifices will be accepted by the spirits and that the spirits will show mercy or become reconciled if they have been offended.

The belief in good and evil spirits is also found among the Gilyak, according to Seeland (1882:50), who notes further that evil spirits predominate and must be propitiated. Hawes (1903:212) reports that the Gilyak have a two-cycle year, marked by the seal and sable hunting seasons respectively. The hunters dedicate their first land-hunting catch to the "lord of the forest" at a special place; and the seal bones are tossed back into the sea. Similar restitution is found among the Lapps, who set aside certain parts of the slain elk for later burial; among the Minnetaree Indians, who believe the skeleton of the bison will again take on flesh if the bones are undestroyed; among the Baffinland and Hudson's Bay Eskimo, where a boy's first seal is stripped of its skin and flesh and the bones are thrown by his mother into a deep hole so that they may rise again as live seals for the boy to catch in later life.

The fertility-increase complex encountered among the Australians is conspicuous by its absence among these people; and this must be regarded as specific to the Australian situation. But it is noteworthy that an animistic view of nature, anxiety about continuity of the food supply, and propitiation and restitution ritual are manifest nevertheless. This persistent syndrome of thought and ritual action, apparently independent of the relative bounty of the environment, seems then to be a function of the dependence upon and intimate relationship with the natural setting. In this case, such characteristics would appear potentially attributable to prehistoric hunters like those of the Upper Paleolithic.

The Gilyak data relating belief and art offer a few details suggesting the extension of certain features in Australia beyond the local situation. We might consider them briefly. The Gilyak make art ritually and impute mana-like power to the art product. Seeland (1882) refers to "idols" which are both symbols for and dwelling places of the spirits. Small carved figures are worn as magical charms, recalling the Australian *tjurunga.* Hawes (1903:194) reports crude murals in the village houses: some representations of bears, and a rough design like a chessboard. (Without implying that this has any resemblance of which one could make interpretive use, the reference to a mural chessboard pattern recalls two interesting similarities: a like design occurs at Lascaux [cf. fig. 84 in Breuil 1952:120; Windels 1950]; and Birdsell has shown

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

the writer a map drawn for him by an Australian informant which looks like a multicolored chessboard.) Kreinovich (1935) reports this interesting art ritual among the Gilyak: on the sea-going hunt, an indispensable part of the preparation is the making of a carved figure to be placed on the prow or stern of the boat. The ritual is called *tn,aj*, which also means "image" or "picture" or "figure." It affords protection on the hunt.

Now, with respect to connections between art and belief, some extension of the Australian material beyond the specifically local situation may be suggested: The ritual production of art. The equation of a work of art with that which, from our point of view, it merely represents. The investment of pictures or carvings with mana-like power.

Before proceeding to examine similarities and differences in Australian and Upper Paleolithic art, it might be useful to take stock of the procedure thus far. We began with a brief summary of the picture which archeology provides of the life situation of Upper Paleolithic man, and followed this with a very broad inventory of the art. Alongside this account was offered an overview of the conditions of life in Australia, their imprint on belief and behavior, and the expression in art of aspects of Australian world view and values. It then became evident that any extension of the Australian data to Upper Paleolithic man would require further ethnographic comparison to filter out elements specific to the Australians. Examples were offered relevant to two overlapping sets of relationships: (1) the life situation and belief, and (2) belief and the practice of art. Certain very broad positive and negative suggestions were developed in these illustrative comparisons. To narrow the interpretive possibilities further requires that we turn to the art itself, to its content and, above all, to its style. The analysis of style offers two potential contributions. Before exemplifying the more detailed kind of interpretation which can be made when the sort of study outlined above is followed by scrutiny of the art itself, the concept of style and its potential value to our undertaking deserves consideration.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF PREHISTORIC ART IN STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

A. Style and Meaning. "By style is meant the constant form—and sometimes the constant elements, quality and expression—in the art of an individual or a group." In this compact statement by Schapiro (1953:287) are two implications of potential importance for the study of prehistoric art. One is that style, as well as subject matter, yields "meanings." The other is that an art style refers to a specific group. Our discussion of style will be devoted to developing these two implications.

Style is not, as is sometimes assumed, an aspect of art independent of subject matter or "content." This distinction merely refers to different lines of sight on the same phenomena. When we talk about subject matter, the objective is principally to identify the items of experience to which the painter has turned for his models, or to characterize the anecdotal situation which has

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

served him for a metaphor. When we talk about style, we may be said to be concerned with identifying the principle or principles of selection which distinguish the artistic utterance.

Selection occurs on three levels. First, it affects the choice of subject matter. The universe of Upper Paleolithic art is predominantly a carnival of the animals—and the big game animals at that. The art of Australia offers a much more representative sample of the plant and animal life of the region, and humans are frequent subjects. This is a gross contrast, but it will serve to illustrate the point: If we were to approach the matter from a primary interest in "content," our problem would be solved with an inventory of the creatures who inhabit the artistic universe. The stylistic approach, however, aims at detecting the bias which such a census might reveal and then trying to interpret its significance.

Even when the subject matter is merely identified, there is usually some attempt to describe the manner of depiction, the second level on which selection occurs. The suggestion here is that the manner of depiction is properly and usefully regarded as an object of analysis in its own right. The same subject matter is sometimes found in two quite distinct bodies of art—for example, the fish paintings in Arnhem Land and at the Gorge d'Enfer in France. Discriminating the piscine species is hardly sufficient to account for the contrast in point of view expressed by the art. More to the point is the X-ray treatment of the fish in Australia as against the full-fleshed presentation of the Upper Paleolithic fish. The difference in this case is stylistic, a difference in the selection of relevant elements from the model encountered in real life. This is what distinguishes an Altamira bison from the buffalo on a nickel. On this level, selection is defined by such questions as: What aspects of the model are retained? What aspects are stressed, by disproportion or color or other means? What aspects are attenuated or ignored?

Many Australian paintings present a tableau, built either on some situation encountered in daily life or on a fantastic recombination of various individual elements of ordinary experience. In such a work, the artist creates and populates a milieu. This expresses the third level of selection, that which involves patterns of arrangement of the subject matter in the total composition. In the *Mimi* paintings in Arnhem Land, we may see inordinately tall human figures hurling spears at kangaroo. Some of the bark paintings from the same region offer a synthetic situation: A man dominates the center of the picture. He is ringed by fish, two of which are converging on his huge, extended penis. In the former work, the milieu is modeled on a mundane event, whereas the latter presents a microcosmos whose overall arrangement or gestalt is synthetic, a product of fantasy. In both, however, the elements of subject matter have been selected; the depiction of the subjects shows selection; and, in the frame of reference of the total composition, the "environment" is established through selective principles expressed in juxtaposition, relative size of the elements, the character of the *lebensraum*, and suggestions about time through treatment of sequence, and so forth.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

In contrast with Australian art, one of the most striking features of Upper Paleolithic art is the rarity of "scenes." Where they do occur, as in the famous one at Lascaux, the style is markedly different from the rest of the art. They are generally very economical delineations, almost stick figures in some cases, rather than opulent paintings; and their "sketchy" quality suggests a kind of reportage, perhaps the illustration of a verbal narrative. Most of the art, however, is "portraiture" of one kind or another, i.e., the presentation of an animal which is not placed in a context but rather preempts the "milieu" of the painting. Not only does the analysis of compositional selection become much more refined, but we are faced with interpreting the significance of the absence of any kind of *mise en scène.*

Thus far, we have described style as the expression of principles of selection on three levels and have sought to specify them. In order to suggest the "meanings" which style may yield, we must turn to a more general canvass of the idea of selection per se.

Boas (1927:78–9) derives selection from the limitations of the artistic media. The materials of the painter and sculptor do not permit truly literal imitation, but constrain them to select. This is self-evident, but it doesn't explain why the selection should not turn out to be random. The fact is that the selection is not random, or else we could never talk about "Gothic" art or "Cubism" and so on; so that we must work toward some idea of the source of the patterns of selection.

Tylor said that the purpose of art "is not imitation, but what the artist strives to bring out is the idea that strikes the beholder" (1907:300). In relating selection to creative intent, rather than to the constraints imposed by the media, Tylor puts us on the path to a useful conception of meaning in style. Malraux (1953:324) develops this theme:

Whatever the artist himself may say on the matter, never does he let himself be mastered by the outside world; always he subdues it to something he puts in its stead. . . . For the visible world is not only a profusion of forms, it is a profusion of significances; yet as a whole it signifies nothing, for it signifies everything. . . . Thus, styles are *significations*, they impose a *meaning* on visual experience . . . always we see them replacing the uncharted scheme of things by the coherence they enforce on all they "represent." Every style, in fact, creates its own universe by selecting and incorporating such elements of reality as enable the artist to focus the shape of things on some essential part of man.

This will recall the parallel statement by Whorf in quite a different context, worth quoting here because it refers in a more general way to the source of selection as a function of symbolic behavior in man's organization of reality:

The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented to us in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds. . . . We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to do it in this way (1940:231).

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

A few years earlier, in *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict defined the ethos of a culture as a selection from the great arc of human possibilities. Her analogic reference to the configuration of culture and art style in the same work is not merely heuristic; the conception of art style was as much a model as a metaphor.

An art style is a particular set of selective principles. Taken as a whole, the style of a particular work of art expresses the perceptive bias of the individual artist, as conditioned by (1) his peculiar life history and (2) the context in which his life unfolds, that context being the human group to which he belongs and its culture. But there is also a style attributable to a corpus of art by many artists, as the synoptic collections of any historically organized museum will confirm. Sapir's distinction between individual and social behavior (1949) can be projected to reconcile the individual and social dimensions in art style: those aspects of "individual style" which may be referred to shared patterns of selection represent the art style of the group or culture. The "cultural meaning" of an art style, then, is the organization of reality, the conceptual modes, the various levels of value—in short, the collective representations—of the culture which produced it.

B. Stylistic Units and Cultural Units. Up to now, we have been concerned with interpreting art—with the use of ethnographic materials and with the meanings which may be derived from the analysis of style. Along with Schapiro, we have assumed that a particular art style is the product of a particular historical sociocultural entity. The concept of style outlined above would seem to warrant this assumption. And, although taxonomic arrangements of non-artistic archeological materials in "industries" and "assemblages" have not been equatable with cultures (Movius 1953:36–7), archeology has used art styles to achieve culture historical integration. On the premise that art styles refer to historic cultural entities, archeologists have plotted their distribution geographically and chronologically and have been able to order their assemblages in a space-time matrix. Bennett's reconstruction of a Central Andean area co-tradition (1949) summed up historical and methodological contributions by Kroeber (1944) and Willey (1945), among others, and remains today a prime example of the effective use of art styles in plotting culture history.

But to say that an art style belongs to an historic sociocultural entity doesn't quite do away with the problem of coincidence between an artistic unit and a group unit. We must consider Schapiro's point that a culture may foster two art styles contemporaneously. If this were true, we could not be sure whether our ideological reconstruction referred to part of the outlook of a group, or to the whole of it; and our unit of reference would slip from our grasp.

From the standpoint of the present concern with cultures on the hunting and gathering level, i.e., cultures which are likely to be homogeneous, the problem does not appear formidable. An apparent instance of diverse art styles maintained by a single culture in Arnhem Land disappears upon closer inspection. The Mimi paintings in the caves are, in most stylistic respects,

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

markedly different from the bark paintings and other art produced today and in the recorded past. We cannot assume, because the Mimi paintings figure in contemporary belief and ritual, that they represent another art style of the aborigines of today, who do not make them, do not know or have forgotten who did make them, and regard this art as both representative of and produced by spirits. The fact that present-day aborigines project an explanation on the art does not put them in possession of two art styles.

Turning more directly to Schapiro's point that, "The variation of styles in a culture or group is often considerable within the same period" (1953:307), we are led to inquire into the unit characterized as "a culture or group." Considering the range of examples adduced throughout the article, it is fair to assume that he refers to contemporaneous variety within something like "Western culture." The tremendous diversity within this frame of reference is a plain fact, but are we justified in referring to it as "a culture"? To the extent that we are justified in taking Western culture as a unit, it is vis-à-vis non-Western cultures; and then it is the similarities within our unit, not the differences, that are being stressed. If, however, we are going to focus on variation within this huge geographical, historical, sociocultural framework, then we have to recognize subcultures in space, time, and the organization of society and social thought. And the question becomes one of coincidence between a single art style and a single subculture.

The recent history of modern art gives vivid testimony to the overlapping and side-by-side existence of diverse artistic styles; it is fruitless to seek a common denominator for Expressionism and Cubism or for Norman Rockwell and Picasso. There is parallel diversity in views of reality and values. The artistic subcultures can be characterized by different orientations in belief and behavior. However, in no case can a variety of styles be attributed to one artistic "school." The problem which Schapiro raises is not, in the end, a problem of reconciling cultural homogeneity with stylistic diversity, but one of establishing meaningful coincidences between art styles and sociocultural entities.

This problem is yet to be solved with respect to the Upper Paleolithic. Breuil has organized the art into two great cycles, the Aurignacian-Périgordian and the Solutréo-Magdalenian, on the basis of archeological evidence, stylistic criteria (which assume a progression toward accomplished naturalistic rendering and increasing elaborateness in technique), and similarities in certain broad features of execution. This grouping of the material, granting its validity, is nevertheless unsuited to the purposes outlined in this paper. The units are chronological and lump obviously disparate art styles. The Altamira polychrome bison are placed in Magdalenian VI. So are the bison at Font-de-Gaume. Yet they are remarkably different in style. The former are thickly outlined, presented in a variety of poses, very detailed, adorned with a stylized, fringe-like treatment of the hair. The latter have more generalized forms, are rather delicately outlined, are mostly standing erect, with emphatic development of the hump and other rounded parts of the body. The refinement of delineation in the French bison contrasts with the Spanish cave paintings as Japanese art might contrast with Rouault or Picasso.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

In order to obtain units against which the analysis of style can be projected, it will be necessary to cross-cut Breuil's chronological classification with groupings based on spatial distribution. Despite their apparent contemporaneity, and whatever similarities in outlook they may have shared, there were differences in the principles of selection between the people at Altamira and those at Font-de-Gaume. We have to assume, provisionally at least, that these were variant local cultures. What might, for convenience, be called the "Font-de-Gaume Style" and the "Altamira Style" must be plotted geographically. Once the distribution is known, the archeology of the area which corresponds with the art style must also be treated as a unit distinct from the remainder of the larger region. In short, a stylistic-cultural region must be plotted and dealt with as an entity.

The outcome of such "style-mapping" will be individual units with which we can begin to do interpretive work. It will not result in a sequence of Upper Paleolithic art history, for the present state of our knowledge of art styles and the logic of their progression is totally inadequate to allow us to convert several different art styles into an historical series on internal evidence. For sequences of styles, we will have to continue to depend for a long time on the data of dirt archeology.

SOME TRIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF UPPER PALEOLITHIC ART

Let us proceed now to some attempts at interpretation of some features of Upper Paleolithic art, using the guides developed above. The following suggestions were developed in ethnographic comparisons, taking off from a review of the Australian data:

Dependence upon nature is one of the crucial features of a hunting and gathering subsistence, regardless of the relative bounty of the environment.

The relationship with the natural setting is intimate and intense.

Hunting is difficult with the inadequate arsenal possessed by these peoples; and cornering and killing big game animals is not only problematic but often dangerous.

The unexpected and irregular manifestations of nature produce major crises in the lives of such dependent people.

These situational factors are reflected in several themes in the outlook and behavior:

Nature is perceived as active and purposive and personal, sometimes in animistic terms and sometimes in outright anthropomorphic terms; and there is some tendency to identify to greater or lesser degree with nonhuman living things.

Even when the food supply is abundant, dependence, unpredictability in the total situation, and the resistance of big game to the hunter's purpose invoke anxiety which is expressed by peopling the universe with spirits or gods which (a) account for the character of the situation, and (b) provide the possibility of appropriate action to control or at least salvage the situation.

Nature, thus regarded, is approached from two directions: It is perceived

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

as accessible to propitiation; and compensation for what man must take from it in order to survive is regarded as possible and necessary.

In turn, these themes are reflected in certain attitudes and patterns of behavior with respect to art:

The main belief in this connection is that a work of art is the same thing as that which it represents.

From this stems the idea that art objects have mana-like power.

In the realm of behavior, we have seen that hunting and gathering people who engage in art-making do so ritually.

This represents the range of possibilities filtered from a description of Australian life, belief, and art by virtue of comparisons with other hunting and gathering peoples designed to distinguish between what is specific to the Australian situation and what might remain for use in interpreting Upper Paleolithic art. In approaching the prehistoric material, the art itself guides us to a still closer range of potential explanation. The selection reflected in the subject matter, depictive treatment, and compositional arrangement of the art is the clue to the selection which characterizes the outlook of the ancient people. In view of what has been said about the need for well articulated art styles for the Upper Paleolithic, it is only possible to deal here with discrete features which cannot be added up and offered as the values and outlook upon reality of a true sociocultural entity.

The handprints in the caves are the remains of a ritual of identification ("Kilroy was here"), the mark of the pilgrim's visit to a sacred place. The very way of life, as we have seen, develops an intimate sense of locality and the imputation of sacred character to features of the landscape. This is elaborately expressed in Australia, where there are also handprints and where the natives are able to identify the owners who have placed them there in a ritual act.

The profusely superposed drawings are the traces of a restitution ritual: whenever an animal was killed, his essence was restored to Nature by ritual rendering of his image at a sacred spot. Basic to this interpretation are the following beliefs: an image is what it represents; restitution can and must be made to the spirits or gods who stand for Nature. These express anxiety over the continuity of the food supply, born of dependence upon nature, and the notion that taking life is dangerous not only vis-à-vis the powerful beast but also the powerful spirits who inspire and protect all life.

The superposed drawings occur at selected places, often surrounded by available areas for drawing. On occasion, as at Les Trois Frères, they are placed in juxtaposition with other art—in this case the "Sorcerer"—in a manner which suggests sacrifice to a spirit or god. Above all, the palimpsests of this kind suggest a compulsive superposition rather than mere overpainting or overdrawing; and this compulsiveness inspires the notion of ritual. Similar artistic phenomena are reported from Australia by Basedow (1925:303), who cites rock carvings at Yunta in the Flinders mountains where "one design has been carved over the top of another, time after time, until eventually the ground appeared as though it were covered by an elaborate carpet." Speaking

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of the "impression of profuseness" in the cave galleries of rock painting in Arnhem Land, Elkin (1954: 232–33) says: "The drawings overlay one another. This suggests that satisfaction lies not so much in admiring the finished picture, as in the act of painting it or in some practical desire it expresses and in some result it will effect . . . he believes that this 'ritual' act will bring about the desired result."

The anthropomorphic figures, as a general class of art, express the affiliation between men and other living creatures and, as well, the personification of nature. This is a very vague generalization; but it does suggest the direction of productive analysis. Assuming the significance of anthropomorphic figures suggested here, the most informative path would seem to require a close study of the factors of selection—human and animal elements used—and composition of these elements into a synthetic figure. This is not an easy task for the Upper Paleolithic, where anthropomorphic figures are not a strongly expressed artistic theme and where they tend to occur as one-of-a-kind examples.

The animals which occur with darts or spears sticking in them have been popularly interpreted as imitative magic; and although this kind of interpretation is again very general, it does gain support from other evidence discussed above. This involves the same kind of equation of the artistic depiction with that which is depicted as do the superposed drawings of the palimpsests, although the intent here is clearly not restitution but rather to gain power over the animal. Thus, we have an expression tending to confirm the perception of the game animals as dangerous in a literal sense. In the more specific treatment of *perspective tordue* below, there seems ample justification to impute this sense of problem to Upper Paleolithic man.

Perspective tordue in Upper Paleolithic art is not a manifestation of inept perspective rendering but evidence for the intense concern of the hunter, with his inadequate armament, over the danger he faced from the horned wild beasts. "Twisted perspective" is Breuil's name for an artistic practice encountered in the Upper Paleolithic in which the horns of animals otherwise shown in profile are turned around full face to the viewer. The accepted interpretation of this phenomenon has been that it represents less accomplished naturalism than later art. To put it another way, this style has been designated as earlier and assigned to the Périgordian, largely on the assumption that there is a progression in Upper Paleolithic art as a whole toward the Renaissance ideal of perspective.

This assumes a kind of progressive learning which took place over many thousands of years. It also ignores the possibility that perspective tordue expresses a principle of style, a kind of compositional selection which is designed to stress the significance to the artist of the horns of the animal. However, recourse to the Australian material yields evidence that such twisting of usual appearances is purposeful and refers to aspects of the life experience of the artists.

In Australia there are many pictures in which the figure of a man or an animal is presented in profile, standing or running, but with the soles of the feet

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

turned up to face the viewer. We know why the Australians do this. From early childhood, boys are taught to identify human and animal tracks with extreme subtlety. Their lives depend on the success of the hunt and game is scarce, and no means of detecting the opportunity for a kill can be neglected. Animal tracks themselves are a prominent motif in Australian art; in the pictures described above they merely become an element—albeit an important one—of a larger composition. It should also be noted that footprints of humans, as well as handprints, are found in the caves and are part of the syndrome of identification. Tracks are the mark of men and animals in Australia.

In this light, it is evident that the presentation of the soles of the feet in the Arnhem Land bark paintings and other art represents a selective principle, a violation of literal truth in behalf of a more profound reality, reflecting the intense concern with identifying animals and men and even spirits.

In the Upper Paleolithic, we cannot overlook the possibility of an analogous situation in the art, which takes its shape from the particular situation that obtained then and there. We have referred to the inefficiency of the weapons of Upper Paleolithic man in dealing with large animals; and he doubtless used traps and pitfalls and other means to bring them down. It is also quite likely that one of the perils of wandering around the countryside to hunt or to collect vegetable food was the possibility of attack by these beasts. This was a real problem for him; and the notion that his art features the selective principle which gives prominence to the horns on these grounds seems more plausible than inept rendering—an idea which applies esthetic values limited to a particular period of Western art history. Further, in the famous "wall-scene" at Lascaux, which appears as noted earlier to be illustrating an actual event, we get a depiction of an event in which the disemboweled beast looms over the fallen hunter, horns pointing to the fallen man and to the viewer.

The above are some examples of interpretations of Upper Paleolithic art, offered to illustrate how artistic selection may be projected on a range of possible explanations to narrow that range considerably. This paper has been designed to suggest procedures whereby ethnographic materials, the data about ecology and the life situation and art afforded by archeology, a concept of style as selective perception, can contribute to a systematic, verifiable sequence of analysis and reconstruction. The essence of the procedure is a progressive narrowing down of the variety of explanation for which plausibility can be asserted. The objective is a limitation on plausible explanation; patent demonstration is out of the question. Even so, with much work on a more modest scale than indicated here, on many fronts which demand study, there is some prospect of narrowing the span between that period for which we know something of man as a highly evolved animal and that brief epoch for which his attitudes and outlook are known to us in specific detail.

NOTES

[1] The writer is indebted to Hallam L. Movius, Jr., Clyde Kluckhohn, and Gordon R. Willey for their suggestions and criticisms of the several drafts of this paper, as well as for their manifest contribution to its orientation.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

[2] The limitations of even the most scrupulous library research need hardly be stressed, except that awareness of these restrictions has underlined the value of Joseph B. Birdsell's generous contribution of his first-hand knowledge of Australian aboriginal life in hours of conversation and counsel.

[3] Ethnographic comparison, even to the limited extent pursued here, was immensely facilitated and enriched by recourse to the HRAF and Cross Cultural Survey files at Yale University. The writer is grateful to George Peter Murdock for his time and trouble and encouragement in the early stages of this research, as well as for the initiation at his hands to the benefits of the HRAF material.

REFERENCES CITED

BASEDOW, HERBERT
1925 The Australian aboriginal. Adelaide, F. W. Preece and Sons.

BENNETT, WENDELL C. and JUNIUS B. BIRD
1949 Andean culture history. Handbook Series No. 15, American Museum of Natural History. New York.

BERNDT, R. M. and CATHERINE BERNDT
1951 Sexual behavior in Western Arnhem Land. Viking Fund Publ. in Anthropology No. 16. New York.

BIRDSELL, JOSEPH B.
1953 Some environmental and cultural factors influencing the structuring of Australian aboriginal populations. The American Naturalist, vol. LXXXVII, No. 834. Supplement to May–June. Published for The Institute for the Study of Human Variation of Columbia University.

BOAS, FRANZ
1927 Primitive art. Oslo, H. Aschettoug & Co.

BREUIL, HENRI
1952 Four hundred centuries of cave art. Translated by Mary E. Boyle. Realized by Fernand Windels. Dordogne, Montignac.

ELKIN, A. P.
1954 The Australian aborigines. Sydney, Angus and Robertson.

ELKIN, A. P., R. M. BERNDT, and C. BERNDT
1950 Art in Arnhem Land. Melbourne, F. W. Cheshire.

FRY, H. K.
1953 Body and soul: a study from Western Australia. Oceania III:247–256. Sydney, Australian Nat'l. Res. Council.

HAWES, CHAS. H.
1903 In the uttermost East. London and New Hork, Harper & Bros.

KREINOVICH, E. A.
1935 Hunting of the beluga by the Gilyaks of the village Puir. Sovietskaia Etnografiia, No. 2:108–115.

KROEBER, A. L.
1944 Peruvian archaeology in 1942. Viking Fund Publ. in Anthropology No. 4. New York.

MALRAUX, ANDRÉ
1953 The voices of silence. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. Garden City, Doubleday & Co., Inc.

MARETT, R. R.
1934 Food rites. *In* Essays presented to C. G. Seligman, E. E. Evans-Pritchard ed. London.

MCALLESTER, DAVID P.
Enemy Way music: a study of social and esthetic values as seen in Navaho music. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, vol. XLI, no. 3. Cambridge.

MILLS, GEORGE
1953 Navaho art and culture: a study of the relations among cultural premises, art styles and art values. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

MOUNTFORD, CHARLES P.
1956 Records of the American-Australian scientific expedition to Arnhem Land: 1, art, myth and symbolism. Melbourne, The Melbourne University Press. London and New York, The Cambridge University Press.

MOVIUS, HALLAM L., JR.
1953 Curren Point, Larne, County Antrim: The type site of the Irish Mesolithic. Proc. Roy. Irish Acad., vol. 56, Sec. C., no. 1. Dublin.

ROHEIM, GEZA
1938 The nescience of the Aranda. British Journ. of Medical Psychology, 17:343–360. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

SAPIR, EDWARD
1949 The unconscious patterning of behavior in society. *In* Selected writings of Edward Sapir, David G. Mandelbaum ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

SCHAPIRO, MEYER
1953 Style. *In* Anthropology today, A. L. Kroeber ed. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

SEELAND, NICOLAS
1882 Die Ghiliaken, Eine ethnographische Skizze. Russische Revue, vol. XXI. St. Petersburg.

SVERDRUP, HARALD
1938 Hos Tundrafolket (With the people of the Tundra). Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.

TINDALE, NORMAN B.
1940 Distribution of Australian aboriginal tribes: a field survey. Trans. Roy. Soc. So. Australia 64: 140–231. Cited in Birdsell (1953).

TYLOR, EDWARD B.
1907 Anthropology. New York, D. Appleton & Co.

WHORF, B. L.
1940 Science and linguistics. *In* The Technology Review, vol. XLII, April. M.I.T., Cambridge.

WILLEY, GORDON R.
1945 Horizon styles and pottery traditions. American Antiquity 11:49–56.
1953 Prehistoric settlement patterns in the Viru Valley, Peru. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 155. U. S. Gov't, Printing Office. Washington.

WINDELS, FERNAND
1950 The Lascaux cave paintings. New York, The Viking Press.

This content downloaded from 192.215.101.254 on Tue, 9 Jul 2013 17:24:21 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions