Franz Boas
1906

BOAS

Reader

The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911

Edited by
George W.
Stocking, Jr.

The University of Chicago Press
Chicago and London

1974

SELECTION

The Principles of Ethnological Classification

The leading idea of Otis T. Mason's writings on ethnology is his attempt to classify human inventions and other ethnological phenomena in the light of biological specimens. "They may be divided into families, genera, and species. They may be studied in their several ontogenies (that is, we may watch the unfolding of each individual thing from its raw material to its finished production). They may be regarded as the products of specific evolution out of natural objects serving human wants and up to the most delicate machine performing the same function. They may be modified by their relationship, one to another, in sets, outfits, apparatus, just as the insect and flower are co-ordinately transformed. They observe the law of change under environment and geographical distribution." This method of research is founded on the hypothesis that a connection of some kind exists between ethnological phenomena of people widely apart. Professor Mason is of this opinion, and expresses it as follows: "Anthropologists assign similar inventions observed in different parts of the world to one of the following causes: 1. The migration of a certain race of people who made the invention. 2. The migration of ideas —that is, an invention may be made by a certain race of people and taught or loaned to peoples far removed in time and place. 3. In human culture, as in nature elsewhere, like causes produce like effects. Under the same stress and resources the same inventions will arise." From this stand-point Professor Mason has arranged the ethnological collections of the national museum according to objects, not according to the tribes to whom they belong, in order to show the different species of throwing-sticks, basketry, bows, etc.

We cannot agree with the leading principles of Professor Mason's ethnological researches. In his enumeration of causes of similar inventions, one is omitted, which overthrows the whole system: unlike causes produce like effects. It is of very rare occurrence that the existence of like causes for similar inventions can be proved, as the elements affecting the human mind are so complicated; and their influence is so utterly

"The Occurrence of Similar Inventions in Areas Widely Apart," and "Museums of Ethnology and Their Classification," *Science* 9 (1887): 485–486, 587–589.

unknown, that an attempt to find like causes must fail, or will be a vague hypothesis. On the contrary, the development of similar ethnological phenomena from unlike causes is far more probable, and due to the intricacy of the acting causes. As far as inventions are concerned, the disposition of men to act suitably is the only general cause; but this is so general, that it cannot be made the foundation of a system of inventions.

But from still another point of view we cannot consider Professor Mason's method a progress of ethnological researches. In regarding the ethnological phenomenon as a biological specimen, and trying to classify it, he introduces the rigid abstractions species, genus, and family into ethnology, the true meaning of which it took so long to understand. It is only since the development of the evolutional theory that it became clear that the object of study is the individual, not abstractions from the individual under observation. We have to study each ethnological specimen individually in its history and in its medium, and this is the important meaning of the 'geographical province' which is so frequently emphasized by A. Bastian. By regarding a single implement outside of its surroundings, outside of other inventions of the people to whom it belongs, and outside of other phenomena affecting that people and its productions, we cannot understand its meaning. The only fact that a collection of implements used for the same purpose, or made of the same material, teaches, is, that man in different parts of the earth has made similar inventions, while, on the other hand, a collection representing the life of one tribe enables us to understand the single specimen far better. Our objection to Mason's idea is, that classification is not explanation.

His method, as far as applied to objects which have a close connection with each other, is very good. The collection of moon-shaped Eskimo knives or labrets from North-west America has given us great pleasure, and enables us to trace the distribution of those implements; but even they do not fully answer the purpose of ethnological collections. Besides these, we want a collection arranged according to tribes, in order to teach the peculiar style of each group. The art and characteristic style of a people can be understood only by studying its productions as a whole. In the collections of the national museum the marked character of the North-west American tribes is almost lost, because the objects are scattered in different parts of the building, and are exhibited among those from other tribes.

Another instance will show that the arrangement of similar implements does not serve the purpose of ethnological collections. From a collection of string instruments, flutes, or drums of 'savage' tribes and the modern orchestra, we cannot derive any conclusion but that similar means have been applied by all peoples to make music. The character of their music, the only object worth studying, which determines the form of the instruments, cannot be understood from the single instrument, but requires a complete collection of the single tribe. Here, however, it can be seen that

each ethnological collection affords only very fragmentary instruction; that its real use is only to illustrate descriptions of the tribes. For a study of native art and its development, they are indispensable. For this purpose, duplicates, of which the superficial visitor of ethnological museums frequently complains, are absolutely necessary. They are the only means of determining what is characteristic of a tribe, and what is merely incidental.

Mason's method takes a place in ethnology similar to the former 'comparing method' in geography. A mere comparison of forms cannot lead to useful results, though it may be a successful method of finding problems that will further the progress of science. The thorough study must refer to the history and development of the individual form, and hence proceed to more general phenomena.

Prof. Otis T. Mason's reply to my remarks on his views of the methods of ethnology is mainly a justification of his plan of arranging the collections of the national museum. As this plan is the outcome of his philosophical view of the problems of ethnology, we must scrutinize these in order to judge as to the merits of his system.

His principle object is the study of each and every invention among peoples of all races and countries. I am well aware that this idea was and is shared by many scientists; and at this very moment I read with interest Mantegazza's proposal of erecting a psychological museum, i.e., a museum of ethnological objects arranged according to the ideas to which they belong. Professor Mason's rank among American ethnologists, however, and the weight he can give to his opinions by the arrangement of the large collections of the national museum according to his theories, induce me to criticise his views more particularly.

My view of the study of ethnology is this: the object of our science is to understand the phenomena called ethnological and anthropological, in the widest sense of those words,—in their historical development and geographical distribution, and in their physiological and psychological foundation. These two branches are opposed to each other in the same way as are biology and the so-called systematic 'organology,' or, as I have called it in another place (*Science*, ix. No. 210), when treating on the study of geography, 'physical science and cosmography'; the former trying to deduce laws from phenomena, the latter having for its aim a description and explanation of phenomena. I tried to show that both branches are of equal scientific value.

Let us inquire which method must be applied to carry on ethnological researches of either kind. Ethnological phenomena are the result of the physical and psychical character of men, and of its development under the influence of the surroundings: therefore two problems must be studied for attaining scientific results. The preliminary study is that of the surroundings: the final aim of the researches is the knowledge of the

laws and history of the development of the physiological and psychological character of mankind. 'Surroundings' are the physical conditions of the country, and the sociological phenomena, i.e., the relation of man to man. Furthermore, the study of the present surroundings is insufficient: the history of the people, the influence of the regions through which it passed in its migrations, and the people with whom it came into contact, must be considered. All of these are phenomena which may directly be observed by a well-trained observer, or may be traced with greater or less accuracy by historical researches.

The second part of ethnological researches is far more difficult. The physical and psychical character of a people is in itself the result of the action of the surroundings, and of the way in which the present character was attained. Each stage in the development of a people leaves its stamp, which cannot be destroyed by future events. Thus it appears that the elements of the character of a people are extremely complex. There are two ways of treating this problem.

One of the remarkable features of such problems is the occurrence of similar inventions in regions widely apart, and without having a common origin. One method of studying them—and this is Professor Mason's method—is to compare the phenomena, and to draw conclusions by analogy. It is the deductive method. The other method is to study phenomena arising from a common psychical cause among all tribes and as influenced by their surroundings; i.e., by tracing the full history of the single phenomenon. This is the inductive method. For this method of study, the tribal arrangement of museum specimens is the only satisfactory one, as it represents the physical and ethnical surroundings.

I will explain these ideas by giving an example. It has frequently been proposed to establish a museum illustrating the adaptation of organisms to surroundings. The aim of this study is to find the physiological laws or the combination of causes which have the effect of causing these adaptations. The classification and arrangement must, of course, be made according to surroundings, in order to show their influence on different kinds of organisms.

An ethnological collection is analogous to this. The objects of study are researches on psychology. The method of researches is a study of the surroundings. The surroundings are physical and ethnical: therefore the arrangement must also be physical and ethnical, as this is the only way to show the single phenomenon in its peculiar character and surroundings.

It has been the tendency of science to confine the domain of deductive methods more and more, and not to be content with arguments from analogy, which are the foundation of most errors of the human mind, and to which may be traced the religious and other ideas of man in a primitive state of culture, and, to a certain degree, even in a state of advanced civilization. Science is constantly encroaching upon the domain of the argument from analogy, and demands inductive methods.

Nevertheless the psychological and scientific value of the argument from analogy cannot be overrated: it is the most effective method of finding problems. The active part it plays in the origin of philosophical systems and grand ideas which sometimes burst upon scientists is proof of this. But, as far as inductive methods can be applied,—and we believe that their domain will continue to increase,—induction must scrutinize the ideas found by deduction. Therefore I shall call Professor Mason's system a suggestive one, but not fit for scientific researches, as it does not allow the application of the inductive method.

But even this acknowledgment must be limited. The technological idea, which Professor Mason has made the leading one in the arrangement of the collection of the national museum, is only one side, and a very limited one, of the wide field of ideas which must be leading in a 'psychological museum,' as Mantegazza calls it.

The rattle, for instance, is not merely the outcome of the idea of making noise, and of the technical methods applied to reach this end; it is, besides this, the outcome of religious conceptions, as any noise may be applied to invoke or drive away spirits; or it may be the outcome of the pleasure children have in noise of any kind; and its form may be characteristic of the art of the people. Thus the same implement belongs to very different departments of a psychological museum.

Furthermore, let us inquire what is the psychological principle upon which Mason's system is founded. The leading idea is technology. The foundation of technics is the faculty of acting suitably: consequently the purpose of the implement must be made the principle of division. For instance, all kinds of cooking-pots and other arrangements for cooking would belong to one class. The mere fact that certain pots are made of clay would not justify the establishment of a pottery department. This quality of being made of clay is incidental, and does not agree with the psychological basis.

There is one point of view which justifies a classification according to inventions in a psychological museum. This is the extent to which each invention is used by a people: for instance, in what branches of life pottery is made use of, which may be limited in one tribe, very wide in another. But in this case the purpose of the object will not be the principle of division, but the principal invention applied in its manufacture; and thus the specimens would not be arranged according to Professor Mason's system, objects serving widely differing purposes belonging to one class. Therefore I cannot consider it justifiable to make technology, in the sense Professor Mason does, the basis of arranging ethnological collections.

One reason ought to make us very cautious in applying the argument from analogy in ethnology as well as in other sciences of similar character; biology, for instance. Former events, as I have already said, leave their stamp on the present character of a people. I consider it one of the

greatest achievements of Darwinism to have brought to light this fact, and thus to have made a physical treatment of biology and psychology possible. The fact may be expressed by the words, "the physiological and psychological state of an organism at a certain moment is a function of its whole history"; that is, the character and future development of a biological or ethnological phenomenon is not expressed by its appearance, by the state in which it *is*, but by its whole history. Physicists will understand the important meaning of this fact. The outward appearance of two phenomena may be identical, yet their immanent qualities may be altogether different: therefore arguments from analogies of the outward appearance, such as shown in Professor Mason's collections, are deceptive. These remarks show how the same phenomena may originate from unlike causes, and that my opinion does not at all strive against the axiom, 'Like effects spring from like causes,' which belongs to that class of axioms which cannot be converted. Though like causes have like effects, like effects have not like causes.

From my statement it will be understood that I cannot content myself with Mr. Dall's remark, in the letter contained in to-day's issue, that both standpoints contain part of the truth. I have expressed in another place (*Verh. Ges. für Erdkunde*, Berlin, 1886, No. 7) my opinion on Dall's ethnological method, and emphasized, as I have here also, the necessity of studying each ethnological phenomenon individually.

In conclusion I have to add a few words on the practical side of the question upon which Professor Mason and Mr. Dall touch. In regard to this question, I concur with Mr. Dall, and believe that the public will be much more benefited by the tribal arrangement of ethnological collections.

I cannot agree with Professor Mason's proposal of arranging the cases like a checker-board. In ethnology all is individuality. We should be compelled to leave long rows of cases empty, as certain phenomena occur but in very few tribes. It would be almost impossible to show in this way all important ethnological phenomena, the historical development of tribes, the influence of neighbors and surroundings, etc. It is my opinion that the main object of ethnological collections should be the dissemination of the fact that civilization is not something absolute, but that it is relative, and that our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes. I believe that this object can be accomplished only by the tribal arrangement of collections. The second object, which is subordinate to the other, is to show how far each and every civilization is the outcome of its geographical and historical surroundings. Here the line of tribal arrangement may sometimes be broken, in order to show an historical series of specimens; but I consider this latter point of view subordinate to the former, and should choose to arrange collections of duplicates for illustrating those ideas, as it were, as an explanation of the facts contained in the tribal series. Of course, it is generally impossible to do

this, on account of the lack of specimens, or, more frequently, on account of the lack of our knowledge; but it is my ideal of an ethnological museum. I wish to state here again that I am not at all opposed to Mantegazza's psychological museum, which will be very suggestive and important for the development of science, but I consider the ethnological museum indispensable for controlling the ideas suggested by the analogies shown in the psychological collection, and as the only means of showing the state of culture of man.

SELECTION 8

The Aims of Ethnology

The development of our science itself has only become possible due to the general recognition the principle of the theory of evolution has attained in recent decades. It is a common characteristic of all forms of evolutionary theory that every living being is considered as the product of an historical development. The fate of an individual influences not only the individual himself, but his successors as well; and in order to understand an organism it is therefore necessary not only to know its own history but also that of its forebears. This perspective opens the whole vast field of the natural sciences to the historical method, and has contributed fundamentally to its rapid advance. Ethnology has existed only since this perspective has found common acceptance, for it has taught us to understand that no occurrence in the life of a people disappears without a trace, but affects even the most distant generations. The myths which our ancestors told to each other and in which they believed, have left their impress upon the ways of thinking of their descendants who came under the spiritual domination of a foreign culture. Even the most brilliant genius is influenced by his age and his environment, which is itself a product of the past. Thus culture-history teaches the continuity of inventions and ideas from the levels at which we find primitive peoples today up to our own time. The history of the sciences, the history of

Die Ziele der Ethnologie (New York: Hermann Bartsch, 1889), pp. 17–24. For this translation (which dates from my tenure at the University of California, Berkeley) I am indebted to two research assistants, John Gillingham (who did the major work on the present version) and David Nicholas (who did an earlier version), and to Professor Reginald Zelnik, who checked the final version with me.

inventions, and above all the history of religions point to the study of their germinal forms among primitive peoples.[1]

I have used throughout the expression "primitive people" without further clarification. I hope that in so doing I have not created the impression that we are dealing with peoples living in an original state of simplicity and naturalness as Rousseau conceived of them. On the contrary, we must keep in mind that even a primitive people has had a long history behind it. It may have gone through states of higher civilization and then, due to the gradual loss of inventions and ideas, have sunk down again to a lower state; or it may have climbed more slowly but surely up to its present level. None of these peoples is, however, free from conventional proscriptions and rules. On the contrary: the poorer in cultural achievements, the greater the number of ingrained rules and proscriptions which work to determine every action.

If, however, ethnology viewed as a purely historical science is already inextricably linked with culture-history, this connection stands out even more clearly when we turn to a consideration of the second great task of our science. A comparison of the phenomena of the lives of peoples shows that the foundations of their development are very similar to each other. From this we must conclude that human development follows certain laws, and to establish these is the second and indeed the more important goal of ethnology.

It must nonetheless be kept in mind that there is no basic distinction between the two purposes, since the general law is expressed just as clearly in the individual phenomenon as the individual phenomenon is expressed in the general law. However, the method used in discovering these laws is distinct from the historical method and casts an altogether new light on the individual case under consideration, since it shows which of its features are accidental or individual and which are of general applicability. For this reason the purely historical approach must always be considered incomplete without the illumination which derives from the comparative method. The detailed study of the individual phenomenon leads us directly to the comparative method, since the ways and means at our disposal for studying the history of peoples[2] soon fail us. Written records do not reach back into the distant past and relate only to peoples of a few culture-regions.[3] Even the other methods which we have discussed often leave us in the lurch. In such cases we have no other choice but to compare the life phenomena of the peoples being studied in order to draw our conclusions from existing similarities and dissimilarities. In the pursuit of these studies we often encounter cases in which the same custom or the same idea is found among peoples so

[1] Cf. 1940, p. 633, where this paragraph is modified in a number of subtle ways, and its last phrase is simply "the study of the lives of primitive tribes."

[2] Cf. 1940, p. 634, "the actual history of cultures."

[3] Cf. *ibid.*, "a few cultures." (The original German was *Kulturkreise*.)

widely separated that a common origin is completely precluded.[4] It therefore becomes necessary for us to determine whether there are laws from which follow time and again the appearance of the same phenomenon independently in the lives of different peoples—in other words, whether the development of the human mind follows definite laws. Thus emerges the second great task of ethnology: the discovery of the laws of the lives of peoples—or, as it is usually called, the study of folk-psychology.

The first and most important question that must be clarified is whether there are any fixed laws at all according to which the development of peoples progresses, or whether this is just a matter of chance. We have already cited various examples of the occurrence of similar phenomena in widely separated areas. In these cases the ethnologist always perceives two contradictory and equally possible explanations: that both phenomena have sprung from common origins, or that both have developed independently of each other. Only with certain quite general phenomena is one never in doubt. For instance, the facts that there are no peoples without religion, that art and social organization exist everywhere, and that everywhere with the progress of civilization the individual becomes freer in that the innumerable proscriptions and rules governing his conduct tend to disappear—all these may from the outset be correctly derived from the mental capacities of mankind.

Let us through an example elucidate the method by which folk-psychologists draw their conclusions. It will be seen, then, that the facts collected by the ethnologist play a large, important role in these studies.

The results of recent researches into the development of the family offer an excellent example.

According to the results of philological and historical researches dealing exclusively with the peoples of the Indo-European language group, it appeared as if the family comprises the foundation of society, and that the tribe, the people, and the state are outgrowths of it. From this point of view it seemed strange that among many peoples the father was not the unquestioned head of the family, but that often the higher authority is invested in the wife. Thus Herodotus says of the Lycians that the daughters inherited, not the sons. It is said of the Athenians that up to the time of Cecrops children were named after their mother; and according to Tacitus, the mother's brothers were owed particular respect among Germans. Above all, the numerous tales of Amazons should also be mentioned. So long as science sought to solve the question of the development of the family from the standpoint of our culture, these facts could not be explained. Only when we began to place ourselves in the realm of the thoughts and customs of foreign peoples whose development has

[4] Cf. *ibid.*, "peoples for whom we cannot establish any historical connection, so that a common historical origin may not be assumed."

proceeded independently from our own or which have remained on more primitive levels did an understanding of the true development of the family begin to dawn.[6] It was found that the development abstracted from our culture was nowhere to be observed. Wherever we looked we found primitive tribal configurations, but nowhere was the family their foundation. We observed everywhere that at the lowest levels of culture the tribes separated into hordes of men and women and that a communal marriage existed. We observe this condition for example in Australia, where both hordes regard each other with hostility, and each has its own sacred animals and plants. In such crass form this social condition has been observed only among a few peoples, but traces of it are widespread. Thus the men and women of the Arawaks in South America have different protective deities, and the inhabitants of the Sierra Leone coast have different secret societies for men and women.

Another frequently observed phenomenon is the division of the tribe according to age classes. In such cases the class of adult males takes possession of the women of the tribe, while the younger class raid the neighboring tribes and abduct their women. A further advance out of this condition is manifest in peoples among whom the wife must be secured from other tribes by purchase. This condition is widespread among the North American Indians. Among them the tribe is divided into a number of clans. No member of one clan may marry a member of the same clan, but instead must look for a wife in another clan. In all such cases children belong to the tribe of the wife. They have nothing to do with the father and just as little with the tribe among whom they live, since it is to the mother's tribe that they belong. In the case of war between the two tribes, therefore, they leave their father in order to fight against him.

Nowhere, however, does this condition seem to have been durable, and we see it superseded almost everywhere by the purchase of the children from the maternal tribe so that they thus become the property of the father. Until this happens they belong completely to the maternal tribe and remain under the protection of their maternal uncle, from whom they also inherit. This is the condition which is frequently called matriarchy. The constitution of the family arises only with the purchase of the children by the paternal tribe. This tendency of a transition from matriarchy to patriarchy manifests itself everywhere.

It is only since these facts have been recognized that the phenomena mentioned above regarding the Indo-European peoples have become comprehensible. They must be conceived as survivals from the far distant past in which the father was not yet the head of the family.

[6] Cf. 1940, p. 635, where Boas made subtle modifications in the preceding sentences, substituted for the rest of this paragraph and the four succeeding paragraphs a parenthesis which bears at best a tenuous relationship to the material deleted, and added a footnote indicating he had done so because they contained the no longer tenable view "of a necessary precedence of matrilineal forms of family organization."

The phenomena just described recur in endless variations over the entire globe, so we must assume that this development is basically the same everywhere. Of course, this does not mean that the process of development has been exactly the same everywhere, but rather that its fundamental features have been similar everywhere.

Thus we see from this example that the facts ethnology teaches us imply an important advance for our knowledge of the development of human culture. One fact derived from these studies cannot be emphasized enough, namely, the *relative* correctness of emotions which seem so natural to us.[6] It is difficult for us to conceive that the feeling the father bears toward his child should be altogether different among primitive peoples from what it is among ourselves. We learn from the data of ethnology that not only our ability and knowledge but also the manner and ways of our feeling and thinking is the result of our upbringing as individuals and our history as a people. To draw conclusions about the development of mankind as a whole we must try to divest ourselves of these influences, and this is only possible by immersing ourselves in the spirit of primitive peoples whose perspectives and development have almost nothing in common with our own. If we use our own feelings in an effort to establish how our ancestors behaved, we should not expect to achieve truthful results, since their feeling and thinking were different from our own. We must reject many presuppositions that seem self-evident to us because precisely such mental states were not self-evident in earlier times. It is indeed impossible to recognize *a priori* what in our feelings is common to all mankind and what is only the result of history[7] —except through the teachings of ethnology. It alone opens to us the possibility of judging our own culture objectively, in that it permits us to strip off the presumably self-evident manner of thinking and feeling which determines even the fundamental part of our culture. Only in this way can our intellect, instructed and formed under the influences of our culture, attain a correct judgment of this same culture.

[6] Cf. *ibid.*, "It shows that emotional reactions which we feel as natural are in reality culturally determined."

[7] Cf. 1940, p. 636, "is due to the culture in which we live."

If we are to hope that within a reasonable length of time the instruction on the culture of the Malay people, more particularly of the Philippines, will be given, it would be necessary to prepare a young man for this purpose by giving him opportunities to study in Leyden, in European museums and on the spot, and in this way to prepare himself for the task."

Respectfully submitted,
FRANZ BOAS,
Secretary Committee on Collections from Eastern Asia

SELECTION 39

The Educational Functions of Anthropological Museums

April 29, 1905.

MORRIS K. JESUP, ESQ.,
President American Museum of Natural History,

See draft of original

DEAR SIR,—

In reply to your letter of the 28th, I take the liberty to state my opinions regarding installation with perfect frankness.

If I understand your wishes correctly, particularly in view of your praise of the present Peruvian installation, you desire a certain definite scheme adhered to in every anthropological exhibit, so that the visitor will find all collections arranged according to one simple guiding principle.

Permit me to state my views regarding installation in some detail. I am not going to speak of scientific studies, but only of the educational exhibit of the Museum.

It seems to my mind that it is the object of a large anthropological collection to illustrate all the principal features of the history of human civilization, from the earliest forms up to the highest, so far as this can be done by the presentation of material objects belonging to diverse cultures.

Copy preserved in the Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society.

principal points of view that must be emphasized, therefore, are the relation of man to nature, industrial development, the forms of customs and beliefs. These must be explained by taking into consideration the historical conditions of each people.

Granting these general premises, which, I believe, coincide with your wishes, it seems to me that we must make a fundamental distinction between a small museum and a large museum. In a small museum only the most generalized questions can be treated, and details must be disregarded. In a large museum, where more extended material is available, more special questions, which are at the same time fundamental for an understanding of human history, become important. A large museum will therefore take up the general question of evolution of human culture in some detail. As soon as this is done, the few simple points of view sufficient for a small museum become inadequate, and it is no longer possible to adhere to a systematic plan.

For this reason the installation in a large museum must necessarily cease to be intelligible without particular explanation of the subject-matter of the exhibits, because the points of view are different in each area. There is therefore a conflict between the aims of a simple and small collection, which is to appeal only to the general public, and which should consist of a few specimens only, and those of a collection the object of which is to be instructive to people interested in somewhat more complex questions, like our high-school students, teachers, artists, missionaries, those interested in special trades, in general historical questions, etc.

I have tried to solve this conflict of interests by arranging one series of collections for the general visitor, and by separating out those collections that bear upon more special questions. I have made the suggestion that in course of time these general collections be assembled in one hall, in order to make it easier for the general public to grasp the idea in question. The other collections bear upon special problems. The points of view from which they must be seen and studied vary from case to case. If we try to devise a general scheme for their exhibition, we frustrate our own end. I may illustrate this by some special points. In the West Hall you will find one case devoted to the general type of culture of the Prairie Indians, another to the general culture of the Woodland Indians. The more special collections are arranged to illustrate two points —the importance of the warrior societies in the life of the Prairie Indians and the modification they have undergone, and the history of the development of the art of those Indians. In the North Hall we have also a general group and a number of special groups showing primarily the peculiar development of religious ideas and social organization among various tribes. In the California collection the centre of interest has been made the development of basketry technique, and so on. If, therefore, your criticism is directed to a lack of uniformity of scheme, I must admit there is no such uniformity. It is not there, because every collection bears upon a special question which it elucidates. By classifying our material under one general scheme, these points would be lost entirely and we should destroy the usefulness of our large collections.

This question hinges, of course, upon our whole conception of the function of the Museum. We have a building containing now twenty-four beautiful large halls. If it is our sole object to instruct the general public, we defeat our own purpose by the magnitude of our building and the beauty and mass of its contents. To *teach* the general public, a building of eight halls would be ample; but a small museum of eight halls would not attract the masses. The magnitude of the Museum is what brings them here. They come to admire, to see, and to be entertained. We instruct them almost against their wish and will. To *teach* anthropology to the general public, I need only one hall: to impress them with the fact that our people are not the only carriers of civilization, but that the human mind has been creative everywhere, I need a large exhibit of impressive specimens. If impressiveness were our only aim, it would perhaps hardly justify the large expenditure of money and energy necessary for upbuilding a large museum. The extended collections serve, however, another purpose.

Just as our school system requires, besides primary and grammar schools, high schools and universities, so a large museum should fulfil the function of a primary objective school for the general public, as well as serve those who strive for higher education and help to train the teacher. The educational methods of university, high school, grammar school, and primary school are different; and thus the methods of exhibition must differ, according to the public to which we appeal. By adapting every exhibit to the level of the needs of the uneducated, we frustrate our object of adding to the knowledge of the educated who come here in search of more special information.

To sum up, I believe it is the educational function of a museum of the size of the American Museum of Natural History to entertain the masses, to instruct the large number of people who come here to get knowledge, to advance the knowledge of those who possess a higher education, and to help those interested in special studies. The adaptation of the *whole* exhibit to the masses would destroy, in my opinion, its usefulness for the purposes of secondary and higher education, which have their own methods.

I do not wish to explain here in detail how I have tried to reach this end, and what practical difficulties are encountered, which make progress of installation very slow. It would be necessary to point out the work done in special cases, in order to bring out these technical points.

I think what I have said before explains why I cannot indorse the exhibit in the Peruvian Hall. The essential traits of Peruvian culture do not appear in the small fragmentary groups, in which a hard and fast scheme has been applied to material that does not fit it. So far as the

general public is concerned, it should be shown in the Peruvian Hall what distinguishes that culture from all others. What was the state of agriculture of this region? What animals were domesticated? What was the general style of architecture, the characteristics of the metal industry, spinning and weaving? I do not think that you can find specimens answering these questions assembled in any one case in that hall. On the other hand, you see over and over again that Peruvians worked in stone, wood, clay—a fact that is without significance in relation to their culture.

I may say that the very fact that Professor Bumpus had arranged the Peruvian Hall in this manner made it quite impossible for me to accept his proposition, which he urged over and over again, and from which he receded very reluctantly, that I should accept the scientific direction of the Anthropological Department, and let some one else take the work of installation. I knew that this would mean a re-arrangement on principles with which I could not agree without compromising my convictions.

I hope that I have made my point clear. If I understand you rightly, you criticise the lack of a schematic arrangement. My reply is, that I have never attempted that, because I consider it impossible to arrange an anthropological exhibit on this basis without sacrificing all that is essential for the anthropological work of a large museum devoted to the education of the masses as well as of those who have had the advantage of higher education. If you decide to devote a hall to a special exhibit for the general public, I shall be glad to make it. In fact, I have advocated this for some time.

I fully appreciate all that you have done for the Museum, and I think I should betray the trust that you have placed in me if I did not do my best to defend what I consider sound principles of installation and administration.

Yours very respectfully,
FRANZ BOAS