

Book Reviews

Papers of Robert Redfield

Human Nature and the Study of Society. The papers of Robert Redfield. vol. 1. Margaret Park Redfield, Ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962. xvi + 507 pp. \$10.

Margaret Park Redfield has here assembled 41 papers by the late Robert Redfield. This volume, which has an introduction by Raymond Firth, is the first of two volumes that will be published by the University of Chicago Press. The papers, of which about two-thirds have been previously published (the others were prepared for special occasions), are grouped under three headings: Anthropology as a Social Science: Methods and Principles; The Folk Society and Civilization; and Human Nature. Volume 2 will contain papers on "race, education, the 'commands of reason,' and the good life."

Redfield was one of the most influential social scientists of the past three decades, although his precise scientific position and the nature of his influence are difficult to assess. Owing to his bold, pioneering formulations and hypotheses, he was provocative even to those who disagreed with him. But he offered no rigorous methodology that afforded ready-made research tools. He considered his approach to be as much that of the artist as that of the scientist. His thinking was so free ranging and diversely motivated that one wonders whether to designate him a social scientist, a philosopher, an idealist, a humanist, or a humanitarian. He seems to have been all these and much more.

The present collection is something of a history of Redfield's career, one that covers all aspects of his work except those that we are promised in the second volume. The first paper, "Anthropology, a natural science?," was published in 1926 when Redfield, who had obtained a law degree and been admitted to the bar, turned to anthropology. Other papers date from the

1950's. Although substantive data vary somewhat during different periods of his life—for example, his early researches in Mexico and his later interest in other areas—all are concerned with the methodology for understanding people far more than with descriptive analysis.

These papers seem to me to embellish and expand the essential views set forth in Redfield's several books—*Tepotzlán*, *The Little Community*, *The Primitive World and its Transformation*, *A Village that Chose Progress*, and *The Folk Culture of Yucatán*. During the late 1920's and the 1930's, when other American anthropologists were recording ethnography and working out distributions and histories of culture elements, Redfield classified himself as a social anthropologist—in the British tradition—and attempted to conceptualize means of understanding "folk" or "peasant" societies. That his approach was always qualitative and did not employ quantitative methods, which are now becoming fairly common, was an inevitable manifestation of Redfield as a person. He worked with ideal models, such as the folk society and the folk-urban dichotomy, because his own feelings led him to identify himself with the "schemes of values of people [which are] central and of most importance" (p. 49). "Social scientists are closest to their subject matter when they are concerned with feelings, sentiments, opinions, standards, and ideals" (p. 48), and yet "social science . . . does not evaluate" (p. 52). The social scientist, he says, has partly the detachment of the physicist, partly the human sympathy of the novelist (p. 67). The stress on understanding values "implies a scheme of values on my own part" (p. 70). "Social scientists . . . do take moral positions as to matters they study" (p. 90).

These and similar statements found throughout the volume seem to me the key to Redfield's thinking. To feel strongly about what ought to be, while

taking a thoroughly objective view of matters, poses a real dilemma. Redfield's use of ideal rather than real models reflects, in part, his humanitarianism and his compassion for people. He deeply sympathized with, perhaps even emphasized, the abstraction that he designated the little society, the folk society, or the peasantry, and he was distressed at the influence of urbanization upon it. When his critics pointed out that there were no actual societies with the particular characteristics that he ascribed the folk societies, Redfield was sufficiently imaginative to reply that, in this case, science develops as a dialectic—the original thesis, the critical antithesis, and the synthesis. Thus, his views on changing society kept apace of his critics.

The papers in this volume exemplify, however, Redfield's stubborn, life-long effort to understand human nature and to use every means, including those of his critics, to get inside the mind of man. But, while his compassion remained undiminished, the scope of his enquiry expanded. I think it important to stress that, during the last decade, his work on urbanization, part of it done in collaboration with Milton Singer, contained a very substantial core of "hard science" in its structural and functional analysis and its cross-cultural implications. This subject and its correlate, developing and changing civilizations, anticipated by many years much of the current interest in the broad problem of modernization to which social science is devoting itself. The chapter entitled "The cultural role of cities" (pp. 326–350) is especially relevant, although other chapters continue the strongly humanistic theme that runs throughout the volume.

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Russian Translation

Marine Microbiology (Deep Sea). A. E. Kriss. Translated from the Russian by J. M. Shewan and Z. Kabata. Interscience (Wiley), New York, 1963. xviii + 536 pp. Illus. \$19.75.

This volume is an excellent English version of the original Russian text (1959), which was considered of sufficient merit in the U.S.S.R. to be awarded the Lenin prize in 1960. It is largely