

## Three Essays Scoring 5

### Essay #4 Score: 5

In his book, *Mirror for Man*, Clyde Kluckhohn presents his views on the development of culture. Kluckhohn believes that culture develops out of a combination of human nature, human biology, and the laws of nature. There are vast differences in the habits of the different peoples of the world. An example could be the eating patterns of Americans compared with those of Europeans. Another could be the attitudes of American students compared with the attitudes of Asian students. At the same time, there are some characteristics which are present in all societies, such as peer pressure. In my opinion Clyde Kluckhohn is correct when he states that human behavior is affected by both human nature and human biology.

Kluckhohn gives several examples from his life experience illustrating how two cultures can have very different behavior patterns. During a recent trip to West Germany, I encountered a similar difference. I quickly discovered that the most striking difference between the eating habits of Americans and German was the way in which the knife and fork were used. In Germany most people eat with their fork in their left hand and their knife in their right hand. In addition the fork is almost always used upside down and the knife is used as a "pusher", much like Americans use bread. When I questioned a German friend about this difference I was surprised by her response. She explained that the "German" style of eating was the only "civilized" way and that the "American" style was "sloppy" and "Barbarian".

Another example of cultural differences could be the educational attitudes of Americans as opposed to those of many Asians. Many people in the United States are surprised and alarmed by the high test score and college admissions averages of Asian students in contrast to the falling averages of students of other ethnic backgrounds, including white. This discrepancy is directly related to cultural differences between American and many Asian nations. In most Asian cultures education is strongly encouraged and supported and has been for generations. On the other hand, in America education is often a low priority. Many American students look at school as a burden rather than a chance to gain knowledge. At the same time, many American parents reinforce this attitude because they were raised with a similar belief.

Kluckhohn is careful to point out that there are characteristics which are present in all cultures. These similarities are the result of human biology, rather than the result of training or "upbringing". An example would be the fact that all infants cry when they are hungry. This is a biological necessity because the human infant is totally dependant on its parents. Another example would be the concept of "peer pressure". Because humans are social creatures who need to live in groups, whether families, tribes, or nations, most people feel at some point a desire to conform to what is expected.

The different cultures of the human species vary in many ways, from eating habits to religion. At the same time there are many similarities in these diverse cultures. I have experienced these differences and similarities both first and second hand. Such experiences lead me to agree with Kluckhohn's view that culture arises out of human nature, and its forms are restricted by human biology and the laws of nature.

**COMMENT:** *Essay #4 presents a competent response to the text and the topic. It begins by focusing on Kluckhohn's ideas about the sources of culture, which it paraphrases Kluckhohn to identify as human nature, human biology, and the laws of nature. It goes on to illustrate how different ways of using knives and forks both seem right to Germans and Americans, and to show how the value given to education in their two cultures accounts for the differing levels of educational attainment reached by Asian and American young people. Citing Kluckhohn's care to mention features common to all cultures, the essay then discusses infants crying and all humans responding to peer pressure as biologically-based similarities, and concludes by affirming Kluckhohn's ideas about culture arising out of human nature. The essay as a whole demonstrates an accurate understanding of Kluckhohn's text.*

*The prose of this essay is in its writer's control. While Essay #4 begins stiffly and lacks the fluency and complexity of Essays #1, #2, and #3, its writer consistently chooses words that convey its ideas economically and precisely and uses sentences that employ parallel structure and subordination to reinforce them.*

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### Essay #5 Score: 5

Why do men do the things they do? Professor Kluckhohn attempts to explore, define and explain the answer to this complex question in one brief passage. He reasons that we are all given the same basic biological "tools" at birth, so it should follow then, that we should all behave in similar ways. But, because of "culture", defined as "the total life way of a people", we do not react to similar situations in exactly the same way. Culture is the main reason we can not explain other people's actions "in terms of biological properties."

Professor Kluckhohn proceeds to explain cultural differences and similarities through some experiences of his own. First he parallels an American woman's view of polygamy to a Koryak woman's. Then he shares an anecdote of an American man who was raised as a Chinese. Lastly, he tells a tale of a woman serving rattlesnake sandwiches to her guests. After each example he points out that it is a persons upbringing and way of life that dictates how he or she will act in or react to a given situation.

I am in total agreement with Professor Kluckhohn's views. I found his passage to be very interesting reading because it put into words views and ideas I had

formulated through dealing with people of other nationalities. It also pointed out that a body doesn't make a man, a mind does. How the mind is trained and nurtured will decide what the man is and how he thinks.

I am what some would call a "people-person." I love being with new people and learning about what makes them "tick." I have been lucky enough to travel through Europe and the Orient so I have seen first hand whether East does meet West or not. But the place where I learned the most about people and the way they live would have to be right here at home - Southern California. Living here in an area with a rich ethnic mixture has opened my eyes to things like: the Filipino tendency to eat with a spoon and fork while Americans tend to use mainly the fork, the Oriental's tight family ties and the growing rate of American divorces, etc. The mixture of traditional Filipino parents and growing up in California has given me a chance to glimpse how some cultures go hand in hand while others clash violently.

My first real look at how cultures can clash came when I was about twelve. A cousin of mine had just married and, having just come from the Philippines, was wondering if they could live with us until they found an apartment and got settled into their prospective new jobs. My cousin Sammy and his German wife Heidi moved in with us and stayed for about two and a half months.

The first culture clash regarded meals. Being a traditional Filipino household with very close family ties meant that everyone had to come together for meals. My mother felt it was her obligation to provide breakfast and dinner for both her family and houseguests. The first few nights we all sat down to diner together. One evening my cousin told my mother that Heidi was beginning to feel obligated to come to dinner and, if it was all right, if my mother would please stop making them have their meals with us. My mother got a little upset and asked me how Heidi could be so rude. Mom was just doing what she had been taught when she was young and Heidi, not being used to our culture, felt stifled.

For Filipinos it is very important that you respect your elders. This could come in the form of the entire family greeting them at the door when they came to visit or just letting the head of the house know if you were going out. My cousin never failed to let us know whether he was leaving or not but his wife had a tendency to come and go as she pleased. Coming in at late hours or leaving without a word may be viewed by some as normal, but to Filipinos raised in the Philippines it was a direct attack at the respect elders deserved.

We've had other people stay with us but they had always been first or second generation Filipinos who knew of our ways and abided by them. Having someone with a totally different upbringing live with us taught us lessons in tolerance and open-mindedness. We learned not to judge by our standards but understand and accept someone else's way of life.

No one may ever be able to answer Professor Kluckhohn's question of "why?" completely. People are always changing and growing. Past experiences, traditions, values and beliefs will always dictate how a person will react to

something, but because no two people are alike there isn't any way one can be absolutely sure. Dealing with other cultures requires tolerance, patience and openmindedness, for it can be difficult and frustrating. Yet to me it is one of the most intriguing subjects on earth and should be well worth trying if only for the experience of it.

**COMMENT:** *Paraphrasing Kluckhohn, Essay #5's first paragraph contrasts the influence of biology with that of culture; its second paragraph then shows how Kluckhohn's examples reinforce the primacy of culture. The third and fourth paragraphs then state the writer's agreement with Kluckhohn, based on her experience both in the West and in the East. Most of the rest of the essay — paragraphs five to eight — consists of a single extended example drawn from the author's experience: how her Filipino family adjusted to her cousin's German wife. This example clearly shows the writer's understanding of Kluckhohn's ideas about the cultural determinants of behavior. Reiterating Kluckhohn's question "Why?" at its conclusion, the essay expresses doubt that the question can finally be answered, but argues for the importance of bridging cultures. Throughout, the essay displays an accurate understanding of Kluckhohn's ideas and an ability to reflect on their implications.*

*The prose of this essay is less self-assured than that of Essays #1, #2, and #3. Occasionally there are sentences, like the second in paragraph seven, in which reference is at first unclear, or where syntax is awkward: "This (what?) could come in the form of the entire family greeting them ("elders" or cousins?) at the door when they came to visit or just letting the head of the house know if you (what relation to "they"?) were going out." Similar reference problems occur in the use of "they" for "he and his wife" (paragraph 5, sentence 2), and in several uses of "it" (for "he" in paragraph 3, sentence 3; for "this" in paragraph 7, sentence 4, and in sentences 4 and 5 of paragraph 9). Usually, however, this essay demonstrates its writer's ability to choose words accurately and vary sentences effectively; these qualities can be seen with particular clarity in paragraphs four and seven.*

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### **Essay # 6 Score: 5**

In Clyde Kluckhohn's *Mirror for Man*, he explains the differences and similarities among the world's peoples by stating two important ideas: 1) People are similar because they have the same biological equipment and undergo similar life experiences "such as birth, helplessness, illness, old age, and death," but, 2) people are culturally different because of the way they were brought up and they may live in a different environment created by human beings, and acquire a distinct social legacy from their own people.

Kluckhohn suggests that where a person lives is one of the factors that determines one's culture. In China, people have a strong dislike for milk and milk products. In the United States, a person drinks milk from the time of birth

because American society has made a pattern for its people; Americans make milk an integral part of their meals because they are told it's the only way to remain healthy and develop strong bones and to avoid disease such as osteoporosis, a disease brought on by the lack of calcium (which is found in milk). Therefore, the Chinese may not understand why Americans drink milk so often, and Americans may wonder why the Chinese do not know the health benefits of milk. Kluckhohn implies that there are cultural misunderstandings between different sets of people because they are not aware that "each specific culture constitutes a kind of blueprint of all life's activities."

I do support Kluckhohn's theory that culture is determined by a person's environment and their "design for living." I have been raised in Los Angeles and I have friends of varying ethnic backgrounds, languages, birth places, and cultures. My best friend came from Korea nine years ago and has assimilated to the ways of American behavior. Yet, I do not understand why Sandy remains stoic when she has a serious problem or why her parents never display public affection to her or to themselves. I asked my mother if Sandy's behavior was strange and she replied "no" because she said Sandy is from Korea where she was brought up in a different environment, where her culture taught her ethical and moral values that differ from values taught in the United States. I came to realize that although Sandy will remain in the United States for the rest of her life, she may never "give up" her Korean values or her Korean upbringing.

My nephew Troy was born in Los Angeles, California, but for the first two years of his life, he has been living in Lima, Peru, my family's country. The stereotypical belief is that if you are born in the United States you will act and speak like an American and adopt an American way of life; my nephew has proven this belief wrong. Even though Troy is an American by birth, he has been raised in Lima, and can only speak Spanish; he only likes Peruvian food and Spanish-speaking T.V. programs. When he came back to the United States, he had problems adjusting to living in L.A. because he misses his environment: the Peruvian people, food, entertainment, and schooling-the Peruvian way of life. Troy does not like watching English-speaking cartoons or children's programs and he has just recently attempted to make friends with English-speaking children. Troy's experience is similar to that of the "Chinese"-American man that Kluckhohn had described: Troy's biological heritage was American, but the cultural training had been Peruvian.

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, she explores the problems women had to go through to get married in eighteenth-century England. Elizabeth, the main character of the novel, cannot comprehend why a woman must revolve her life around looking for a potential husband. But Elizabeth knows she has been brought up as a proper lady so that she may marry someone of great wealth and that she should not question a woman's role in life; that is, to find a husband, get married, having to legally give all her possessions to her husband, and to be an obedient wife, as directed by English culture and law. An American woman would scoff at these traditions because she has different values and ideas. An American woman of today may choose to work and not get married or not have children because she is not legally bound by her parents or her country to do

anything she DOES NOT want to do. An American woman of the eighties is living in times where the American culture is rapidly changing; there are hardly any "traditional" American ways of life. American laws allow a woman to do whatever she wants with her life, therefore, American culture dictates to a woman her potentialities. Elizabeth of *Pride and Prejudice* could not comprehend present day American culture or live in an American environment; her English culture would tell her to shun American culture.

Because Clyde Kluckhohn is an anthropologist, a person may think his idea of "culture" may be too technical, but his definition of "culture" helps human beings that "try to understand themselves and their own behavior." We as a human race may understand human behavior if "we know a people's design for living" and that we all follow different social patterns. Each of us derive our own culture from our own people's social legacy and from our unique social environment.

**COMMENT:** *After briefly stating Kluckhohn's ideas about the relationship between biology and culture in paragraph one, Essay #6 illustrates Kluckhohn's point about the primary importance of culture by discussing several examples of cultural contrast and misunderstanding. Like the extended example in Essay #5, these examples cite the writer's personal experience, but Essay #6 also draws on Kluckhohn's own examples and on the writer's other reading. The second paragraph suggests reasons for the differing attitudes toward milk among Americans and Chinese; the third paragraph relates the writer's coming to understand how a Korean-born friend, largely assimilated to American culture, can still remain unwilling to express emotion openly; the fourth paragraph shows how the writer's nephew, though born in Los Angeles, actually formed his cultural identity during this first two years of life with the writer's family in Lima, Peru. Paragraph five shows cultural differences over time as well as space, explaining how the cultural role prescribed for Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* would make it hard for her to function as an American woman of the 1980's. All these examples show an accurate understanding of Kluckhohn's text and weave his insights thoughtfully into a series of interesting examples.*

*The prose of Essay #6 is somewhat uneven. Paragraphs two through four demonstrate the fullest command, choosing words precisely ("integral part," paragraph 2; "stoic," paragraph 3) and managing sentences effectively (see the balance set up by "in China" and "In the United States," and the way that balance is maintained in paragraph 2). Paragraphs one, five, and six show less consistent control, both in sentence structure (see "An American woman of today . . ." and the two following sentences in paragraph 5) and in idiomatic usage ("why a woman must revolve her life around," rather than "why a woman's life must revolve around" and "dictates to a woman her potentialities," both paragraph 5). As a whole, however, the essay demonstrates clear competence.*