THE CONCEPT OF NEED

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ABSTRACT

In ordinary discourse the terms 'need' and 'want' are often interchanged and it is therefore necessary, in an analysis of the concept of need, to examine the term 'want' and to enquire into its relation to 'need'. In human behaviour the usual indicator of wanting is trying to get. Although some things are wanted for themselves, a thing is usually wanted for a purpose. When that which is wanted is an object, the want, or desire, can be expressed generally as 'wanting x for y' or 'wanting x in order to y'. We can also want objectives, the general expression of which is either 'wanting to x' or 'wanting that x'. 'Wanting to' depends to some extent upon 'able to' for its significance. If there is no possibility of doing, we can only wish we could act or we hope for a certain state of affairs. For various reasons our wanting may not issue in attempting to get. Conflict is intrinsic to the nature of desires, necessitating a choice of satisfactions. Our limited resources are another factor. Choices also have to be made between what we want and what we want to avoid. Due to our capacity for language we can mediate between conflicting wants and restrain ourselves from trying to get what we want. We can convert our desires into plans. Although we usually want x because we think it will be enjoyable or lead to something else that will be, sometimes x is wanted because of moral considerations. We arrange our wants into a hierarchy determined, to some extent, by our beliefs concerning obligation.

When we look into the relation between 'wanting' and 'needing' we find that our way of expressing both is similar: we 'want/need x in order to y'. However, since we do not need everything we want, the terms must be distinguished. We also differentiate between needs in general and 'human needs'. Of the human needs the biological ones have been most accurately defined, although within broad limits. Conclusions about
psychological needs are more tentative and usually involve a premise that requires scrutiny: the assumption that all human behaviour is a response to some need. When we examine the evidence for an alleged need - the need for identity - we find there are serious problems in defining it and when we consider an activity such as mountain climbing, or picture-buying, we are led to question the usefulness of a theory which claims to relate all human activity to a need. The conclusion arrived at is that the lists of categorical needs produced by the social sciences are given an absoluteness which is unwarranted. Need theory largely ignores the distinctions of ordinary discourse between wanting and needing and at the same time fails to take sufficient notice of the human activity of endowing things and states of affairs with value. The goals of physical and mental health are only two of many goals which we may pursue. Also modifying the need-behaviour equation is the acceptance of moral principles which impose prohibitions on our behaviour. Thus both value and need are terms required in an adequate account of human behaviour and in many instances explanations in terms of need-reduction are redescriptions of goal-seeking.

Since value and obligation must be given a prominent role in the account of human behaviour, the question arises as to whether a normative definition of human need is possible. Any answer given must take into consideration the various ways in which our values, and consequently our needs, are socially determined. Not only do different cultures have different concepts of need, but the concept also varies from one sub-culture to the next. What is needed depends to a considerable extent on what is 'normal' behaviour and this concept is extremely variable since each culture develops only a small segment of potential behaviour and ignores or represses other possibilities. If cross-cultural normality could be defined it would presumably show how whole cultures deviate from the normal, but the problem is that before we can define normality we need the concept to determine which behaviour is relevant to the defi-
nition and which must be excluded as abnormal. Even if we confine ourselves to our own society, normality is usually described in terms of adjustment to the group. But to which of the sub-cultures should the individual adjust? And what is a good adjustment? Perhaps society needs adjusting as well as the individual. Answers to these questions require value judgments and until some agreement is reached on them, any definition of human need is provisional.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. WANTING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. NEEDING</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. NEEDS AS NORMATIVE</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOTNOTES</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

WANTING

An enquiry into the nature of human needs can be envisaged as a part of the larger program which Stuart Hampshire has recommended for philosophy: to seek a "definition of man". This, of course, is not a new quest; what is new is the enormous amount of material which the social sciences are producing in this field. Since our concern is with the concept of need we shall examine the way in which this term is used in ordinary discourse and in some of the studies of the social sciences. This, in turn, will require a look at several other terms related to, and sometimes overlapping, the concept of need.

Of the concepts related to that of need, the ones that occur most frequently in ordinary discourse are 'want' and 'desire' and they are often used interchangeably. I can have a desire for, or want, candy and I may want to change my job and decide that it would be desirable to do so. But although 'wanting' covers most cases to which 'desiring' equally applies, 'want' seems to be a somewhat weaker term than 'desire' and is not as applicable to those instances in which a considerable amount of passion is involved. If, in turn, a desire is very strong it is usually referred to as a craving. Thus someone who, under ordinary circumstances, wanted a drink could, after some privation, be said to want it badly or have a desire for it and, in more desperate straits, to crave it. In general, though, the uses of the two terms overlap, but 'want' is usually used as a verb while 'desire' is normally used in its nominal or adjectival form. Thus one usually speaks of wanting something but only infrequently of desiring it, although normally a situation which can be described as someone wanting x can also be described as his having a desire for x. Before
going on to consider this general area in which 'wanting' and 'desiring' overlap, it is necessary to examine a problem in connection with the term 'desire'.

When 'desire' is used as a noun in the description of human behaviour it is usually associated with bodily sensations. Although it is often assumed that a desire and an accompanying sensation are one and the same thing, we shall try to show that this assumption is not warranted. Ordinary usage of the term, however, gives some support to this assumption because the same term or phrase can be used to refer both to the state of affairs of which desire and sensation are a part, or to an aspect of it. 'I feel thirsty' can refer to the parched sensation in the throat (that is, describe a sensation), express a desire for a drink, or convey both meanings at the same time. Thus desire is often held to be an indefinable sensation that prompts us into action. Something is lacking in our present situation and we act to attain it, or something is present and we act to remove it. In both cases the relation between the pleasant or unpleasant sensation and the desire to do something about it is so intimate that reference to the sensation is usually accepted as a sufficient explanation of the action taken to bring about a new state of affairs. This close link between desires and sensations does not, however, show that they are identical and it is relevant to ask if it is possible to have one without the other. The answer appears to be that we can and do desire many things without having a sensation to accompany the desire. The man who wants to succeed in business may experience very definite sensations when his desire for success is blocked, but the sensation follows upon the failure to fulfil his desire, rather than being identifiable with it. If one has a desire to see the exhibition at the art gallery or the new cars at the motor show one is not likely to have any sensation to which the desire can be equated. It is evident that our desire to act in a certain way can be incited by ideas, and that this desire can be modified or banished by
reflection, either with or without accompanying sensations. This "accessibility" of desires to examination distinguishes them from sensations, even though at times our desires can be vague and we are not sure just what it is that we want. But whether our desire is directed toward a specific object ('I've got to have that prize') or vague, we can plan to put desires into action. Even when a desire arises spontaneously from my physical state (desire for food, desire to scratch, etc.), it is something I am conscious of, that I can think about and decide to satisfy or leave unsatisfied. We may be misguided in our desires so that it is not unusual to be asked why we have a particular desire but this is not the case with sensations. They are not right or wrong; they occur.

Since a desire is not a sensation, the frequent association of the two does not in itself require us to differentiate between desiring and wanting. Neither does ordinary discourse usually make such a distinction. Whereas the primary connotation of 'want' used to be 'lack' ('I want for nothing'), and 'desire' once was used much more frequently in cases where we would now speak of wanting (He desires food), the usual way to express a desire now is to say 'I want'. Even when the desire is considerable and 'wanting' seems too weak a term, it can be conveyed by such expressions as 'I must have', 'I've got to have', or 'I desperately want'.

'Want', however, is also often interchanged with 'need' as, for example, in this exchange:

'I need seventy-five dollars.'
'Why?'
'Because I want to buy a suit'.
'Why do you want to buy a suit?'
'Because I need to make a good impression at the office.'
'Why must you make a good impression?'
'Because I want to get a raise.' Etc.

In spite of such looseness in the use of these two terms, they must be distinguished. We know that there are things we need
but do not want (such as an operation), and things we want but do not need (such as a particular painting). What the distinction between the two is will be considered in the next chapter; here we shall concern ourselves with examining that to which desiring/wanting refers.

The basic indicator of a desire, of wanting x, is the attempting to get x. There are many levels, or intensities, of wanting but each represents an attitude directed at an object or an objective. Wanting x is not a feeling or a sensation, but an attitude toward x that expresses itself in x-seeking behaviour, or would express itself in this way under certain conditions. This last phrase will require considerable comment; at present we want to consider the relation between wanting x and getting x in those cases where the object or objective is attained. If 'x' stands for an object it is always relevant to ask someone who wants x what he wants x for, whether x is an orange, a new car, a hammer or real estate. It is possible that a thing is wanted simply for itself and not for any other reason - such as the rock which the rock hound wants. (He could, of course, want it for other reasons: to enhance the value of his collection, or to make into an ornament.) To say that a thing is wanted for itself and not as a means to something else implies that it is wanted because the having of it gives pleasure. That one would enjoy having something is, in general, an adequate reason for wanting it. But usually the tangible object is wanted for a purpose and the attitude of wanting x can be more fully accounted for by the phrase 'wanting x for y', or 'wanting x in order to y'. In our example of the seventy-five dollars wanted in order to buy a suit, in order to make a good impression, in order to get a raise, the reasons given can continue until someone loses patience or the final reason is accepted as a 'reasonable' explanation. The frequent occurrence in discourse of such questions as 'Why do you want it?', or 'What do you want it for?', indicate that people usually have reasons for wanting what they are trying
to get and can state them. Although one could want something for no particular reason, it is doubtful that the concept of wanting would exist without, in general, people having reasons for wanting. There seems to be a parallel here with promise-keeping and truth-telling, but to discuss this further would involve us in the problem of values - a problem to be considered in the next chapter.

It is not necessary, or perhaps not possible, to give complete reasons. We accept partial reasons because we are familiar with wants and recognize what counts as getting what one wants. We usually want oranges in order to eat them but if someone asks for an orange and then places it on a table near an easel we may also know what, in this situation counts as getting an orange. Sometimes 'I want an orange' is elliptical for 'I want to eat an orange'. Also, giving a reason for wanting, ('because I want to eat it'), usually indicates what counts as getting it. For the artist what counts as getting it is to have it in sight. If this is not understood from the reason given, ('because I want to paint it'), it must be included in a complete account of wanting. We may, of course, be uncertain about the exact nature of the object we want; the man who wants to buy a birthday present for his wife may be vague about the object he is looking for but he does know that getting x means having it to give to his wife.

It is possible that a person may already have what he wants but does not know that he has it, as when he looks throughtout the shop for the screwdriver he has in his pocket, but one cannot want what one already has if 'want' is used in the sense of 'lack'. In the above case, the man wants (desires) what he does not want (lack). An apparent exception, "Do you want those tickets?" (asked of someone who already has them), is due to our custom of shortening 'want to keep' to 'want'.

The conditions, then, for specifying our desire when what we want is an object, are that we be able to indicate what we want it for and, when necessary for a complete description,
what would count as getting it.

Among our positive wants (excluding for the moment such cases as 'not wanting' and 'wanting to be rid of') there are not only an endless variety of objects wanted but also equally diverse and numerous objectives. We can want better weather, more authority, a shorter working week, new immigration laws, an exciting ride, etc., etc. Although the list appears inexhaustible there are limits upon what can be wanted and it may be possible to reduce these wants to a few basic categories.

An examination of these objectives suggests that they can be reduced to the general types of wanting: 'wanting to x', and 'wanting that x'. As with objects, the range of objectives one can have is restricted by one's experience and one's knowledge of possible objectives. A man who has never played baseball and knows nothing about it cannot want to pitch curves over home plate. A child at the multiplication table stage of mathematics cannot want to solve differential equations, and a man who does not know what a gasoline motor consists of cannot want to adjust the valves. The cases that come to mind are ones in which the desire to do x depends on previous acquaintance with a more general activity of which x is a part. Does this mean that a man can only want to do what he is capable of doing? Since he can want to ski without knowing how, this does not seem to be so. Or, if he is colour-blind he nevertheless wants to distinguish colours as others do.

It seems necessary, however, to distinguish in the last example between wanting and wishing. Although 'wishing' expresses a desire for objects or objectives, the difference between wishing and wanting appears to be a matter of whether or not the possibility of acting to get the object or achieve the objective is present. Thus, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride", but if beggars want to have horses there is some likelihood of being able to get them. In ordinary discourse, though, 'wishing' and 'wanting' expressions are not always used precisely. Someone says, 'I wish I had some candy', and then
goes to the store to get some. Or we say, 'He wanted to go but couldn't'. It could also, of course, be true that in the first case the wish, upon reflection, became a want and in the latter, that he wanted to go while there was a possibility of going and then found the possibility did not exist. At any rate, in spite of our loose use of these terms we tend to regard wishes as that which would be delightful 'if it came true' and wants as that which we believe we can do something about. This distinction is in keeping with the observation that the indicator of wanting is trying to get (or to do). If a man genuinely wants to ski, and cannot, he will try to learn. If he has no legs he may wish he could but could not be correctly described as wanting to. The expression 'wants to' depends to some extent upon 'able to' for its significance.

As well as being able to attempt to do what we want, we can also describe what we want. But as it is possible to want and not know why, so it is also possible to describe what one wants yet use the wrong description. This erroneous description may be due to ignorance of the correct description or to self-deception. In the latter case one may insist that one only wants justice done when what one in fact wants is revenge.

As in the case of wanting an object, one can want to do something which one is already doing, such as wanting to hear something by Wagner when that is, in fact, what is being played now. In a different sense one can also want while doing when the desired objective involves a process: one can want to learn to ski while one is learning to ski, just as one can want to win while one is winning.

While there are some objects we want simply because of the pleasure they give us, there are a great many objectives of the 'wanting to x' type that we pursue for the same reason. We often 'want to x' because x-ing is pleasant, whether x stands for flying, reading a book, writing a poem, planting a garden or riding a horse. In all of these cases the reason for the activity can be other than the enjoyment of it - I may not
enjoy gardening but care for mine anyway in order to avoid the criticism of the neighbours - or enjoying it may be one of the reasons for wanting to do it. We can enjoy our work and we may not enjoy our leisure. When we want to do x for its own sake, we do so not because the action will produce something called 'pleasure', but because the experience itself is a pleasant one. This is reflected in our language about wanting: we desire what we describe as desirable; we want to experience pleasant experiences. At the most basic level, to desire to do something is to be pleased when the opportunity to do it presents itself, and to be displeased when the opportunity is absent. Obviously the qualifying phrase "under certain conditions" is again relevant. For example, there are things we look forward to doing with great anticipation but when we actually do them they are anything but enjoyable. But where no complicating factors are present we want to do what we enjoy doing and we enjoy doing what we want to do. Hence when we describe this relation we use a verb (enjoy) which is transitive. The normal object of desire is that which we enjoy.

In the case of objects the object desired is usually wanted for an end to which it is the means. The counterpart of 'wanting x in order to y' in terms of objectives is an action undergone for the purpose of achieving a desired end. A man may not enjoy going downtown to buy tickets for the hockey game which he thinks it will be a pleasure to watch later. In general, the normal explanation of an individual's action is expressed in terms of his wants. There are exceptions, such as those determined by obligations, and descriptions in terms of what people don't want. (Both of these will be considered later.) The usual answer to the question 'Why did he do x?' is either 'because he enjoys doing x' or 'because he wants to do y', where y is considered desirable in itself and doing x is a means toward the desired end. To the extent that 'doing x' is recognized as an enjoyable activity, the question does not arise, just as we do not question why someone does what pleases
him unless we think there are sufficient other reasons for abstaining from the action.

As indicated, our objective can be either 'wanting to x' or 'wanting that x'. The latter case seems to require a distinction between wanting and wishing similar to the one which applies to the former. In 'wanting that x' our objective is a certain state of affairs. To use 'wanting' correctly - that is, with the implication of being able to do something about it - means having some sort of power to bring about the wanted state of affairs. Thus, the shop foreman to the mechanic: 'I want this motor running properly when you are finished with it'. If we have no control over the desired outcome we can only wish or hope. We want to go on a picnic and we hope the weather will be fine. In some instances we may have the authority to want that x, but express it as a wish or hope in order to elicit a more favourable response ('I wish you would stop chewing gum').

To sum up the specification of wanting when it is an objective, rather than an object, that we want: either the objective is a desire to undergo an experience, or a desire that our environment undergo a change. The wanting is not entirely dependent on the ability to describe it as a certain kind: we have desires before we can articulate them. Wanting can also be expressed in such vague terms as 'wanting to know' or 'wanting to create' and it may be difficult to indicate what the objective is. But new artefacts are produced, games are invented, calculi developed and masterpieces created. The vague desire can attain definite ends. And sometimes language has to be modified and enlarged to accommodate them.

It is now necessary to introduce a complicating factor which has been deferred until now: the conflicting nature of desires. This is closely related to an earlier statement that wanting x normally expresses itself in x-seeking behaviour 'under certain conditions'. Conflict with another desire can be one of the reasons why a desire does not result in action.
"You can't have your cake and eat it too" is the common-sense expression of the conflict which can exist between desires. The fact that I cannot both have my cake uneaten and eaten does not prevent me from wanting to eat it and wanting to have it uneaten, or from having both of these desires at the same time. When the conflict is between objects desired, the source of the conflict is usually the limited resources for satisfying a desire for an almost unlimited range of objects. With desires of the 'wanting to x', or 'wanting that x', kind the conflict is often intrinsic to the nature of the desires. Faced with a number of things I am able to do if I want to do them, I must choose, and by choosing one course of action I exclude others which I may also want to pursue. It is, of course, possible to satisfy several desires by means of a single activity. I may garden because I enjoy cooperating with nature, I want to improve the appearance of my place, I want to plant the slope before the rains wash it away, and I want my garden to be the envy of the neighbours. When a choice has to be made - whether it is between studying and going to the movies, or between one profession and another - my decision in favour of x prevents me from engaging in action appropriate to fulfilling a desire that conflicts with x.

As well as having to decide between two courses of action, we may also be faced with a choice between what we want and what we want to avoid. We want to buy the luxury item and at the same time fear the effect on our budget. We may want to stay and fight and at the same time want to run for cover, or we are attracted to a dangerous sport and frightened away by the risks involved.

The choice may also have to be made between two threats we want to avoid. An employee is in danger of being fired unless he involves himself in a shady deal and he wants to escape both alternatives. His situation could, of course, be described as wanting to keep his job and wanting to maintain his integrity, but the need to choose between the two threats is accompanied
by the desire to be rid of both. This is not the case with desires for positive ends, and so it is more exact to classify these desires as 'wanting to avoid x', rather than 'wanting to x'.

How a man resolves the conflicts produced by his wanting to do various things or wanting various changes in his situation, when these desires are incompatible, will depend upon what he knows, or believes, about himself and his environment. The incompatibility itself may be due not to the nature of the desires but to what he knows or believes about them. He may discover that visiting his brother and taking a trip to Berlin are not incompatible because his brother happens to be in Berlin. If he refrains from getting married because he believes that to break his vow of celibacy would be a sin, and if he comes to the conclusion that his belief was erroneous, wanting to marry and wanting to avoid sin will no longer conflict. Similarly his desires may conflict without his knowing it, or they can begin to conflict as an awareness of the implications of belief grows - as when an employer realizes that his belief about the dignity of man is incompatible with the way he uses men. In general, when one wants to x, or wants that x, and x implies m, one does not necessarily want m. Once the relation between x and m is known, however, one must decide whether one still wants x when it involves m.

Wanting is expressed in behaviour. Human beings, unlike animals, characteristically express wanting in verbal behaviour and this behaviour frequently takes the form of describing, explaining and discussing wants. We not only verbally express our desires but we talk about them. This ability gives us a great deal of flexibility in getting what we want or doing what we want to do. When our situation and our desires are at odds, we act to bring our world into line with our desires. But if we find this difficult or impossible, several alternatives are available to us. We may, of course, keep on wanting what there is little hope of getting and live with the resulting
conflict. The slave longs for freedom and the man of mediocre ability wants the position and salary which elude him. If in such cases there is no possibility of attaining the desired goals, we would say that they wish they could attain them; if there is some possibility of action toward them, or it is believed that there is, then they could be said to keep on wanting.

When several of our desires conflict our usual method of dealing with the conflict is to seek means of satisfying as many desires as possible. A student wants both to spend his time on his studies and to avoid debt so takes a part-time job and gives up some of his leisure. Again, because of our ability to reflect upon our wants and to express them, it is possible to resolve conflict by postponing the getting of some things we want to a future date. (This will be discussed more fully later). But it is also possible to want not to have a certain desire and so change or eliminate the desire itself. A man increasingly concerned about lung cancer may come to want to stop smoking more than he wants to smoke. However, if his desire to smoke is stronger he may choose yet another way out, or at least reduce the conflict, by being skeptical about the correlation between smoking and lung cancer or assuming that since many smokers do not get cancer he is among those who will not get it.

This capacity for modifying our view of our situation enables us to engage in self-deception about our desires. In describing what we want when there is no attempt to deceive others we may nevertheless give a wrong description for various reasons. We may simply be ignorant of the correct description and mis-name or wrongly describe what we want. We may also be confused about what we want to do, and it is often the having to describe our desires that enables us to see what they are. Or we may have desires which we find too repugnant to acknowledge to ourselves and we reject another person's description as wrong, even though it may, in fact, be correct. But someone
else's description, or our own difficult and painful analysis, may lead us to accept the description previously rejected. At the same time as I refuse to admit to having the desire I may express it in a disguised way. Or again I may 'rationalize', giving what I consider a good reason for wanting to do what I do, rather than the less acceptable correct one. The alcoholic may take a drink "just to get rid of the hangover". The reason some whites gave for keeping negro slaves was that thus the Negroes had a better chance to become Christians than if they had stayed in Africa. Finally, I can deceive myself to the extent of wanting to do x but not acknowledging it and, in fact, doing the opposite of x. Although this involves considerations that go beyond the scope of this discussion, we are familiar with this aspect of wanting and it is reflected in our language by such phrases as, "Methinks the lady doth protest too much". What we want and what we say we want can diverge in a great many ways.

The ability to talk about wants also makes it possible for others to have a large influence upon our wanting. We may be quite unaware of the extent to which others, through advertising or other means, persuade us to want and want to do. How effective the "hidden persuaders" are in determining what we want is very difficult to assess but a great amount of advertising is devoted to the creation of a desire where none existed. "You need x", "Don't you wish that ....", "Now you too can ...." are all intended to help us develop a hunger for the product or the activity that will satisfy it. Hence we may want many things simply because we have often been told that we do. This can then lead to the intensification of the conflict of desires which we experience by increasing the number of things we want or want to do. But since advertising can lead to new and interesting activities not contemplated before, as well as to frantic acquisition without enjoyment, increased wanting is not necessarily a liability. Education is also designed, explicitly or implicitly, to influence our wanting.
We have indicated some of the ways in which language both complicates our wanting and gives us flexibility in mediating between conflicting wants. In this process of mediation we may deceive ourselves about the nature of our desires and we may be unaware of the extent to which our wanting is determined by what others tell us that we want. Another factor in the relation between our desires and our possession of language is our ability to have long-range, as well as immediate, desires.

Apart from conduct which issues from obligation, either self-imposed or by an external agency, the normal way of explaining what a man does is in terms of his wants or desires. Even when we speak of 'unconscious' desires these descriptions are modelled on those in which the desire is obvious. When the desire does not result in the expected action it is possible that the explanation lies in the lack of opportunity of getting what is wanted, or in the fact that it is incompatible with another immediate desire. But the reason may be that the wanting has been neither frustrated nor abandoned in favour of another desire but rather its fulfillment postponed to a future date. Because we can reflect upon our desires, criticize and evaluate them, we can detach them from immediate action and decide to act later. Or we may abandon them once we have thought about them and concluded that we do not want what we desired prior to reflection. Desires may be formed by the persuasions of others but they can also be formed by ourselves, and these may lead to action which others do not expect of us on the basis of the way in which we have usually tried to get what we want. Our wanting can be a sudden impulse to do something, or it can be a long-range disposition to act in a certain way whenever, or if ever, the opportunity occurs. Thus, although it is possible that, when I am self-deceived about my wanting, another person may know my desires better than I do, it is also evident that in other cases what I want to do may be determined by someone else more by asking what I think than by observing my behaviour. This is not to deny that when I yield to the impulse to hit
someone I may be expected to do it, given my temper and the
provocation, or that my long-range intention to be honest will
result in predictable action. But since I can, to some extent,
stand off from my desires and ask myself, "Do I really want to
do x?", I can decide against doing x, or against doing x now,
and so fail to reveal the desire for x in behaviour. Rather
than rush into every opportunity for doing x when I want to do
x, I can convert my desire into plans.

Since, in wanting x or wanting to do x, x can signify
an unlimited variety of things, and since many of these things
are incompatible for the reasons we have examined, on what ba­
sis do we determine what we will try to get or do? A partial
answer has already been given in terms of enjoyment: we want
what we think we would enjoy if we had it. And we do many
things, not in themselves enjoyable, because they are means to
other experiences which are. When we ask someone for a reason
for his doing x and are told it is because he enjoys doing x,
it would be odd to go on to ask: "But why are you doing what
you enjoy?".

Although 'doing x because x is enjoyable' can cover a
wide range of human activity, from the most trivial to the ex­
ceptional and noble, it does not cover all cases of wanting.
A man can have reasons for doing x other than the fact that do­
ing x is enjoyable or, when it is not, that it leads to doing
y, which is. He can want to help another in distress even
though the result for him is decidedly unenjoyable. His act
may, of course, give him a pleasant feeling of benevolence, but
if he acted thus only in order to get the pleasant feeling the
desired feeling is not likely to appear. That is, if the only
thing that pleased me, when I want to do something for others
and do it, were the pleasant feeling which accompanies it, then
repeating the action would fail to reproduce the feeling.

The difference between doing x because it is enjoyable
and doing it for other reasons can be expressed by saying that
I can have reasons for doing x which are not reasons for wanting
to do x. I may believe that I must do x even though I find it disagreeable or painful and put it off as long as possible. The usual way of expressing this is to say that I don't **want** to do x at all, but I believe that I **have** to. Only when I have convinced myself that I ought to do x because it is the only way to get y will I do x. In a sense it can be said that I simply want y more than non-x, but in these circumstances my wanting y is of a different order from wanting non-x. My sense of being under obligation to do y (and, therefore, to do x) is a more important factor in determining my behaviour than my wanting to do non-x which would be more pleasant. We do sometimes refer to y as wanting to do y ('I want to do the right thing') but to the extent that we consider ourselves under obligation, 'wanting to fulfil an obligation' takes precedence over 'wanting what we will enjoy'. If I consider a promise made to a dying friend as binding upon me, I will carry out my instructions regardless of how unpleasant to me is the action entailed. The reason for my action is not my enjoyment of it, or of its goal, but that my belief about being under obligation to act in a certain way precludes my avoiding the unpleasant experience it involves. In such cases, when someone wants to know why I am doing x when I don't enjoy doing x, the answer will be in terms of my beliefs. Though it is silly to ask someone why he does what he enjoys doing, (unless we suspect that he does not actually enjoy it and is doing it for another reason), the moral question: "Granted you enjoy it, but ought you to do it?", may not be out of place. Thus we can be mistaken about the nature of our wanting in the various ways previously indicated and, from a moral point of view, we may also be misguided in our beliefs about obligation. This may then result in our being mistaken about the relative importance we place on the things we want when our wanting involves conflicting desires. Our ability to reflect upon our wanting enables us to arrange our wants into some sort of hierarchy, the structure of which will depend to some extent upon our beliefs.
This structure can also be modified by experience. When our wanting $x$ has resulted in getting $x$ for a considerable period we tend to undervalue $x$ until an occasion when we cannot get it. A man who quits his job rather than lose his self-respect may discover, after several months of privation and job hunting, that he is willing to take his job back and lose some self-respect. This shrinking and expanding of the importance of objects and activities which we want has many other causes, including our tendency to apply a 'discount rate' to things which we want but can only get at some future date. Conversely, an impulse to want, or to want to do, can result in a single, dominant desire crowding out other things that we would want more, were we to reflect upon the implications of our choice.

Further discussion of the relation between our beliefs and our wanting would involve the concept of value and so will be postponed until the next chapter. To sum up: the fundamental expression of a man's wanting is to try to get what he wants, hence to some extent his actions are an indication of his wanting. But as a language-user he can reflect upon what he wants and thus what he knows or believes about himself and his situation will affect the way in which his wanting and acting are related.

We want some things because we expect to enjoy them, others because they are a means to the enjoyment of something else. Similarly we want to do things because we expect to enjoy doing them and we want to do other things because they are prerequisite to activities we enjoy. But we do some things, not because we want to, but because we consider ourselves under obligation to do them. Consequently we want some things, and want to do certain things, because they are a means to doing what we believe we are obliged to do. Because some of the things we do have moral implications, an analysis of wanting involves normative as well as descriptive elements. It is possible that the concept of 'need' is this normative element within the general and more unstable concept of wanting or desiring. This possibility must now be examined.
CHAPTER II

NEEDING

In order to analyze the concept of need it will now be necessary to isolate this concept from that of 'wanting' with which it is so closely related. The next step will be to differentiate between biological and non-biological needs and to examine the characteristics of each. We shall then consider how the social sciences use the concept of need, and try to show that in their accounts human need is usually defined in terms of categorical needs which are given an absoluteness that is not warranted. In their explanation of human behaviour it is frequently assumed that all of our actions are a response to one or more of these categorical needs. Some of the difficulties which this assumption raises will be examined and an alternate view proposed. On this view, the above concept of needs is inadequate because it does not take into account the extent to which our needs and our value judgments influence each other. To show how this modifies the above concept of need will require a discussion of values. But since evaluating and wanting overlap so much, it will also be necessary to say something of the relation between values and wants and, finally, to look at needs in the context of wants - the context from which we detach them at the beginning of this analysis.

In examining the role which the term 'wanting' plays in the description of human behaviour we have seen that the verbs 'want' and 'need' are often used interchangeably. This practice is based on the obvious relation that exists between some of our wanting and the needs from which the wanting arises. If the doctor has correctly diagnosed my ailment as a need for iron, I will want to get iron pills because I need them. We usually think of the relation between wanting food and needing it as being equally straightforward. Usually we want food
because we are hungry, but we also know that we need food in order to survive. Yet even here needing and wanting can diverge widely. We may want more food than we need, we may have such a poor appetite that we eat less than we need, or we may satisfy our need by eating food which threatens, rather than ensures, our survival. Assuming, for the moment, that an adequate account of this divergence can be given, it is evident that even in the case of food the apparent interchangeability of 'need' and 'want' is misleading. In many other cases the relation between wanting and needing is not so obvious, and we have already noted that there can be things we need but do not want, and others that we want but do not need.

The way we usually speak of our needs, however, is similar to the way we express what we want. A common form of expression is to say we want x in order to y. Similarly, we say we need (have to have, etc.) x in order to y. "I want another chance to show you that I can do it", and also "I need another chance to show you". Or again, "I want/need a loan to pay for my education". Although the form of the expression is the same in both cases, the two verbs fulfil a different function. Generally, to say what one wants is to indicate what one tries to get (unless circumstances or other considerations prevent it) and, when appropriate, to give the reason for our desire (in order to y). To refer correctly to something as needed, on the other hand, is to indicate some thing, or action, or state of affairs as being prerequisite to some end (in order to y). The goal may be the same whether we are describing our desire for what we believe is the prerequisite for attaining it, or indicating the prerequisite itself. Because the formulation of expressions concerning our needs and wants is similar, it is understandable why these two terms are so often interchanged. Even when we are aware of the distinct function which the two terms serve, in many instances it makes little difference whether the means to a goal we have in mind is expressed as a desire or a requirement. To most people it seems unimportant
whether they say "I need a tankful of gas and a quart of oil", or, "I want a tankful of gas and a quart of oil". Sometimes it is a matter of courtesy or tact; most teenagers recognize that "I want a loan, Dad" is not the best approach.

As long as we are dealing with needs at this level of generality there is little difficulty in sorting out needs and wants. But that further distinctions between the two must be made becomes apparent when we acknowledge that we do not need everything we want. Then it is no longer a question of which description is preferable but of a complex relationship between needing and wanting. We speak, for example, of needs 'generating' desires and of our desiring or wanting something as 'arising out of' our need for it. If I am asked: "Why do you want x?", a reasonable reply would be: "I want x because I need it". But if, on the other hand, the question were: "Why do you need x?", the reply "Because I want it", although not necessarily absurd, is not likely to go unchallenged. Although there may be things we just want without being able to say what we want them for, we do not just need something without there being any possible account of the end (such as survival, or well-being) which the satisfaction of the need would serve. Needs, apparently, are not desires although some generate desires or wanting. In the case of food, my need for food normally results in my wanting food, and my wanting food usually results in my trying to get it. In this sequence many factors, other than the availability of food, can alter the outcome.

But we do not trace all our wanting to a need from which it arises. We recognize that while we want, and want to do, an almost unlimited number of things, we think of our needs as being fewer in number. Thus, when society, family, career, etc., make insistent and simultaneous demands on our time, energy and income, we try to find a balance between these demands and our limited resources. In doing so we usually distinguish between needs which must be satisfied and wants which will be, if the resources are sufficient, but postponed or abandoned if
they are not. We also distinguish between those who have enough to satisfy their needs and the 'needy'. Thirdly, we speak of things which we need but do not want. We admit, for example, that we need exercise but want to read a book instead. We sometimes refer to what others (especially children) want as being bad for them and prescribe what they need instead. We recognize that we need to cooperate with others but sometimes do not want to and wish that we did not have to. These, then, are the three distinctions we make in ordinary discourse between needing and wanting: wanting what we need, wanting what we do not need, and needing what we do not want.

There are, of course, numerous ways in which we can be wrong about what we want (some of them were examined in chapter one), but usually we know more or less what we want and try more or less consistently to get it. We are much less certain, however, about what it is we need, but our tendency is to assume that what we want is what we need. We want more living space and so announce to the family that we need a larger house. We want a simple solution to the problem of living beyond our means and conclude that we need a raise. Once a criterion of need has been established these statements could, in certain situations, refer to needs but if we are reasonable we recognize that we do not need everything that we want. We may have a very unclear idea of what constitutes a need but we nevertheless distinguish between necessities and luxuries, even though what we call necessities seem to grow to match our incomes. The oriental method of achieving serenity through elimination of desires and our western use of advertising to stimulate them illustrate the range of cultural approaches to the interpretation of wants and needs.

The general formula, 'needing x in order to y', covers everything from needing a wrench in order to tighten a nut to needing food in order to survive. Frequently, however, we use 'need' in a more restricted form and here we are particularly interested in the use of the expression 'human need'. In
ordinary discourse this expression can serve to differentiate between the needs of people and other types of needs, but usually its use implies that out of the welter of needs covered by the general formula there are some more basic than others and that these must be satisfied if human beings are to function adequately. Since we are often very unclear as to what adequate functioning would be and since the medical and social sciences are engaged in establishing criteria for determining this, it is necessary to examine the special languages of these sciences as well as ordinary discourse. The human need for vitamin C or calcium, for example, was not known to be a bodily need until medical research established it. Similarly, the social sciences have defined other human needs on the basis of evidence for them produced by research. But what is to be accepted as evidence? While some bodily needs have been clearly defined it is not possible to generalize about all of man's needs in any way comparable to that which is possible in the natural sciences. A further difficulty can be anticipated: since what we call needs seem to be related in each case to ends, to the attainment of which the needs are prerequisites, it is to be expected that a consideration of these ends will involve us in the complex question of value judgments. It then becomes relevant to ask if the social sciences have given adequate consideration to this question in the formulation of their criteria. This, in turn, raises the problem of whether a non-normative concept of need is even possible. This problem will be discussed in the next chapter; here we shall examine the content of the term 'human needs' in some descriptions of human behaviour.

However much definitions of need vary, there is general agreement about the biological basis of some human needs. Warren, referring to organic needs, in the Dictionary of Psychology, defines a need as "any factor or condition in the environment of an organism which assists to a marked extent in preserving its life and health or in furthering its usual modes
of behaviour"^2. A lack of one of these factors in the environment arouses an experience in the organism which he also calls a need. This lack is what we ordinarily call 'needing' so, according to this definition, 'needing x' is an experience we have when our organism lacks x, and x is something which promotes our survival and health. For x to be considered a need it will not only have to contribute to these ends but also contribute "to a marked extent". When x is water these criteria are easily applied; in the case of some other chemicals involved in bodily processes classification is still uncertain. As medical science progresses the application of the first criterion to human biology will no doubt yield more conclusive results although the second will always be more difficult to apply. While the researchers compile, test, and revise lists of bodily needs it is always possible that there may be needs of which, at any given time, they are unaware, just as there was a time when the relation between goitre and the need for iodine was unknown. There are still many people in the world suffering from goitre who do not know of this relation, and, in general, there is a considerable gap between ordinary talk of biological needs and medical knowledge of them.

We have, of course, a natural response to some of our needs which results in the attempt to satisfy them whether we know what we need or not. The strong urge to breathe which we have when there is an excess of carbon dioxide in our system is one of numerous examples. But our bodily reactions are not always a guide to what our needs are. We can inhale carbon monoxide without any awareness that we are starving for the oxygen which we need, and a deficiency in thyroxin (which has certainly been established as a bodily need) rather than stimulating to remedial action causes mental and physical sluggishness. We are very much dependent upon science for the identification of many of our biological needs.

Warren also considers x to be a need if x furthers an organism's usual mode of behaviour. This extension of the
definition introduces, even at the biological level, the possibility of the satisfaction of one need being incompatible with the satisfaction of another. The possibility of conflict is graphically illustrated in the case of drug addiction. The addict's need for drugs is a need which furthers his usual mode of behaviour, but satisfying it may be disastrous in relation to the end which the satisfaction of his other needs serves: the preservation of life and health. Gould and Kolb substantiate this when they define need as "whatever is required for physical well-being, or what, if lacking, will lead to internal disturbance". The craving for drugs and the internal disturbance resulting from their lack may lead to behaviour which destroys life and health rather than contributing to them.

Although the addict is an extreme case, many of our "usual modes of behaviour" show a disregard for the biological ends of health and survival and frequently jeopardize them: eating and drinking too much, driving too fast, dieting too ruthlessly, smoking in spite of the danger of lung cancer, and so on. Whether any of these activities would be considered technically as acquired needs would presumably depend upon their extent and the amount of disturbance caused by deprivation. A man may be literally 'drinking himself to death' or only occasionally exceeding the speed limit for the sake of the exhilarating feeling that accompanies it. Some of these activities may be due to ignorance of the consequences, or failure to act rationally, but they may also be the result of a deliberate choice of goals pursued whatever the risk to life and health. This suggests that any criterion of acquired need will be very difficult to apply. Furthermore, although the need may be classed as a physical or biological one, the effect upon mental health is also a consideration, and may be a crucial one. Thus, although the distinction between biological and non-biological needs is useful, the utility of biologically based definitions of needs (such as those cited) is severely limited where human beings are concerned. While we are following our
usual modes of behaviour we normally pay some attention to the requirements of health but we may engage in a wide variety of actions which disregard the consequences to health — mental as well as physical. The problem of whether all these actions can be correlated with needs will have to be investigated.

Our inquiry into needs thus far has been restricted to what are usually called biological needs because these appear to be the more obvious ones. When we recognize that the terms 'need' and 'want' have distinct functions and examine the role that 'need' plays it is the bodily needs that readily come to mind. We know that our need for food and drink can be satisfied by a number of things that are good for us and by some things that are not. We know of many factors that contribute to good health and of certain precautions that are advisable. But there are biological needs which do not automatically result in wanting and we may have wants which, if satisfied, would be harmful to the body. Consequently we depend upon medical science not only to help us keep the organism functioning but also to provide us with a list of what our biological needs are. But needs can also be acquired so that often it becomes impossible to satisfy both the constitutional and the acquired need. A choice must then be made between the ends or goals which the satisfaction of these needs serves.

Ordinary discourse about needs, however, ranges over a much wider area than the needs of the body. Whatever problems there may be in relating what we believe we need to a general claim about human needs, we are usually quite sure of a number of non-biological needs that describe our situation. We need vitamins but we also 'need to be loved', we 'need to get ahead', we 'need to have some excitement', and so on. Whatever the actual needs are to which these statements refer, they are generally designated as psychic, psychological, social, or cultural needs. The first two terms emphasize the element of conscious or mental life, while the latter two emphasize the importance of our relation to other people in the satisfaction of these
needs. These two aspects of our experience are so interrelated that in an analysis of the term 'need' it is doubtful that separate treatment of them would be an advantage. Choosing one of the terms to represent both aspects is also somewhat arbitrary but 'psychological' may be the best term for representing all non-biological needs. It can be argued, of course, that the division of human needs into biological and psychological is also unhelpful since the satisfying of biological needs has psychological import and that psychological needs are based on biological ones. Obviously they are interrelated in many ways. Our activities can, for example, lead to the satisfaction of several needs at the same time. A meal with a friend can be described in terms of the need for food or the need for companionship. What someone calls his 'need to be loved' may have a great deal to do with a biological urge to satisfy his sexual need. The pursuit of goals that primarily satisfy psychological needs can have biological effects and the state of the organism can affect the satisfaction of psychological needs. The man who keeps talking of his 'need to get ahead' may soon need medical attention for the ulcer he has acquired and one of the ways to 'get more out of life' can be to adopt healthier habits.

The difficulty of analyzing human needs on the basis of two or more categories has led some researchers to reject all attempts to classify them and to speak of an undifferentiated fundamental human energy capable of countless variations through experience. On this view, man has only one need: the need, as Carl Rodgers says, to actualize, maintain, and enhance the organism. This is a model of concise definition but when we are confronted with questions such as "Do I need x, or just want it?", or "I think I need x but do I really need it?", we are not at all sure how to apply it. A similar handicap goes with the term 'self-realization' when it is used to describe this universal need since it has little meaning for us until we define the type of self that is to be realized. For purposes of analysis it seems useful therefore to consider human
needs under the two aspects of biological and psychological, providing that in doing so we do not ignore their interrelatedness. Both the physician and the psychologist can diagnose and cure a large range of problems without the other's help, but with some problems their cooperation may be a prerequisite to correct diagnosis.

As we have already indicated, the general expression of need is 'needing x in order to y'. Thus, in the case of psychological needs it is relevant to ask: "What are they needed for?". Something is a biological need if it is required for maintaining physical health and preserving life. By analogy something is a psychological need if it is required for emotional and mental health and survival. Someone getting to the end of his tether says: "I've got to have a holiday; a few more weeks of this and I'll go out of my mind!". Someone else claims she needs a divorce on grounds of "mental cruelty". There may be a great deal of exaggeration in these claims and the difficulty of giving precise meaning to such terms as 'emotional health' and 'mental breakdown' is well known. (In legal cases dealing with claims of 'temporary insanity' both defendant and prosecutor frequently introduce professional testimony on their behalf.) Although it is generally agreed that we have psychological needs and that their satisfaction serves to promote and sustain mental health, the difficulties of establishing the validity of professed particular needs are formidable. Consequently, whereas we may be willing to let medical science give content to the formal definition of biological needs, the conclusions of psychologists about our psychological needs are more tentative, and so inspire less confidence in most people. This difference may be a matter of degree. Numerous biological findings are also tentative; for example, the quantity of food we need has been fairly well established and the need for certain ingredients verified but within wide limits. For several reasons there is considerably less agreement about our psychological needs. It is evident
that needs must be specified in relation to a particular culture at a particular time. (This will be discussed more fully later.) Also, needs can be specified at numerous levels of generality. Lists have been compiled that have included up to sixty specific needs which have been reduced by others to one all-inclusive need. But there is more to the problem than cultural relativity or levels of generality. The science is not as far advanced as others are, the findings are more difficult to verify than in the natural sciences, and there is considerable disagreement among researchers over the significance of their findings. It is not the purpose of the present inquiry to attempt to arbitrate between the general theories of human behaviour which this has led to, but rather to examine the concept of need and how it is used. At this stage we are interested in the technical use of this concept in the discussion of psychological needs. To reduce the subject matter to manageable proportions we must confine ourselves to a specific area and one that suggests itself is an examination of an assumption that seems to underlie most research into human needs. "It may be assumed," writes Linton, "that it is the needs of the individual which provide the motivations for his behaviour and which are, through this, responsible for the operation of society and culture." There are two basic kinds of needs:

In addition to those which can be traced directly to physical tensions, as the need for food, for sleep, for escape from pain and for sexual satisfaction, man has a whole series of other needs whose connection with such tensions cannot be clearly demonstrated.

These additional needs are the "psychic" or psychological ones and "as motives of adult behaviour, physical and psychological needs seem to stand very much on a par". The latter, however, are much more difficult to identify. "The nature and even the presence of psychic needs can only be deduced from the behavior to which they give rise."

In order to see some of the implications of this view, the following approach will be used. First, an example of an
alleged psychological need for which there is considerable
evidence in human behaviour will be examined to indicate some
of the problems involved in defining these needs. Then sever­
al examples of behaviour which is not easily related to a par­
ticular need will be considered and finally an alternate view,
which does not start from the above premise will be outlined.

As already indicated, there are numerous classifications of psychological needs and there is no single accepted
method of classification. Still, some needs are included in
most of the lists and of these we want to consider the need
for identity. According to Fromm, the need for identity must
be given a prominent place because it stems from a distinguish­
ing characteristic of man. "Man may be defined as the animal
that can say 'I', that can be aware of himself as a separate
entity." This awareness of oneself as an 'I' is, however, a
relatively recent development. "The member of a primitive
clan might express his sense of identity in the formula 'I am
we'; he cannot yet conceive of himself as an 'individual' ex­
isting apart from his group." We want to belong to some sort
of group but we also want to "escape from groupism", as David
Riesman puts it. But the pull of the crowd is strong and our
tendency is to satisfy the need for identity by conforming to
the crowd.

What could be more obvious than the fact that people are
willing to risk their lives, to give up their love, to
surrender their freedom, to sacrifice their own thoughts
for the sake of being one of the herd, of conforming, and
thus of acquiring a sense of identity, even though it is
an illusory one.

This sort of dedication to the goal of belonging happens fre­
quently enough, but we must nevertheless ask: What does it tell
us of the need for identity? One could also say: "What could
be more obvious than the fact that people are willing to risk
their lives, to give up their love, to surrender their freedom,
to refuse to sacrifice their own thoughts, in spite of rejec­
tion by the herd, and thus to acquire a genuine sense of iden­
tity, of autonomy?". It would also not be difficult to find
numerous examples to support this claim. In both cases we can interpret the behaviour as stemming from the need for identity but in the first case the behaviour is said to be misguided and the goal attained illusory. But on what basis can we decide that individualism should have been sought after rather than conformity to the crowd? Not on the basis of observed behaviour because that is more likely to favour the crowd. And not on the basis of our need for identity because this is what is to be established, presumably on the basis of behaviour. We could, however, invoke another need and say that we experience the pull of the crowd because of our need for affiliation and that this is in conflict with our need for identity. Many people would say that they have felt this tension, at least sometimes, between 'needing to be accepted' and 'needing to be themselves', even though they do not put it in more precise terms. But when we find people who have merged very well into the group and apparently feel no need of a sense of their own identity, another explanation is required. This thorough identification with the group has, of course, been frequently observed in other cultures but it is not absent from our own. Perhaps such people have satisfied the identity need without being aware of it. This could, of course, be the case just as we could get all the vitamins we need by eating the proper foods without ever knowing that we need the vitamins or that we are satisfying the need for them. But whereas it is relatively easy to determine whether or not a certain vitamin is a human need, it is not so simple to establish that human beings have a need for identity when we consider the problems involved in defining it, of isolating it from all other needs, and of establishing what the results are when it is satisfied and when it is not. On the other hand it is possible that these people need a sense of identity but get along quite well with a substitute, in this case the sense of belonging. This would require a separate set of criteria for deciding which is genuine and which is substitute and also casts doubt upon the status of
identity as a human need. A third possibility is that they need a sense of identity but can get along without satisfying it, in which case it must be shown what the effects are upon these persons when the need is not satisfied and the goal it serves is not achieved. Eric Fromm says that this need must be satisfied if man is to remain sane. If sanity is the goal which a sense of identity serves it would certainly establish identity as a need. But, assuming that definitions of identity and sanity could be agreed upon, the social sciences have not established, with any precision, what the relation is between this alleged need and mental health.

The paucity of firm conclusions in this field is not surprising when we consider the practical difficulties involved in the investigation of psychological needs. The need for food can be inferred from food-seeking and eating but it can also be related to phenomena (such as stomach contractions) other than the behaviour from which it is inferred. It is also relatively simple to observe the effects of deprivation. But creating conditions for the observation of the results of deprivation and satiation of the need for identity is another matter. To try to deprive a man of his sense of identity would mean to arrange circumstances under which numerous other alleged needs of his would be affected. But specific satiations and deprivations of psychological needs can have widespread general effects.

Furthermore, since every actual occasion is the outcome of many concatenating variables, in order to be relatively certain of the presence and strength of any single factor one must be able to distinguish and approximately measure most of the others, both within and without the organism.12

This is a formidable requirement.

Let us consider a man who is working hard at his job and explains it as "working to get ahead". It is likely that his behaviour is related to a number of hypothetical needs. He may be striving for independence: a promotion would lead to fewer people in authority over him and more independence for
himself (need for autonomy). He may be afraid of losing his job if he does not hustle (need for security). He may want to prove that he can do an excellent job (need to achieve). He may long for praise for his efforts (need for recognition). He may be aiming at a promotion in order to win the acceptance of the group he admires (need for affiliation). Or he may simply want to make more money (related to what he wants to do with the money and this, in turn, related to a host of other needs). "Working to get ahead" can contribute to all these needs at the same time and to others not mentioned. Probably most of our activities contribute toward satisfying several different needs simultaneously and any psychological need would rarely stand in anything like a clear-cut, one-to-one relationship with behaviour from which it was deduced. The attempt to determine what those needs are has resulted in numerous, frequently revised, lists of needs and, on the part of many researchers, the abandoning of the attempt as unfruitful and redundant.  

The problem of isolating psychological factors in human experience in order to establish the existence of a need-behaviour relationship becomes even more acute when we consider the many activities which people engage in which are not usually thought to be need-related at all. Mountain climbing is an example. Since this is behaviour that numerous people display at some time and some people devote a good part of their lives to, it ought to serve the satisfaction of some human need if all of our behaviour has this function. Does the mountain climber have a mountain climbing need? This is not very likely. If mountain climbing were a distinct need, the same claim would apply to so many other human activities that the list of human needs would become almost as long as a listing of the things that human beings do. However, the mountain climbing could be behaviour fulfilling a more general need. Perhaps the mountain climber is satisfying a need to affiliate with others, and his friends happen to be mountain climbers. Or he may have a need to master his environment and satisfies it in this way. Or
again, the reason for his mountain climbing may be that he is satisfying his need for recognition. Now it may very well be possible to determine that a particular mountain climbing exploit did fulfil a certain need or several needs at once. But is it not also possible that one may be climbing a mountain simply because one wants to, and not because one is thereby satisfying a need? (The resulting exercise could satisfy a need without it necessarily being the explanation for the activity.) To admit this possibility would be to concede that need-satisfaction is not universally explanatory of human behaviour and so would be resisted by the need-theorist. It could be argued, for example, that even though no other need is satisfied, 'climbing a mountain because you want to' is satisfying an 'achievement need'. If this is a need, however, it could be claimed to account for almost any human action and thus can be satisfied along with almost any other need; hence it is as limited in elucidating the concept of need as are such terms as 'enhancement of the organism'. However, the issue here is not simply whether some alleged needs have more or less explanatory force, but whether or not a need-reduction type of explanation is applicable to all forms of human behaviour. Before attempting to answer this question it may be helpful to turn from the discussion of a specific activity like mountain climbing to that of creative activity in general.

Does the man who excludes a great many activities from his life which others think important, even to the point of endangering health, in order to concentrate on composing a symphony, or designing a bridge, or writing a novel, have a need to create? Perhaps, and perhaps those of us whose achievements are much more modest have it in a smaller degree. But if creativity is a need, what of those individuals whose behaviour shows far more evidence of inertia than of creativity? It may be that their lethargy is due to biological factors. Perhaps the failure to satisfy another need, such as the need for security, is holding them back. To establish this would require
an account of how needs are related to each other and the social sciences so far have developed few tools to determine interrelations of needs. They may establish that Jack is at the twentieth percentile on 'need deference' and at the sixtieth on 'need recognition' but what tends to slip through the testing procedures is the uniqueness of Jack, who has adopted his own hierarchy of 'need satisfaction'. In doing what he does - creating or being uncreative - he selects some goals that others find unattractive and he rejects as irrelevant to his goals what others consider needful. After all the allowances are made for frustrated needs - biological and other - human behaviour exhibits the full range of activity from creative to remarkably uncreative and sometimes destructive.

The application of need theory to this variety of behaviour has contributed considerably to our understanding of the sources of human action. But although the concept of need is essential to an adequate explanation of behaviour, it does not seem to have the universality claimed for it. In attempting to show what the limitations of need theory are it will not do to assign to it an impossible task and then point out how it has failed to give a complete account. Some of the difficulties referred to above can be put down to the primitive state of development of the methods of analysis. Other difficulties could be overcome with more attention to the variations in needs and need intensities due to hereditary factors. The role of acquired needs has not been agreed upon, even though it is an important part of need theory. Some writers call all psychological needs acquired needs; others use the term in a much more restricted sense.

Having acknowledged the difficulty of the task of applying need theory, it remains to ask whether it is as useful a theory as it claims to be. In general, it purports to account for human behaviour by relating it to certain needs which human beings have. And the question which this claim raises is whether it is useful or even possible to relate all human
activity to a need. When we examine the needs-activities equation we find that an almost infinite number of human activities is somehow related to a certain number of needs. The answer to the question, "How many needs?", varies. At one end of the scale one could postulate a need for every bit of activity observed. This would neither be helpful nor is it suggested. At the other end one would account for all human activity with one basic undifferentiated need. As indicated earlier, many researchers have adopted this approach because of what they think are insuperable difficulties in the alternatives. We have also seen how unhelpful this version of the theory is in the elucidation of the concept of need. Most need theorists take a middle road between these two extremes and compile lists of needs. The length of these lists varies widely and presumably part of the reason for this is which unsatisfactory extreme the compiler is most anxious to avoid. Once a list has been decided upon, however, it is assumed that all instances of behaviour can be shown to follow from one or more of these categorical needs. But in order to do this these categorical needs are given an absoluteness that is unwarranted if our analysis of needing and wanting is on the right track.

As long as our analysis of the concept of need is completely general we can substitute, in the expression 'I need x in order to y', any human activity for y and cite a corresponding need for x. 'I need lessons in order to be able to ski', 'I need a car to get me to work on time', etc. When, at this level of generality, we refer to psychological needs we are still referring to individual needs: 'Lucy needs encouragement in order to build up her self-confidence', or 'Green needs a hobby to help him relax'. But when social scientists produce a list of categorical needs they are giving us, not just particular psychological facts about particular people but, they claim, a general explanatory theory of human behaviour. Somehow an innumerable variety of everyday needs is being accounted for by a few categorical ones. But what are the criteria used
in this reduction? If a man is walking down the street a correct account of his action may be that he needs a stamp and is going to the post office to get it. If the categorical needs are able to account for all behaviour, his need for a stamp must be subsumed under a categorical need. To do so seems highly arbitrary. The same could be said of an endless number of similar needs. One could compile a list of hypothetical needs to correspond with each possible human activity including a 'stamp' need. Is there any reason to suppose that each of these hypothetical needs is an expression of a categorical need? That there is not should be evident from an examination of the relation between needing and wanting - a relation which seems to have been neglected in the formulation of criteria for categorical needs.

We have seen earlier that in ordinary discourse the general form of expression of wants is similar to that used in expressing needs. With cake-making in mind, one can refer to the ingredients one needs or the ingredients one wants, in order to make it. We have also seen that in ordinary discourse, although need-expressions and want-expressions are similar, we do not describe every action performed because we want, or want to do, something as also satisfying some need. If you think health is important, and you trust your doctor, and he has diagnosed your ailment correctly, then when you take the pills that he prescribed your pill-taking activity is due both to your wanting them and your needing them. But if you want a painting that you like and you buy it, you account for your painting-buying behaviour as due to your wanting the painting and not because you have a painting need. The need theorists may object: "Yes, you make the distinction between wanting and needing the painting, but buying the painting is nevertheless behaviour that can be accounted for by a need that you have - probably a need for recognition." But of course when a man buys a painting, the behaviour that is observable is that of buying a painting, not of attempting to fulfil a recognition
need. Only when this item of behaviour is correlated with many other items such as prior envy of the Jones because they have a painting of this quality and he has not, his lack of enjoyment of the painting together with his constant showing it off to others, etc., can the interpretation 'fulfilling a need for recognition' be placed upon the painting-buying action. When such additional items of behaviour are not present, there is no warrant for describing the purchase as need-fulfilling, but there is reason for accepting the purchaser's account: he is buying the painting because he wants it and not because he needs it or because he needs to buy it or because he has some other need that buying the painting will help to satisfy.

On the basis of need theory it could be claimed that even though additional items of behaviour which would indicate this action's relation to a need appear to be absent, given sufficient opportunity to observe the circumstances surrounding the purchase, the need being served by it could be identified. To use a biological analogy: the phenomenon of excessive water drinking of the person suffering unknowingly from diabetes has a basis in a need and with sufficient probing this need could be identified. When applied to some psychological cases this analogy is obviously valid. But does it apply to all cases? Some people drink a great deal of pop and a thorough medical investigation could reveal that they are taking in far more liquid than they need, and that there is no hidden need, as in case of diabetes. They drink it because they like to drink it.

To say that some people buy pictures because they enjoy looking at them and not for other reasons is one way of differentiating between needs and wants in the description of human behaviour. Because need theory ignores the distinctions of ordinary discourse between wanting and needing, it misses a feature of the concept of wanting which we have noted before. Some things are wanted for their own sake and not 'in order to' do or get something else and so fail to qualify as a hypothetical need. Consequently they cannot be assimilated into any one
of the categorical needs. There are, of course, reasons for doubting the effectiveness of need theory in accounting for other types of behaviour, in view of the difficulties encountered in applying the need-behaviour equation, but the above limitation seems to be the most obvious one.

Before going on to consider an alternative to an all-inclusive need theory, a resume of the preceding discussion may be helpful. In determining biological needs the connection between our actions and the failure to satisfy these needs can usually be established, although there are difficulties, some of which we have noted. With the psychological needs these difficulties are multiplied, for reasons we have also discussed. But whatever the problems of defining psychological needs, they play a very important role in our lives and we normally distinguish them from biological needs. The need for emotional response from other individuals is probably the most easily identified of the psychological needs, whether it is referred to as a need for love, or affection, or affiliation. We 'need to be loved', we 'need to feel wanted', we 'need a friend' or we 'need someone to talk to'. We may not be able to give a more precise account, but at this level of generality the layman and the specialist usually agree about this need, even if we find other alleged needs harder to verify in our own experience. We may not agree as readily with the expert when the latter points out to us how some of our actions are related to unsatisfied needs. Yet there are many ways in which our needs and our awareness of them can diverge. No doubt we can have psychological needs of which we are unaware just as we may have a biological need without the experience of wanting that which would satisfy it. We may be ignorant of our needs or mistaken about them and thus also incorrectly describe them. The observations made in the previous chapter about how we can be mistaken or deceived about our wanting also apply to the attempts to describe our needs. Our description may be most wide of the mark when frustrated needs result in behaviour for which we
account with entirely different reasons. Without going into the question of how needs that have remained unsatisfied for some time can influence action without our awareness of it, we are familiar enough with this to recognize that some human behaviour must be accounted for in terms of frustrated psychological needs. Even the non-expert can recognize some behaviour as falling into this category ("What's wrong with him is that he needs more affection than he gets"). But behaviour that is need-satisfying and behaviour due to the frustration of some needs does not give a complete account of the things that human beings do. There are many things which we do just for the sake of doing them. We play games not only in order to get exercise, we get absorbed in hobbies, we do things 'for the fun of it', and we engage in more serious pursuits without 'needing to'. In some cases these activities may be related to needs; in others no appeal to needs would account for them. It is always possible that some particular behaviour which appears unrelated to needs could, with more precise diagnostic techniques and more exhaustive investigation, be shown to be related to a need or the frustration of one. But to claim that need theory covers all possible behaviour is unwarranted if a distinction which pervades our language is a reliable guide. We may not be sure of what our needs consist, but we can usually distinguish between action designed to satisfy what we believe is a need and action which we do not relate to a need. Even when we are very much aware of the many ways in which we can deceive ourselves we continue to make this distinction. If it is an invalid one it must be shown that in all cases of activities which we do not relate to any need we are either ignorant of, or deceived about, the nature of our actions.

The difficulties which need theory encounters both in defining the psychological needs and in accounting for behaviour not related to needs raises the question of possible alternate views. Can the insights of need theory be retained while
rejecting the absoluteness of categorical needs? One alternative would be to recognize, far more fully than need theory does, the significance of the human activity of endowing things and states of affairs with value. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of this activity and its relation to the concept of need.

We have seen how the correct use of the term 'need' always implies an end. What we need is that which, when satisfied, contributes to the attainment of an end. We may adopt many ends during a lifetime of goal-seeking behaviour but underlying them are the "demands of nature" - the biological needs whose satisfaction serves the end of physical well-being and survival (of the individual or the species), and the psychological needs whose satisfaction contributes to mental health. How these two goals are interrelated is an aspect of the 'mind-body' problem we need not go into here. The degree to which we are aware that we have these biological and social needs varies greatly. Some needs are 'felt' needs in the sense that deprivation results in an urge to satisfy them. Usually when we need food we feel hungry; when we are choking we gasp for air. A hunger for affection seems to have the same relation to psychological well-being as food-hunger has to physical health. The child sent to bed without supper may feel the former type of hunger more than the latter. Other needs, however, are only 'felt' in an indirect way. In the early stages of diabetes the need for insulin is felt as an increasing thirst. Satisfying that thirst does not satisfy the primary need. Similarly the failure to satisfy some social needs can lead to compensatory behaviour which we may recognize as such, or we may be unaware of the relation of our behaviour to frustrated needs. Finally, there are some biological needs of which we are made aware only by painstaking medical research. Similarly, there may be social needs which, when unsatisfied, produce very elusive indicators in behaviour and we have already noted how difficult the identification of such needs would be.
The degree of our awareness of what our needs are can thus vary from an intense urge to no awareness at all. This, in turn, is an important factor in accounting for the divergence between what we need for healthy survival and what we believe that we need.

The goals of physical and mental health and survival, however, are not the only factors that govern our actions, and even these goals are variously interpreted. How the concepts of physical and mental health vary from one culture to another will be considered later; here we need only mention that the concept of mental health especially varies from one sub-culture to another within the same society. Because we are beings that evaluate, we can and do choose many other goals as well and we decide that some goals are more worthwhile than others. Not only do these other goals sometimes enter into conflict with the goal of survival, but they influence our concepts of physical and mental health. This greatly complicates the relation between needs and the goal of healthy survival. Obviously there is an immense amount of overlap between needs and values, but, since they do not coincide, it is important, in any study of needs, to take the influence of values upon behaviour into account. Unfortunately, the term 'value' is as vague and unhelpful as the term 'needs' and equally a candidate for analysis. Since that is beyond the scope of this essay, we must confine ourselves to a very brief and necessarily inadequate look at how the term functions in ordinary discourse.

At the widest level of generality, when things or situations evoke a favourable response from us, we describe them as valuable. On a longer range view that which we hope and plan and strive for is what we value and we have fears and anxieties when we believe those values to be threatened. We may consider mental and emotional health to be the goal achieved by pursuing these values but we do not normally put it that way. In times of crisis we may fear for our, or someone else's, sanity but in less critical times this is not the object of our concern.
Neither do we usually concern ourselves a great deal with physical health while we satisfy biological needs. What people usually refer to as valuable are the things, situations and experiences which are valued, sometimes for themselves, sometimes as means to something else. There is a bewildering variety of what is valued and people have various reasons for valuing them. Because what is valued tends to exceed what can be had, people, in so far as they are prepared to consider the long-term effects of their actions, sacrifice what they value less for the sake of what they value more.

But no reference to values, however brief, can ignore the complex question of morality. However confused people may be over this question, they accept some moral principles which, when applied, impose prohibitions upon their behaviour. That is, people value various things for various reasons, but because they have moral principles they impose rules on themselves which affect their behaviour. These moral principles prohibit us from pursuing some of the things we want and also exclude certain ways of pursuing them. At the same time, we value, and try to realize, certain states of affairs because of the moral convictions which we have.

When we try to assess what bearing our values have on defining human needs it is apparent, even without further elaboration, that what we call valuing is very similar to what we have called wanting. In general we want (to get) what we value and do not have, and we want (to keep) what we value and have. When we take moral principles into consideration, however, we find that valuing and wanting can diverge. We want some things but do not try to get them because of moral restraints, and because of our convictions we want certain things we value which we would not want if the convictions were absent. With this proviso in mind let us consider how what we have said about value can be related to the concept of need.

In the general expression, 'wanting x in order to y', it is evident that y, as well as x, stands for something that
is wanted, or valued. We want (value) x as a means to something else, y, that is wanted (valued). But some things are valued for themselves and not as a means to something else. This, we have seen, is one of the ways in which wants differ from needs.

In the case of needs we can also state generally that x is needed in order to y, but the relation of need x to our wanting varies. If certain foods are needed in order to keep healthy, we normally want x (certain foods) and y (health). But if we are told that we need an operation to stay alive we may not want x (the operation) even though we want y (survival). But there also seem to be cases where we want neither x nor y. A child may want to quit school, insisting that he wants neither the education nor the goal it is supposed to serve. The curing of addicts and the insane may also be cases of this type. In such cases the validity of the claim that x is what the person needs depends on a prior claim that y is a goal that human beings should have (or that it is a prerequisite to a more distant goal, z, for which the claim can be made). What this implies for need theory will be discussed in the next chapter; here we shall consider the usual case when y is wanted.

Although y may be needed 'in order to' something else, at the end of the series is always a goal which is attained when the needs in question are satisfied. If someone wants to know why we are doing what we are doing and our answer is in terms of something we need, the answer has explanatory force because it implies goals or values which, we assume, will be realized if we satisfy our need. If we are then asked, "But why do you want that goal?", the question indicates that our goal is not recognized by the questioner as one that he would try to attain. We may be able to show him that our goal leads to another one about which we can agree or we may not be able to agree upon which goals are worth pursuing. That is, our reference to needs usually prescribes those goals which we consider worth attaining. Thus there are several distinctions to
be made in the use of the term 'value' with reference to needs. In the broadest sense, 'value', 'need', and 'want' can all be used of some things desired. For example, "I value/need/want your friendship". Secondly, there are things wanted or valued for themselves alone in connection with some of which reference to need would be inappropriate. Where moral principles are involved, our values could also be in conflict with wants or needs or both. Finally, what is valued can be the goal which is attained when a need is satisfied.

Since our human propensity for evaluating so pervades our actions, it has been argued that values, not a series of categorical needs, provide the basis of human behaviour. This does not mean that there are no needs; rather that whatever needs we have are derivative, not basic. But when we consider biological needs we would have to say, on this view, that the goals of health and survival are 'natural values' built into the organism. This, in fact, is not so different from what need theory claims when it refers to needs as "demands of nature" that must be satisfied. In what sense are these needs 'demands' other than that the goals of biological health and survival make demands upon us and that failure to supply these demands results in failure to attain these goals? Furthermore, we frequently speak of values with reference to physical needs because our pursuit of values may clash with these "demands of nature". Thus we may be told that, "If you value your health you need to do the following ....". But a good many people do not value their health as much as they value other goals. However persistent the "demands of nature", it is our values that frequently determine how they will be satisfied and sometimes whether or not they will be satisfied at all.

When we turn to the psychological needs it is also arguable that acting to achieve goals which we value is as useful an account of our behaviour as one that puts it in terms of acting to satisfy a need. It is true that when there is no bread most people are preoccupied with bread and little else,
but with some assurance of survival, goals other than survival begin to emerge. These goals are then arranged into some sort of hierarchy in which the goals of health and survival are usually given priority. But there is no uniform hierarchy accepted by all, even in the same environment, and for many of us the maintenance of goals is a life-long selective process. If my values change, that which I approve and disapprove of, that which I hope for, that which I do and do not do, all can change without a change in my situation. Sometimes this change occurs slowly and we only notice that our values have changed, rather than deliberately revising them periodically. Sometimes it is a crisis which precipitates a change or reveals the hierarchy of values which a person possesses. A writer chooses prison and hard labour rather than remain silent about what he considers abuses of freedom. Out of patriotism a man will go to war. Because of religious convictions a Jew starves to death rather than eat the pork available. A lover is rejected so he commits suicide. Another man dies under torture rather than betray a friend. These are dramatic instances of a phenomenon we are all familiar with: the way in which value pervades our responses to our environment and enormously complicates the task of explaining human behaviour.

It appears that an account of human behaviour is inadequate if it leaves people's values out of the picture. On the other hand, a description in terms of values, without reference to needs (especially biological ones) is equally truncated. (How does one account for the sudden importance of the opposite sex for a teenager without reference to sexual changes of the organism?) Both value and need are terms required in describing human behaviour.

Let us consider the rare, happy individual in our society who claims that he has no need for security or esteem or creativity or affiliation or any other psychological need. Need theory accounts for this by saying that he does have these psychological needs but is not aware of them because they are
satisfied. But is he happy and well-adjusted because all of his needs are satisfied or because he has realized the goals which he values? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in another distinction which must be made between needs and values. We do not need food after we have eaten a proper meal and in general it could be said that a need which has been satisfied is not a need. But a value is valued whether realized or sought (with due allowance for the way in which values when realized do not always turn out to be the same as when sought after). The individual referred to, then, could be said to be pursuing and realizing those values which, in fact, are satisfying his needs. Now although some of the things we value and try to achieve (for example, patience) are goals we pursue for a long time, some of our values change and so, consequently, do the goals we pursue. If our individual gets restless and dissatisfied and embarks on a project which will make changes in his style of life - does this mean that a new need has emerged, or that the new goal which he has adopted is resulting in new behaviour? In such cases description in terms of values, rather than needs, may be more satisfactory. This is especially so when the new goals are adopted out of moral considerations. Strict need theory would have to assume that whenever new values are acquired, needs for the objects or courses of action involved are also acquired. This may sometimes be the case but if, as we have tried to show, in some instances of behaviour value is the primary factor then, in these instances, need-reduction, rather than being the most straightforward account, is a redescription of goal-seeking.

At the end of the last chapter we raised the question of whether 'need' is the normative concept within the wider concept of 'wanting'. Having found it necessary to relate the concept of need to value as well as to want, at this stage the question must be answered in the negative. Whether a normative concept is still possible will be considered in the next chapter, but it appears that the ability to sort out our needs and
wants depends on criteria for establishing which values human beings must or ought to have.
CHAPTER III

NEEDS AS NORMATIVE

The question which we must now consider is whether a normative definition of need is possible in view of the extent to which the concept of value enters into the accounts of human behaviour. Can a list of needs, as part of the "definition of man", be drawn up to serve as a standard of normality applicable to all men? We have seen how our concept of need can vary in relation to our values. Although those values are 'ours', they usually have significance only in the context of relations with other people and they are 'ours' in a community of other persons with whom we live. This has been acknowledged but the emphasis has been on the individual with his particular needs and values. It is now necessary to examine some of the ways in which our values, and consequently our concept of need, are socially determined. This will lead us into the question of differences between cultures and its bearing on a definition of need (taking 'society' as referring to "a group of people who interact more with each other than they do with other individuals" and 'culture' as referring to "the distinctive ways of life of such a group of people"15). Finally, some conclusions about the possibility of a normative concept will be drawn in the light of these social and cultural factors.

Whatever may be the extent to which constitutional factors determine what our needs are, the society in which we live also plays an important role in the formation of our concept of what we need. Whether we adopt the standards of our community, try to reject them, or take an eclectic attitude towards them, we cannot escape society's influence. Thus any attempt to go beyond what we believe to be our needs to generalize about what human beings need must take this influence into account. In order to assess it, it may be helpful to sort out some of the
senses in which needs can be said to be socially determined. These social influences are so various and extensive that any categorization of them would be somewhat arbitrary and must allow for the way in which they go beyond these boundaries and overlap, but the primary factors appear to be the following:

The modifications of our physical surroundings create a social environment which, by conflicting with biological needs, results in numerous needs for remedies. Our society, for example, presently produces so much noise in some situations that noise control becomes an urgent need and individuals frequently feel 'the need to get away from it' into a more tranquil environment. Water, air and soil pollution also result in a need for counter-measures. But changes that are considered to be improvements also affect our concept of need. Every major advance in our understanding of health and illness tends to reveal new needs. Whereas in the past resignation was the attitude to scourges that have afflicted mankind, new knowledge of their causes leads to a demand to be protected from them because protection is now possible. At the same time other needs may be eliminated by such advances. If the worldwide campaign to eradicate malaria is successful, anti-malaria precautions will cease to be needed.

Social conditions also create another sort of need. To be an accepted member of our society requires that we fulfill a host of what, for want of a better name, we can call secondary needs. This includes such things as a certain degree of literacy and a basic wardrobe. In some situations it could even be argued that having a white skin is one of the secondary needs. If we cannot satisfy these needs it may be very difficult for us to satisfy the needs which we consider to be more basic.

We call some things needs which have come to be regarded as rights in our society. For example, we talk of a 'need for privacy' which would not be considered to be a need by an Andean Indian. A certain freedom of choice in whom we date, where we live and what we work at is also thought of as
a need and a right. Of course, this type of need overlaps a great deal with others: we claim to have a need for, and a right to, an education, 'decent' housing, public assistance when destitute, and so on.

Probably the most important factor in society's shaping of our concept of need is the conventions which we are expected to adopt. Certain things are regarded as needs because their satisfaction has social approval or recognition. We need to dress in certain ways for certain occasions. We need to adopt an elaborate system of social rituals in order to live within the social framework with a minimum of friction. In innumerable ways our behaviour is governed by social rules which need to be obeyed if we are to avoid disapproval or rejection. These rules may be of minor or major importance; they may, or may not, involve moral principles. Under certain conditions society approves if we kill and in other circumstances punishes us if we do. What is now acceptable as a 'need to express oneself' may, in another era, have been regarded as a sign of serious illness. It is society that determines to a large extent whether many of the desires, impulses and urges we have will be given a means of satisfaction because they are 'needs' or must be eliminated by treatment or threat of sanctions because they are dangerous. Even if we recognize that society is demanding of us that we play a role and we revolt against it, whatever liberation from social roles which we achieve takes place within limits which are themselves social. All rebellion is partially defined in terms of the structure being negated. At the same time it must be recognized that the comparative freedom of choice and movement in our society make possible the formation of groups and sub-cultures which adhere to conventions of their own which may differ markedly from others. As well as this more or less voluntary coalescence our society is also stratified due to other factors - especially economic ones - and these levels may vary greatly in the conventions which they embody.
Due to some of the social influences which we have outlined we can expect a tendency toward conformity in regard to what the members of our society consider to be their needs. But the presence of sub-cultures with distinct standards of their own raises a crucial question. In defining needs, how big a group is to be taken as a reference? If we take a small sub-culture the results will be different from findings based on the large and conservative middle-class group. And if some sort of consensus can be achieved for our culture as a whole, we must recognize that this is still too small a group on which to base a "definition of man" and his needs. A normative definition of need must take into account the different concepts of need that are found in different cultures.

Whatever variations there are among cultures, it may nevertheless be possible to find some common denominator of behaviour upon which to base a universal definition of need. This, in fact, is what some social scientists claim to have found.

With infinite diversity of variation of emphasis men everywhere nevertheless express the same fundamental needs and capacities in mental life and social interaction . . . It is because we find what we are confident are common impulses, creative capacities, or basic needs expressed in diverse forms in man's many cultures that we judge some things to be fundamental traits of the human being.16

Although an emphasis on the trivia of mores and customs may create the impression of complete relativity, it is believed that at the more fundamental levels of human life one finds that "basically, human beings within communities, countries, and continents all over the world obey the same law of life".17 There does not seem to be any basic difference in the biological equipment of people in different cultural, geographic and racial groups18 and, as far as can be ascertained, the intellectual processes themselves are the same for all normal human beings in all times and places. At least individuals who begin with the same premises always seem to arrive at the same conclusions.19
This, of course, raises the question of why, when the equipment is similar, the premises should be so wildly diverse and beyond it looms the problem of how to determine what a 'normal' human being is. Still, there is some optimism that the answers are beginning to come in.

Some values appear to be as much "given" by nature as the fact that bodies heavier than air fall. No society has ever approved suffering as a good thing in itself — as a means to an end, yes; as punishment, as the means to the ends of society, yes. We don't have to rely on supernatural revelation to discover that sexual access achieved through violence is bad . . . Norms . . . are to be discovered from the ascertainable knowledge of man's nature, just as the norms for building a bridge are to be derived from physics.  

Cross-cultural value statements such as these, if validated, could provide the basis of an 'all-human' ethic and a yardstick of normality for individuals in any society. Even whole societies could be measured against these standards. It could then be shown that social codes "which violate them, such as for instance those which permit deceit and aggression to undermine essential security in personal relations, are plainly injurious".

What are the prospects for establishing a firm base for cross-cultural norms? If a 'normal' human being can be defined it should be possible to define man's needs in such a way that satisfaction of his needs will enable him to be a normal human being (providing, of course, that other factors which lead to abnormality, besides frustration of needs, are not present). But when we observe how man behaves, any optimism is likely to be severely tempered by what we find. The concept of normality is notoriously susceptible to variation from one culture to another. The assumption that one's own culture can supply the norms, though frequently made, is hardly tenable. "There is no reason to suppose that any one culture has seized upon an eternal sanity and will stand in history as a solitary solution of the human problem."

When we go beyond our own culture the common biological
and mental endowment referred to earlier is the starting point in the search for norms. Man has a body which needs to be fed and he uses his wits in his attempts to satisfy that need. But even here the "boundless plasticity" of our human stuff allows a tremendous variety of expression. However, with reference to biological needs, can we not decide the issue of normality on the basis of the requirements for health? It can be observed, for example, that the low-protein, low-calory diet of the orient increases the spread of tuberculosis and reduces man's resistance to communicable diseases. But our typical western diet leads to serious diabetes, gall and renal stones, sclerosis and decayed teeth. To claim superiority of one diet over another, one would have to make a value judgment as to the seriousness of the illnesses associated with each diet. To some extent the inability to define health apart from such value judgments results in an inability to define need. And, of course, physical standards are dictated by considerations other than biological ones. What is regarded as a 'good figure' in one culture is abhorred in another and taken to be an indication of starvation. Standards of beauty (and affluence) to some extent determine standards of health. Insofar as a diet can be found which will not lead to ailments it could be considered to be the 'normal' requirement for physical health. This is still an ideal, both because there is not entire agreement as to the meaning of 'health' and because the causes of health and sickness are not fully known.

When we turn our attention to the psychological needs the variations in behaviour from one culture to another are much greater. Man can live in a wide range of physical conditions and satisfy his physical needs in a variety of ways but he can live in a much wider range of social environments. It seems that any one culture develops only a small segment of potential human behaviour. From "the great arc" of all possible human behaviour, one culture utilizes a portion and the next culture another. "Every culture, every era, exploits some few
out of a great number of possibilities."23 Men everywhere grapple with basically similar social problems but produce a variety of solutions which emphasize certain possibilities of human life and ignore or repress others. While situation and biology severely limit the range of action, they do not exhaust the possibilities since there are usually many ways to solve the problems of an individual or of a society. The outcome of this process of selection is a structure, a pattern of belief and action, a culture. "But the great lesson of culture is that the goals toward which men strive and fight and grope are not 'given' in final form by biology nor yet entirely by the situation."24

To arrive at a definition of man's psychological needs we must be able to find some common standard of mental health among cultures, if by 'psychological need' we mean a need that must be satisfied in order to maintain or regain mental health. But when we look for this element of inter-cultural normality we find that the range of normality may differ so much from one culture to the next that there may be only a slight overlap between the two. And if two cultures are chosen which are located near the opposite ends of "the great arc", abnormal behaviour "in either culture could never be determined in relation to any least common denominator of behaviour".25 The individual whose behaviour we would consider abnormal in our culture may represent the extreme development of traits encouraged in another. Miss Benedict has graphically illustrated this possibility in her comparison of the Zuñi of New Mexico, uninterested in domineering and humiliating others, with the Kwakiutl of our west coast whose primary aim in life is to shame their rivals and show themselves superior to them.

Since 'normal behaviour' has such a latitude of interpretations, it is difficult to see how a common measure of normality could be derived from analyses of cultures. Is it possible that a solution could be found by sorting out cultures
into healthy and sick categories, as is done with individuals within a culture? Presumably cultures, like individuals, could develop behaviour patterns that are injurious to physical and mental health. This, for example, seems to be the case with the population of Dobu Island in eastern New Guinea where "every man's hand is against every other man". Suspicious of every neighbour, the Dobuan expects treachery of everyone and practises it whenever possible. Suicide is usually attempted in marital quarrels or in the extremity of humiliations when he projects upon himself the maliciousness endemic in his society.

Granted that whole cultures could be 'mentally ill', the standard of health by which this illness is diagnosed will have to come from outside the culture. But standards are to be found only in cultures (or sub-cultures), hence any standard chosen would be relative to some culture. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that standards independent of a particular culture may eventually be established, those that are available are considerably culture-bound. This imposes a serious handicap upon the search for a definition of human needs. If we knew what 'human nature' is we could describe what man needs in order to fulfil his nature. But we find that it is 'human nature' to give one's life for another human being, or to eat him. We are in the awkward position of trying to derive a concept of normality from an observation of human behaviour while needing the concept to determine which observed actions are relevant to a definition of normality and which must be excluded as abnormal. Any decision as to relevancy implies value judgments not derived from the observed behaviour. What we have concluded about individuals is applicable to cultures: in both cases the values pursued determine to a considerable extent what the needs will be. If in one culture privacy is highly prized and in another people do not care to be alone, then in one culture individuals have a need for privacy and in the other they do not. What seems to be an inescapable con-
elusion is that different cultures produce different needs and that a considerable amount of cultural relativism is inevitable. Any definition of normality which could be applied to all cultures is likely to be so abstract as to have little practical utility. The alternative is to give the definition more content but confine its application to one culture.

Even if we confine ourselves to one culture only, the difficulty of establishing a criterion of normality is not thereby eliminated. In ordinary usage, in our society, to judge a man normal is to place him in a particular relation to a social group. The group from which the standard is derived is usually our own, but if the man judged belongs to another group in our society, that group may consider his behaviour abnormal by its standards. Judgments of normality vary in our society and, like the rules and conventions previously referred to, depend upon the segment of society from which they are made.

It is to be expected that in any social group there would be a correspondence between its concepts of normality and a biologist's view of what is normal for the human body. In our society it is generally assumed, for example, that sexual roles are given by nature and that therefore one set of sexual patterns is normal and healthy while others are abnormal. Cross-cultural comparisons, of course, show how very flexible human beings are in organizing their lives in this area. But even closer to home the variations tend to polarize into sub-cultural patterns. While monogamy is approved and polygamy outlawed, the relative ease of divorce enables a segment of society to practise what amounts to 'serial polygamy'. In a predominantly Roman Catholic society celibacy is not only regarded as an acceptable alternative to marriage but admired as a superior mode of living. Yet another group would consider any disinclination to prove one's sexual virility as a serious abnormality. It could be argued that celibacy would not be favourably regarded - and considered abnormal - by any society if it became so widespread as to threaten group survival. But
whole communities, such as the Shakers, have actually tried to adopt celibacy as the group's norm. (While the Shakers can be designated as a sub-culture, a Catholic convent would not be because its celibates consider themselves as part of a larger community that includes married people.) For most people in our culture one of the clearest examples of normality and abnormality is the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality. One is 'natural', or normal, and the other is 'unnatural', or abnormal. But the persecution to which homosexuals are subjected can hardly be accounted for by the fear, based on biological considerations, that it constitutes a threat to human survival. Whatever the reasons, the result is that homosexuals tend to form their own sub-culture with their own views of normality. And even though it may be shown that hormone imbalance plays some part in the formation of homosexual tendencies, factors other than biological ones enter into the description of the homosexual sub-culture and its norms. When we consider the variety of sub-cultures and their conflicting norms, it is evident that biological needs (assuming that these can be specified without reference to social and psychological factors) will not give us many clues as to what will come to be regarded as normal by a group. Nor will they suggest why certain human potentialities are developed further in one group than in another and why the particular degree of development in each case is considered normal.

Although we encounter serious difficulties in attempting to find a definition of biological normality, trying to define psychological normality is even more difficult. We have noted the problem in defining the 'sane' society on behavioural grounds. If we confine ourselves to our own society the psychological normality or abnormality of an individual can presumably be determined on the basis of how his behaviour relates to the behaviour accepted as normal by the group. This again involves the question of variation from one sub-culture to another because there is by no means a definition of mental
health that would be acceptable to all the subcultures involved unless it were defined so abstractly as to have little practical use. This aspect aside, the normality of the individual is usually described in terms of 'adjustment' to the group. But which group should he adjust to? In our mobile and 'layered' society people are not necessarily confined to permanent membership in one group. Assuming that there is some extra-behavioural criterion for deciding which group he should adjust to, how shall we define a 'good' adjustment? The normal, or well-adjusted, person is presumably one who accepts the view of normality which happens to be current in his particular social group and lives by its standards without undue psychological disturbance. But there have always been people who differed widely from their social group. Their deviant standards have been condemned in their time as abnormal and frequently lauded by a later age as the exemplars of a new 'normality'. Other advocates of deviant standards have been judged by their contemporaries and by history as exemplifying delinquency, iconoclasm or the slackening of all standards. The fact remains that within a society time and again what was once regarded as abnormal was later judged to be better than the normal from which it deviated, and vice versa. Excellence, as well as dangerous deviation, is often abnormal, while the normal may be the mediocre.

At present in our society if a clinical psychologist treats a 'maladjusted' patient, he does not just investigate behaviour but has to judge and try to modify it. In other words, he has to work with some sort of norm of mental health in view. If the patient is seriously out of adjustment with his society he may have to be shown how to accept society's standards. However, it may be that society needs adjusting on the basis of this individual's standards. Deciding which is the correct view will depend upon value judgments concerning the goals of individuals and societies. The therapist must decide: shall he help the patient to resolve the conflict by
strengthening his will to resist the demands of society upon him, or by strengthening his powers of submission? In need-theory parlance, shall he help him to satisfy his 'need autonomy' or his 'need abasement'? In Fromm's terms, shall he foster a 'genuine sense of identity' or a 'spurious' one? Shall the norm be derived from majority behaviour or from the aspirations of a few individuals? And how shall it be decided whether aspirations that are at variance with accepted norms should be encouraged or eliminated?

It seems clear from the foregoing considerations that the problem of defining human normality is still unsolved. As indicated in the early part of this chapter, some criteria of normality appear to be applicable to all cultures but, so far, this is confined to the establishing of a few actions that could be considered universally abnormal. But has our understanding of human behaviour grown to the point where it is possible to have some assurance that what is considered abnormal behaviour today will continue to be so regarded in the future? This is a difficult question to answer. What does appear to be happening in our pluralistic society is that the range of what is considered normal behaviour is widening. And with increasing communication in our "global village" interaction between cultures may have the same effect. But 'normality' as a cross-cultural measure of man is far from being definable at present.

The conclusion that seems inescapable is that the hoped-for 'definition of man' is still very provisional and culture-bound. Whereas a definition of human needs would contribute greatly to the definition of man, the former eludes us because it depends to a considerable extent upon the latter. Because 'normal human behaviour' is a description determined by culture or sub-culture and restricted to a particular time, a description of human needs is subject to the same limitations. Although a beginning has been made in the search for cross-cultural norms, what this search has primarily disclosed is the extent to which values vary from one culture to the next and
change from one period to another.

This suggests that in the formulation of a definition of human need much more attention must be given to the way in which our concept of need is determined by the values we hold. From this point of view it is understandable why there is such a variety of behaviour in different cultures when presumably, if human beings everywhere have the same human needs, they would behave in similar ways to satisfy them. When we consider the enormous variety of values which human beings pursue and the conflict of values among cultures, among individuals, and even among those that one person may have, it is also understandable why explanations of human behaviour in terms of lists of needs have so far yielded such disappointing results.

If a culture were only a group of patterned means of satisfying a certain number of human needs, then need-theory should be the most useful approach to the explanation of human behaviour. But if the patterns of behaviour of a society are expressions of the values which are held by the members of that society as well as of their needs, then behaviour in that society cannot be described in terms of needs alone. Moreover, because the values sought will determine what is needed to achieve these values, when values change from one society to another, or from one time to another, needs will also change. Although cross-cultural studies have produced little in the way of universal norms, more could be done to determine the relation between a culture's values and its needs. As long as different cultures produce different needs cultural relativism is unavoidable. But it could be shown that if certain values are regarded as basic by a society, then the members of that society will have certain needs. This would produce a definition of the needs of man-in-society based on the values which are given priority in that society. For a definition of human need to have cross-cultural validity, however, it would have to be based on judgments as to which values all cultures ought to have.

The general expression of individual needs, needing x
in order to $y$, can be applied, by analogy, to a society. When the goal, $y$, is physical health, then its needs are those considered to be basic to physical health. Here there is substantial agreement on what these needs are, although we have noted variations. If the goal in question is mental health, then the values given prominence in a society have a great deal to do with how this goal is interpreted, with the result that psychological needs vary greatly from one society to another. If the result is that a member of one society needs much more affection than those of another, on the basis of present knowledge it is difficult to see how one could judge which, in this respect, was the better society and a model to be adopted. A similar difficulty is met with when an individual's hierarchy of values is measured against those of his society. If society's values are accepted as norms, then those values will partly determine what the individual needs. But if a Socrates or a Thoreau refuses to accept those values, then at least some of his needs will not be the same. Not only does society find it hard to control individual spontaneity, but an individual may refuse to accept conventional values because of a sense of moral obligation. In such cases the individual may speak of a 'need to reject false values' as being more important than any other need he may have. The fact that much social eccentricity is worthless does not solve the problem of which values the individual must choose and, hence, which are his 'human' needs. Until more agreement is reached concerning values which man ought to pursue, any definition of human need is provisional.
FOOTNOTES


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p. 7.


10. Ibid., p. 61.

11. Ibid., p. 63.


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