

of the salute. By often almost imperceptible variations in the performance of the act, he could comment upon the bravery or cowardice of his enemy or ally, could signal his attitude toward army life or give a brief history of the virtuosity of a lady from whom he had recently arisen. I once watched a sergeant give a 3-second, brilliant criticism of English cooking in an elaborate inverted salute to a beef-and-kidney pie. It was this order of *variability on a central theme* which stimulated one of the primary "breakthroughs" in the development of kinesics.

My own research has led me to examine extensively American gestural behavior and I have done preliminary work with German, French, Italian, and Spanish gesture behavior. From this work I can say conclusively that in the American and English movement system, and it looks likely to be the same for these other less well-studied cultures, "gestures" not only do not stand alone as behavioral isolates but they also do not have explicit and invariable meanings. Under analysis, those aspects of body motion which are commonly called gestures turn out to be like stem forms in language. That is, these are bound forms which require suffixual, prefixual, infixual, or transfixual behavior to be attached to them to determine their function in the interactive process. Like /couth/ they cannot stand alone.

The isolation of gestures and the attempt to understand them led to the most important findings of kinesic research. This original study of gestures gave the first indication that kinesic structure is parallel to language structure. By the study of gestures in context, it became clear that the kinesic system has forms which are astonishingly like words in language. This discovery in turn led to the investigation of the components of these forms and to the discovery of the larger complexes of which they were components. At least as far as English, American, and German kinesic systems are concerned, it has become clear that there are body behaviors which function like significant sounds, that combine into simple or relatively complex units like words, which are combined into much longer stretches of structured behavior like sentences or even paragraphs.

This does not mean that even for American movers we have exhaustively studied communicative body behavior. We do know now that it can be studied.

The other direct result of the original survey of gestural behavior

was the fact that even this limited kind of survey dispelled another primary misconception about body motion material. This is the "more natural" conception of the body. We have, over the years, come to recognize that the "mind" and its products are subject to training. Only the most ethnocentric can believe that theirs is a natural language while other societies speak some distortion of it. However, there is a prevalent belief which maintains that, beyond certain motor skills which are specially developed in particular societies, there is a natural pattern of movement which other peoples have either learned badly, not evolved to, or lost. Or, alternately, it has been assumed that there are universal, core movement patterns characteristic of all men. It is, of course, self-evident that with a common somatic organization, men will stand with their legs, lift with their hands and arms, manipulate with their fingers, turn, lift, and lower their heads, and so on. However, although we have been searching for 15 years, we have found no gesture or body motion which has the same social meaning in all societies. The immediate implications of this are clear. Insofar as we know, there is no body motion or gesture that can be regarded as a universal symbol. That is, we have been unable to discover any single facial expression, stance, or body position which conveys an identical meaning in all societies. I am unprepared, as yet, to conclude from this that the relationship between various body motion systems is parallel to (or different from) the traceable relationship between language families. However, I think that not only can we dispense with so-called "natural" gestures as being single-culture bound, but we can be prepared to discover that the methods of organizing body motion into communicative behavior by various societies may be as variable as the structures of the languages of these societies.

There is one last item which we must deal with at this time. This has to do with "expressive" behavior. Almost as soon as the linguist or the kinesicist meets someone he is asked, "What can you tell about me from my speech or my body motion?" More fearful or more coquettish respondents manifest considerable anxiety that their behavior is going to reveal their deepest secrets to the expert. Unless the specialist is in a particularly playful or vindictive mood, he has a proper answer to these queries. It is quite true that the individual member of the society has had special experiences which make his performance differ from that of his fellows. To use Ted Schwartz's useful distinction, the special idiolect or the idiomovement system of any individual is a product of the special experiences of his