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But such a concept of custom makes the pattern as a whole unobservable, except as exemplified in the stereotyped aspects of each individual case—the aggregate pattern can never be observed by measurement. A custom is revealed only in a series of more or less representative exemplifications. And change in a pattern, or change from one pattern to another, is even less observable: there is no way to observe and describe an event of change, except perhaps in the field of legislation.

A statistical view of the practice of customs does not provide a way out. We may observe breaches of custom—but is a breach of custom an event of change? We may even summarize a frequency, a rate of breaches of a custom; we will still know nothing about the probability or imminence of a change in the custom, or about the direction of change that frequent breaches signal.

I feel that we need rather to use concepts that enable us to depict the pattern itself as a statistical thing, as a set of frequencies of alternatives. If we, for example, look at social behavior as an allocation of time and resources, we can depict the pattern whereby people allocate their time and resources. Changes in the proportions of these allocations are observable, in the sense that they are measurable, New allocations are observable as concrete events that may have systematic effects and thus generate important change. And this view

does not entail that we limit ourselves to the description of an economic sector of activities only; it can be applied to the whole field of social organization, to describe how people in fact manage to arrange their lives.