1 The Diversity of Cultures

Ruth Benedict

A chief of the Digger Indians, as the Californians call them, talked to me a great deal about the ways of his people in the old days. He was a Christian and a leader among his people in the planting of peaches and apricots on irrigated land, but when he talked of the shamans who had transformed themselves into bears before his eyes in the bear dance, his hands trembled and his voice broke with excitement. It was an incomparable thing, the power his people had had in the old days. He liked best to talk of the desert foods they had eaten. He brought each uprooted plant lovingly and with an unfailing sense of its importance. In those days his people had eaten 'the health of the desert,' he said, and knew nothing of the insides of tin cans and the things for sale at butcher shops. It was such innovations that had degraded them in these latter days.

One day, without transition, Ramon broke in upon his descriptions of grinding mesquite and preparing acorn soup. 'In the beginning,' he said, 'God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life.' I do not know whether the figure occurred in some traditional ritual of his people that I never found, or whether it was his own imagery. It is hard to imagine that he had heard it from the whites he had known at Banning; they were not given to discussing the ethos of different peoples. At any rate, in the mind of this humble Indian the figure of speech was clear and full of meaning. 'They all dipped in the water,' he continued, 'but their cups were different. Our cup is broken now. It has passed away.'

Our cup is broken. Those things that had given significance to the life of his people, the domestic rituals of eating, the obligations of the economic system, the succession of ceremonials in the villages, possession in the bear dance, their standards of right and wrong – these were gone, and with them the shape and meaning of their life. The old man was still vigorous and a leader in relationships with the whites. He did not mean that there was any question of the extinction of his people. But he had in mind the loss of something that had value equal to that of life itself, the whole fabric of his people's standards and beliefs. There were other cups of living left, and they held perhaps the same water, but the loss was irreparable. It was no matter of tinkering with an addition here, lopping off something there. The modelling had been fundamental, it was somehow all of a piece. It had been their own.

Ramon had had personal experience of the matter of which he spoke. He straddled two cultures whose values and ways of thought were incommensurable. It is a hard fate. In Western civilization our experiences have been different. We are bred to one cosmopolitan culture, and our social sciences, our psychology, and our theology persistently ignore the truth expressed in Ramon's figure.

The course of life and the pressure of environment, not to speak of the fertility of human imagination, provide an incredible number of possible leads, all of which, it appears, may serve a society to live by. There are the schemes of ownership, with the social hierarchy that may be associated with possessions; there are material things and their elaborate technology; there are all the facets of sex life, parenthood and

post-parenthood; there are the guilds or cults which may give structure to the society; there is economic exchange; there are the gods and supernatural sanctions. Each one of these and many more may be followed out with a cultural and ceremonial elaboration which monopolizes the cultural energy and leaves small surplus for the building of other traits. Aspects of life that seem to us most important have been passed over with small regard by peoples whose culture, oriented in another direction, has been far from poor. Or the same trait may be so greatly elaborated that we reckon it as fantastic.

It is in cultural life as it is in speech; selection is the prime necessity. The numbers of sounds that can be produced by our vocal cords and our oral and nasal cavities are practically unlimited. The three or four dozen of the English language are a selection which coincides not even with those of such closely related dialects as German and French. The total that are used in different languages of the world no one has even dared to estimate. But each language must make its selection and abide by it on pain of not being intelligible at all. A language that used even a few hundreds of the possible – and actually recorded – phonetic elements could not be used for communication. On the other hand a great deal of our misunderstanding of languages unrelated to our own has arisen from our attempts to refer alien phonetic systems back to ours as a point of reference. We recognize only one *k*. If other people have five *k* sounds placed in different positions in the throat and mouth, distinctions of vocabulary and of syntax that depend on these differences are impossible to us until we master them. We have a *d* and an *n*. They may have an intermediate sound which, if we fail to identify it, we write now *d* and now *n*, introducing distinctions which do not exist. The elementary prerequisite of linguistic analysis is a consciousness of these incredibly numerous available sounds from which each language makes its own selections.

In culture too we must imagine a great arc on which are ranged the possible interests provided either by the human age-cycle or by the environment or by man's various activities. A culture that capitalized even a considerable proportion of these would be as unintelligible as a language that used all the clicks, all the glottal stops, all the labials, dentals, sibilants, and gutturals from voiceless to voiced and from oral to nasal. Its identity as a culture depends upon the selection of some segments of this arc. Every human society everywhere has made such selection in its cultural institutions. Each from the point of view of another ignores fundamentals and exploits irrelevancies. One culture hardly recognizes monetary values; another has made them fundamental in every field of behaviour. In one society technology is unbelievably slighted even in those aspects of life which seem necessary to ensure survival; in another, equally simple, technological achievements are complex and fitted with admirable nicety to the situation. One builds an enormous cultural superstructure upon adolescence, one upon death, one upon after-life.

The case of adolescence is particularly interesting, because it is in the limelight in our own civilization and because we have plentiful information from other cultures. In our own civilization a whole library of psychological studies has emphasized the inevitable unrest of the period of puberty. It is in our tradition a physiological state as definitely characterized by domestic explosions and rebellion as typhoid is marked by fever. There is no question of the facts. They are common in America. The question is rather of their inevitability.

The most casual survey of the ways in which different societies have handled adolescence makes one fact inescapable: even in those cultures which have made most of the trait, the age upon which they focus their attention varies over a great range of years. At the outset, therefore, it is clear that the so-called puberty institutions are a misnomer if we continue to think of biological puberty. The puberty they recognize is social, and the ceremonies are a recognition in some fashion or other of the child's new status of adulthood. This investiture with new occupations and obligations is in consequence as various and as culturally conditioned as the occupations and obligations themselves. If the sole honourable duty of manhood is conceived to be deeds of war, the investiture of the warrior is later and of a different sort from that in a society where adulthood gives chiefly the privilege of dancing in a representation of masked gods. In order to understand puberty institutions, we do not most need analyses of the necessary nature of *rites de passage*; we need rather to know what is identified in different cultures with the beginning of adulthood and their methods of admitting to the new status. Not biological puberty, but what adulthood means in that culture conditions the puberty ceremony.

Adulthood in central North America means warfare. Honour in it is the great goal of all men. The constantly recurring theme of the youth's coming-of-age, as also of preparation for the warpath at any age, is a magic ritual for success in war. They torture not one another, but themselves: they cut strips of skin from their arms and legs, they strike off their fingers, they drag heavy weights pinned to their chest or leg muscles. Their reward is enhanced prowess in deeds of warfare.

In Australia, on the other hand, adulthood means participation in an exclusively male cult whose fundamental trait is the exclusion of women. Any woman is put to death if she so much as hears the sound of the bull-roarer at the ceremonies, and she must never know of the rites. Puberty ceremonies are elaborate and symbolic repudiations of the bonds with the female sex; the men are symbolically made self-sufficient and the wholly responsible element of the community. To attain this end they use drastic sexual rites and bestow supernatural guaranties.

The clear physiological facts of adolescence, therefore, are first socially interpreted even where they are stressed. But a survey of puberty institutions makes clear a further fact: puberty is physiologically a different matter in the life-cycle of the male and the female. If cultural emphasis followed the physiological emphasis, girls' ceremonies would be more marked than boys'; but it is not so. The ceremonies emphasize a social fact: the adult prerogatives of men are more far-reaching in every culture than women's, and consequently, as in the above instances, it is more common for societies to take note of this period in boys than in girls.

Girls' and boys' puberty, however, may be socially celebrated in the same tribe in identical ways. Where, as in the interior of British Columbia, adolescent rites are a magical training for all occupations, girls are included on the same terms as boys. Boys roll stones down mountains and beat them to the bottom to be swift of foot, or throw gambling-sticks to be lucky in gambling; girls carry water from distant springs, or drop stones down inside their dresses that their children may be born as easily as the pebble drops to the ground.

In such a tribe as the Nandi of the lake region of East Africa, also, girls and boys share an even-handed puberty rite, though, because of the man's dominant role in the culture, his boyhood training period is more stressed than the woman's. Here

adolescent rites are an ordeal inflicted by those already admitted to adult status upon those they are now forced to admit. They require of them the most complete stoicism in the face of ingenious tortures associated with circumcision. The rites for the two sexes are separate, but they follow the same pattern. In both the novices wear for the ceremony the clothing of their sweethearts. During the operation their faces are watched for any twinge of pain, and the reward of bravery is given with great rejoicing by the lover, who runs forward to receive back some of his adornments. For both the girl and the boy the rites mark their *entrée* into a new sex status: the boy is now a warrior and may take a sweetheart, the girl is marriageable. The adolescent tests are for both a pre-marital ordeal in which the palm is awarded by their lovers.

Puberty rites may also be built upon the facts of girls' puberty and admit of no extension to boys. One of the most naïve of these is the institution of the fatting-house for girls in central Africa. In the region where feminine beauty is all but identified with obesity, the girl at puberty is segregated, sometimes for years, fed with sweet and fatty foods, allowed no activity, and her body rubbed assiduously with oils. She is taught during this time her future duties, and her seclusion ends with a parade of her corpulence that is followed by her marriage to her proud bride-groom. It is not regarded as necessary for the man to achieve pulchritude before marriage in a similar fashion.

The usual ideas around which girls' puberty institutions are centred, and which are not readily extended to boys', are those concerned with menstruation. The uncleanness of the menstruating woman is a very widespread idea, and in a few regions first menstruation has been made the focus of all the associated attitudes. Puberty rites in these cases are of a thoroughly different character from any of which we have spoken. Among the Carrier Indians of British Columbia, the fear and horror of a girl's puberty was at its height. Her three or four years of seclusion was called 'the burying alive,' and she lived for all that time alone in the wilderness, in a hut of branches far from all beaten trails. She was a threat to any person who might so much as catch a glimpse of her, and her mere footstep defiled a path or a river. She was covered with a great headdress of tanned skin that shrouded her face and breasts and fell to the ground behind. Her arms and legs were loaded with sinew bands to protect her from the evil spirit with which she was filled. She was herself in danger and she was a source of danger to everybody else.

Girls' puberty ceremonies built upon ideas associated with the menses are readily convertible into what is, from the point of view of the individual concerned, exactly opposite behaviour. There are always two possible aspects to the sacred: it may be a source of peril or it may be a source of blessing. In some tribes the first menses of girls are a potent supernatural blessing. Among the Apaches I have seen the priests themselves pass on their knees before the row of solemn little girls to receive from them the blessing of their touch. All the babies and the old people come also of necessity to have illness removed from them. The adolescent girls are not segregated as sources of danger, but court is paid to them as to direct sources of supernatural blessing. Since the ideas that underlie puberty rites for girls, both among the Carrier and among the Apache, are founded on beliefs concerning menstruation, they are not extended to boys, and boys' puberty is marked instead, and lightly, with simple tests and proofs of manhood.

The adolescent behaviour, therefore, even of girls was not dictated by some physiological characteristic of the period itself, but rather by marital or magic requirements socially connected with it. These beliefs made adolescence in one tribe serenely religious and beneficent, and in another so dangerously unclean that the child had to cry out in warning that others might avoid her in the woods. The adolescence of girls may equally, as we have seen, be a theme which a culture does not institutionalize. Even where, as in most of Australia, boys' adolescence is given elaborate treatment, it may be that the rites are an induction into the status of manhood and male participation in tribal matters, and female adolescence passes without any kind of formal recognition.

These facts, however, still leave the fundamental question unanswered. Do not all cultures have to cope with the natural turbulence of this period, even though it may not be given institutional expression? Dr. Mead has studied this question in Samoa. There the girl's life passes through well-marked periods. Her first years out of babyhood are passed in small neighbourhood gangs of age mates from which the little boys are strictly excluded. The corner of the village to which she belongs is all-important, and the little boys are traditional enemies. She has one duty, that of baby-tending, but she takes the baby with her rather than stays home to mind it, and her play is not seriously hampered. A couple of years before puberty, when she grows strong enough to have more difficult tasks required of her and old enough to learn more skilled techniques, the little girls' play group in which she grew up ceases to exist. She assumes woman's dress and must contribute to the work of the household. It is an uninteresting period of life to her and quite without turmoil. Puberty brings no change at all.

A few years after she has come of age, she will begin the pleasant years of casual and irresponsible love affairs that she will prolong as far as possible into the period when marriage is already considered fitting. Puberty itself is marked by no social recognition, no change of attitude or of expectancy. Her pre-adolescent shyness is supposed to remain unchanged for a couple of years. The girl's life in Samoa is blocked out by other considerations than those of physiological sex maturity, and puberty falls in a particularly unstressed and peaceful period during which no adolescent conflicts manifest themselves. Adolescence, therefore, may not only be culturally passed over without ceremonial; it may also be without importance in the emotional life of the child and in the attitude of the village toward her....

Such a bird's-eye survey of human cultural forms makes clear several common misconceptions. In the first place, the institutions that human cultures build up upon the hints presented by the environment or by man's physical necessities do not keep as close to the original impulse as we easily imagine. These hints are, in reality, mere rough sketches, a list of bare facts. They are pin-point potentialities, and the elaboration that takes place around them is dictated by many alien consider-ations....

Such a view of cultural processes calls for a recasting of many of our current arguments upholding our traditional institutions. These arguments are usually based on the impossibility of man's functioning without these particular traditional forms. Even very special traits come in for this kind of validation, such as the particular form of economic drive that arises under our particular system of property owner-ship. This is a remarkably special motivation and there are evidences that even in our

generation it is being strongly modified. At any rate, we do not have to confuse the issue by discussing it as if it were a matter of biological survival values. Self-support is a motive our civilization has capitalized. If our economic structure changes so that this motive is no longer so potent a drive as it was in the era of the great frontier and expanding industrialism, there are many other motives that would be appropriate to a changed economic organization. Every culture, every era, exploits some few out of a great number of possibilities. Changes may be very disquieting, and involve great losses, but this is due to the difficulty of change itself, not to the fact that our age and country has hit upon the one possible motivation under which human life can be conducted. Change, we must remember, with all its difficulties, is inescapable. Our fears over even very minor shifts in custom are usually quite beside the point. Civilizations might change far more radically than any human authority has ever had the will or the imagination to change them, and still be completely workable. The minor changes that occasion so much denunciation today, such as the increase of divorce, the growing secularization in our cities, the prevalence of the petting party, and many more, could be taken up quite readily into a slightly different pattern of culture. Becoming traditional, they would be given the same richness of content, the same importance and value, that the older patterns had in other generations.

The truth of the matter is rather that the possible human institutions and motives are legion, on every plane of cultural simplicity or complexity, and that wisdom consists in a greatly increased tolerance toward their divergencies. No man can thoroughly participate in any culture unless he has been brought up and has lived according to its forms, but he can grant to other cultures the same significance to their participants which he recognizes in his own.

The diversity of culture results not only from the ease with which societies elaborate or reject possible aspects of existence. It is due even more to a complex interweaving of cultural traits. The final form of any traditional institution, as we have just said, goes far beyond the original human impulse. In great measure this final form depends upon the way in which the trait has merged with other traits from different fields of experience.

A widespread trait may be saturated with religious beliefs among one people and function as an important aspect of their religion. In another area it may be wholly a matter of economic transfer and be therefore an aspect of their monetary arrangements. The possibilities are endless and the adjustments are often bizarre. The nature of the trait will be quite different in the different areas according to the elements with which it has combined.

It is important to make this process clear to ourselves because otherwise we fall easily into the temptation to generalize into a sociological law the results of a local merging of traits, or we assume their union to be a universal phenomenon. The great period of European plastic art was religiously motivated. Art pictured and made common property the religious scenes and dogmas which were fundamental in the outlook of that period. Modern European aesthetics would have been quite different if mediaeval art had been purely decorative and had not made common cause with religion.

As a matter of history great developments in art have often been remarkably separate from religious motivation and use. Art may be kept definitely apart from religion even where both are highly developed. In the pueblos of the Southwest of the United States, art-forms in pottery and textiles command the respect of the artist in any culture, but their sacred bowls carried by the priests or set out on the altars are shoddy and the decorations crude and unstylized. Museums have been known to throw out Southwest religious objects because they were so far below the traditional standard of workmanship. 'We have to put a frog there,' the Zuñi Indians say, meaning that the religious exigencies eliminate any need of artistry. This separation between art and religion is not a unique trait of the Pueblos. Tribes of South America and of Siberia make the same distinction, though they motivate it in various ways. They do not use their artistic skill in the service of religion. Instead, therefore, of finding the sources of art in a locally important subject matter, religion, as older critics of art have sometimes done, we need rather to explore the extent to which these two can mutually interpenetrate, and the consequences of such merging for both art and religion.

The interpenetration of different fields of experience, and the consequent modification of both of them, can be shown from all phases of existence: economics, sex relations, folklore, material culture, and religion....

We greatly need the ability to analyze traits of our own cultural heritage into their several parts. Our discussions of the social order would gain in clarity if we learned to understand in this way the complexity of even our simplest behaviour. Racial differences and prestige prerogatives have so merged among Anglo-Saxon peoples that we fail to separate biological racial matters from our most socially conditioned prejudices. Even among nations as nearly related to the Anglo-Saxons as the Latin peoples, such prejudices take different forms, so that, in Spanish-colonized countries and in British colonies racial differences have not the same social significance. Christianity and the position of women, similarly, are historically interrelated traits, and they have at different times interacted very differently. The present high position of women in Christian countries is no more a 'result' of Christianity than was Origen's coupling of woman with the deadly temptations. These interpenetrations of traits occur and disappear, and the history of culture is in considerable degree a history of their nature and fates and associations. But the genetic connection we so easily see in a complex trait and our horror at any disturbance of its interrelationships is largely illusory. The diversity of the possible combinations is endless, and adequate social orders can be built indiscriminately upon a great variety of these foundations.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Benedict on Culture as a Whole Way of Life

Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) presents here some widely shared and important ideas about culture: the ideas that human societies cannot be explained simply by nature, that cultural possibilities are innumerable, that cultures are diverse, that different elements within a culture are interconnected, and that elements of culture must be understood by placing them in their context. These and other themes which emerged in cultural anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century are synthesized in her *Patterns of Culture* (1934). Margaret Mead suggested in 1958 that "today the modern world is on such easy terms with the concept of

culture...due to this book." Although the extent to which cultures are as integrated and uncontested as Benedict implies has been vigorously challenged, and more specialized theories of culture have been developed since Benedict wrote, her work still captures what many people had come to take for granted about culture by the last third of the twentieth century.

For an analogous contemporary study of culture and adolescence, see Amy Schalet, "Raging Hormones, Regulated Love: Adolescent Sexuality and the Constitution of Modern Individuality in the United States and the Netherlands," *Body and Society* 6 (2000): 75–105.

Benedict received her Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University in 1923, and went on to teach there, working with Boas, Mead, Sapir and other influential anthropologists of the time. *Patterns of Culture* compares the cultures of Zuñi Indians of New Mexico, Dobu of New Guinea, and Kwakiutl of British Columbia. Benedict's other works include *Zuñi Mythology* (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1935]), *Race: Science and Politics* (New York: Viking Press, 1945 [1940]) and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946). For more on her life and work see Judith Modell, *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Margaret Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in this Land* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); Barbara Babcock, "'Not in the Absolute Singular': Rereading Ruth Benedict," pp. 104–30 in Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, eds., *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Judith Modell "'It is Besides a Pleasant English Word' – Ruth Benedict's Concept of Patterns" *Anthropological Quarterly* 62 (1989): 27–40.

For a long time, anthropologists discussed the idea of culture more explicitly than sociologists, because anthropology emerged in the western encounter with other societies, whereas sociology emerged to understand historic changes within western society itself: compare George Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1968), Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993 [1966]), and A. L. Kroeber and Talcott Parsons, "The Concepts of Culture and of Social System," *American Sociological Review* 23 (1958): 582–3. For a general history of the culture concept see Raymond Williams, "Culture," pp. 76–82 in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); for a historical overview and analysis of early anthropological ideas about culture see A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963 [1952]); and for more on culture in anthropology see, for instance, Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 26 (1984): 126–66; Talal Asad, "From the History of Colonial Anthropology to the Anthropology of Western Hegemony," pp. 314–24 in George W. Stocking, Jr., *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, History of Anthropology, Vol. 7 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); David Snow and Calvin Morrill, "Reflections on Anthropology's Ethnographic Crisis of Faith," (review article) *Contemporary Sociology* 22 (1993): 8–11; Richard Handler, "Raymond Williams, George Stocking, and Fin-de-Siècle U.S. Anthropology," *Cultural Anthropology* 13 (1998): 447–63; William Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," pp. 35–61 in Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Because anthropology and sociology have had different disciplinary histories, "culture" in the anthropological sense often referred to a "whole way of life" of a people, whereas in sociology the term was more often applied in a more specialized sense, referring to particular objects (like literature or art) or to symbols, meanings and values in particular social locations (e.g. popular culture, folk cultures, mass culture, high culture, or subcultures). Cultural sociology now draws on both senses of the term, examining both the meanings and values implicit in everyday social practice (see especially Parts II and V of this volume) and the organization and outcomes of particular specialized institutions and processes of cultural production (see especially Parts III and IV of this volume). Other anthropologists influential in sociology include Clifford Geertz (see excerpt this volume), Mary Douglas, and Victor Turner. See, for instance, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), and Robert Wuthnow et al., *Cultural Analysis* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), ch. 3; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), and Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

2 The Metropolis and Mental Life

Georg Simmel

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. This antagonism represents the most modern form of the conflict which primitive man must carry on with nature for his own bodily existence. The eighteenth century may have called for liberation from all the ties which grew up historically in politics, in religion, in morality and in economics in order to permit the original natural virtue of man, which is equal in everyone, to develop without inhibition; the nineteenth century may have sought to promote, in addition to man's freedom, his individuality (which is connected with the division of labor) and his achievements which make him unique and indispensable but which at the same time make him so much the more dependent on the complementary activity of others; Nietzsche may have seen the relentless struggle of the individual as the prerequisite for his full development, while Socialism found the same thing in the suppression of all competition – but in each of these the same fundamental motive was at work, namely the resistance of the individual to being levelled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism. When one inquires about the products of the specifically modern aspects of contemporary life with reference to their inner meaning – when, so to speak, one examines the body of culture with reference to the soul, as I am to do concerning the metropolis today – the answer will require the investigation of the relationship which such a social structure promotes between the individual aspects of life and those which transcend the existence of single individuals. It will require the investigation of the adaptations made by the personality in its adjustment to the forces that lie outside of it.

The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli. Man is a creature whose existence is dependent on differences, i.e., his mind is stimulated by the difference between present impressions and those which have preceded. Lasting impressions, the slightness in their differences, the habituated regularity of their course and contrasts between them, consume, so to speak, less mental energy than the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli. To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions – with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life – it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life, and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organization as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence. Thereby the essentially intellectualistic character of the

mental life of the metropolis becomes intelligible as over against that of the small town which rests more on feelings and emotional relationships. These latter are rooted in the unconscious levels of the mind and develop most readily in the steady equilibrium of unbroken customs. The locus of reason, on the other hand, is in the lucid, conscious upper strata of the mind and it is the most adaptable of our inner forces. In order to adjust itself to the shifts and contradictions in events, it does not require the disturbances and inner upheavals which are the only means whereby more conservative personalities are able to adapt themselves to the same rhythm of events. Thus the metropolitan type – which naturally takes on a thousand individual modifications – creates a protective organ for itself against the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten it. Instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner, thus creating a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness, which in turn is caused by it. Thus the reaction of the metropolitan person to those events is moved to a sphere of mental activity which is least sensitive and which is furthest removed from the depths of the personality.

This intellectualistic quality which is thus recognized as a protection of the inner life against the domination of the metropolis, becomes ramified into numerous specific phenomena. The metropolis has always been the seat of money economy because the many-sidedness and concentration of commercial activity have given the medium of exchange an importance which it could not have acquired in the commercial aspects of rural life. But money economy and the domination of the intellect stand in the closest relationship to one another. They have in common a purely matter-of-fact attitude in the treatment of persons and things in which a formal justice is often combined with an unrelenting hardness. The purely intellectualistic person is indifferent to all things personal because, out of them, relationships and reactions develop which are not to be completely understood by purely rational methods – just as the unique element in events never enters into the principle of money. Money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e., with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level. All emotional relationships between persons rest on their individuality, whereas intellectual relationships deal with persons as with numbers, that is, as with elements which, in themselves, are indifferent, but which are of interest only insofar as they offer something objectively perceivable. It is in this very manner that the inhabitant of the metropolis reckons with his merchant, his customer, and with his servant, and frequently with the persons with whom he is thrown into obligatory association. These relationships stand in distinct contrast with the nature of the smaller circle in which the inevitable knowledge of individual characteristics produces, with an equal inevitability, an emotional tone in conduct, a sphere which is beyond the mere objective weighting of tasks performed and payments made. What is essential here as regards the economic-psychological aspect of the problem is that in less advanced cultures production was for the customer who ordered the product so that the producer and the purchaser knew one another. The modern city, however, is supplied almost exclusively by production for the market, that is, for entirely unknown purchasers who never appear in the actual field of vision of the producers themselves. Thereby, the interests of each party acquire a relentness matter-of-factness, and its rationally calculated economic egoism need not fear any divergence from its

set path because of the imponderability of personal relationships. This is all the more the case in the money economy which dominates the metropolis in which the last remnants of domestic production and direct barter of goods have been eradicated and in which the amount of production on direct personal order is reduced daily. Furthermore, this psychological intellectualistic attitude and the money economy are in such close integration that no one is able to say whether it was the former that effected the latter or *vice versa*. What is certain is only that the form of life in the metropolis is the soil which nourishes this interaction most fruitfully, a point which I shall attempt to demonstrate only with the statement of the most outstanding English constitutional historian to the effect that through the entire course of English history London has never acted as the heart of England but often as its intellect and always as its money bag.

In certain apparently insignificant characters or traits of the most external aspects of life are to be found a number of characteristic mental tendencies. The modern mind has become more and more a calculating one. The calculating exactness of practical life which has resulted from a money economy corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula. It has been money economy which has thus filled the daily life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms. Because of the character of calculability which money has there has come into the relationships of the elements of life a precision and a degree of certainty in the definition of the equalities and inequalities and an unambiguousness in agreements and arrangements, just as externally this precision has been brought about through the general diffusion of pocket watches. It is, however, the conditions of the metropolis which are cause as well as effect for this essential characteristic. The relationships and concerns of the typical metropolitan resident are so manifold and complex that, especially as a result of the agglomeration of so many persons with such differentiated interests, their relationships and activities intertwine with one another into a many-membered organism. In view of this fact, the lack of the most exact punctuality in promises and performances would cause the whole to break down into an inextricable chaos. If all the watches in Berlin suddenly went wrong in different ways even only as much as an hour, its entire economic and commercial life would be derailed for some time. Even though this may seem more superficial in its significance, it transpires that the magnitude of distances results in making all waiting and the breaking of appointments an ill-afforded waste of time. For this reason the technique of metropolitan life in general is not conceivable without all of its activities and reciprocal relationships being organized and coordinated in the most punctual way into a firmly fixed framework of time which transcends all subjective elements. But here too there emerge those conclusions which are in general the whole task of this discussion, namely, that every event, however restricted to this superficial level it may appear, comes immediately into contact with the depths of the soul, and that the most banal externalities are, in the last analysis, bound up with the final decisions concerning the meaning and the style of life. Punctuality, calculability, and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life are not only most intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic character but also color the content of life

and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form. Even though those lives which are autonomous and characterised by these vital impulses are not entirely impossible in the city, they are, none the less, opposed to it *in abstracto*. It is in the light of this that we can explain the passionate hatred of personalities like Ruskin and Nietzsche for the metropolis – personalities who found the value of life only in unschematized individual expressions which cannot be reduced to exact equivalents and in whom, on that account, there flowed from the same source as did that hatred, the hatred of the money economy and of the intellectualism of existence.

The same factors which, in the exactness and the minute precision of the form of life, have coalesced into a structure of the highest impersonality, have, on the other hand, an influence in a highly personal direction. There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook. It is at first the consequence of those rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves which are thrown together in all their contrasts and from which it seems to us the intensification of metropolitan intellectuality seems to be derived. On that account it is not likely that stupid persons who have been hitherto intellectually dead will be blasé. Just as an immoderately sensuous life makes one blasé because it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all, so, less harmful stimuli, through the rapidity and the contradictoriness of their shifts, force the nerves to make such violent responses, tear them about so brutally that they exhaust their last reserves of strength and, remaining in the same milieu, do not have time for new reserves to form. This incapacity to react to new stimulations with the required amount of energy constitutes in fact that blasé attitude which every child of a large city evinces when compared with the products of the more peaceful and more stable milieu.

Combined with this physiological source of the blasé metropolitan attitude there is another which derives from a money economy. The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things. Not in the sense that they are not perceived, as is the case of mental dullness, but rather that the meaning and the value of the distinctions between things, and therewith of the things themselves are experienced as meaningless. They appear to the blasé person in a homogeneous, flat and gray color with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another. This psychic mood is the correct subjective reflection of a complete money economy to the extent that money takes the place of all the manifoldness of things and expresses all qualitative distinctions between them in the distinction of "how much." To the extent that money, with its colorlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values it becomes the frightful leveler – it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair. They all float with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money. They all rest on the same level and are distinguished only by their amounts. In individual cases this coloring, or rather this de-coloring of things, through their equation with money, may be imperceptibly small. In the relationship, however, which the wealthy person has to objects which can be bought for money, perhaps indeed in the total character

which, for this reason, public opinion now recognizes in these objects, it takes on very considerable proportions. This is why the metropolis is the seat of commerce and it is in it that the purchasability of things appears in quite a different aspect than in simpler economies. It is also the peculiar seat of the blasé attitude. In it is brought to a peak, in a certain way, that achievement in the concentration of purchasable things which stimulates the individual to the highest degree of nervous energy. Through the mere quantitative intensification of the same conditions this achievement is transformed into its opposite, into this peculiar adaptive phenomenon – the blasé attitude – in which the nerves reveal their final possibility of adjusting themselves to the content and the form of metropolitan life by renouncing the response to them. We see that the self-preservation of certain types of personalities is obtained at the cost of devaluing the entire objective world, ending inevitably in dragging the personality downward into a feeling of its own valuelessness.

Whereas the subject of this form of existence must come to terms with it for himself, his self-preservation in the face of the great city requires of him a no less negative type of social conduct. The mental attitude of the people of the metropolis to one another may be designated formally as one of reserve. If the unceasing external contact of numbers of persons in the city should be met by the same number of inner reactions as in the small town, in which one knows almost every person he meets and to each of whom he has a positive relationship, one would be completely atomized internally and would fall into an unthinkable mental condition. Partly this psychological circumstance and partly the privilege of suspicion which we have in the face of the elements of metropolitan life (which are constantly touching one another in fleeting contact) necessitates in us that reserve, in consequence of which we do not know by sight neighbors of years standing and which permits us to appear to small-town folk so often as cold and uncongenial. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, the inner side of this external reserve is not only indifference but more frequently than we believe, it is a slight aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion which, in a close contact which has arisen any way whatever, can break out into hatred and conflict. The entire inner organization of such a type of extended commercial life rests on an extremely varied structure of sympathies, indifferences and aversions of the briefest as well as of the most enduring sort. This sphere of indifference is, for this reason, not as great as it seems superficially. Our minds respond, with some definite feeling, to almost every impression emanating from another person. The unconsciousness, the transitoriness and the shift of these feelings seem to raise them only into indifference. Actually this latter would be as unnatural to us as immersion into a chaos of unwished-for suggestions would be unbearable. From these two typical dangers of metropolitan life we are saved by antipathy which is the latent adumbration of actual antagonism since it brings about the sort of distanciation and deflection without which this type of life could not be carried on at all. Its extent and its mixture, the rhythm of its emergence and disappearance, the forms in which it is adequate – these constitute, with the simplified motives (in the narrower sense) an inseparable totality of the form of metropolitan life. What appears here directly as dissociation is in reality only one of the elementary forms of socialization.

This reserve with its overtone of concealed aversion appears once more, however, as the form or the wrappings of a much more general psychic trait of the metropolis.

It assures the individual of a type and degree of personal freedom to which there is no analogy in other circumstances. It has its roots in one of the great developmental tendencies of social life as a whole; in one of the few for which an approximately exhaustive formula can be discovered. The most elementary stage of social organization which is to be found historically, as well as in the present, is this: a relatively small circle almost entirely closed against neighboring foreign or otherwise antagonistic groups but which has however within itself such a narrow cohesion that the individual member has only a very slight area for the development of his own qualities and for free activity for which he himself is responsible. Political and familial groups began in this way as do political and religious communities; the self-preservation of very young associations requires a rigorous setting of boundaries and a centripetal unity and for that reason it cannot give room to freedom and the peculiarities of inner and external development of the individual. From this stage social evolution proceeds simultaneously in two divergent but none the less corresponding directions. In the measure that the group grows numerically, spatially, and in the meaningful content of life, its immediate inner unity and the definiteness of its original demarcation against others are weakened and rendered mild by reciprocal interactions and interconnections. And at the same time the individual gains a freedom of movement far beyond the first jealous delimitation, and gains also a peculiarity and individuality to which the division of labor in groups, which have become larger, gives both occasion and necessity. However much the particular conditions and forces of the individual situation might modify the general scheme, the state and Christianity, guilds and political parties and innumerable other groups have developed in accord with this formula. This tendency seems, to me, however to be quite clearly recognizable also in the development of individuality within the framework of city life. Small town life in antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages imposed such limits upon the movements of the individual in his relationships with the outside world and on his inner independence and differentiation that the modern person could not even breathe under such conditions. Even today the city dweller who is placed in a small town feels a type of narrowness which is very similar. The smaller the circle which forms our environment and the more limited the relationships which have the possibility of transcending the boundaries, the more anxiously the narrow community watches over the deeds, the conduct of life and the attitudes of the individual and the more will a quantitative and qualitative individuality tend to pass beyond the boundaries of such a community.

The ancient *polis* seems in this regard to have had a character of a small town. The incessant threat against its existence by enemies from near and far brought about that stern cohesion in political and military matters, that supervision of the citizen by other citizens, and that jealousy of the whole toward the individual whose own private life was repressed to such an extent that he could compensate himself only by acting as a despot in his own household. The tremendous agitation and excitement, and the unique colorfulness of Athenian life is perhaps explained by the fact that a people of incomparably individualized personalities were in constant struggle against the incessant inner and external oppression of a de-individualizing small town. This created an atmosphere of tension in which the weaker were held down and the stronger were impelled to the most passionate type of self-protection. And with this there blossomed in Athens, what, without being able to define it exactly,

must be designated as "the general human character" in the intellectual development of our species. For the correlation, the factual as well as the historical validity of which we are here maintaining, is that the broadest and the most general contents and forms of life are intimately bound up with the most individual ones. Both have a common prehistory and also common enemies in the narrow formations and groupings, whose striving for self-preservation set them in conflict with the broad and general on the outside, as well as the freely mobile and individual on the inside. Just as in feudal times the "free" man was he who stood under the law of the land, that is, under the law of the largest social unit, but he was unfree who derived his legal rights only from the narrow circle of a feudal community – so today in an intellectualized and refined sense the citizen of the metropolis is "free" in contrast with the trivialities and prejudices which bind the small town person. The mutual reserve and indifference, and the intellectual conditions of life in large social units are never more sharply appreciated in their significance for the independence of the individual than in the dense crowds of the metropolis because the bodily closeness and lack of space make intellectual distance really perceivable for the first time. It is obviously only the obverse of this freedom that, under certain circumstances, one never feels as lonely and as deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons. For here, as elsewhere, it is by no means necessary that the freedom of man reflect itself in his emotional life only as a pleasant experience.

It is not only the immediate size of the area and population which, on the basis of world-historical correlation between the increase in the size of the social unit and the degree of personal inner and outer freedom, makes the metropolis the locus of this condition. It is rather in transcending this purely tangible extensiveness that the metropolis also becomes the seat of cosmopolitanism. Comparable with the form of the development of wealth – (beyond a certain point property increases in ever more rapid progression as out of its own inner being) – the individual's horizon is enlarged. In the same way, economic, personal and intellectual relations in the city (which are its ideal reflection), grow in a geometrical progression as soon as, for the first time, a certain limit has been passed. Every dynamic extension becomes a preparation not only for a similar extension but rather for a larger one and from every thread which is spun out of it there continue, growing as out of themselves, an endless number of others. This may be illustrated by the fact that within the city the "unearned increment" of ground rent, through a mere increase in traffic, brings to the owner profits which are self-generating. At this point the quantitative aspects of life are transformed qualitatively. The sphere of life of the small town is, in the main, enclosed within itself. For the metropolis it is decisive that its inner life is extended in a wave-like motion over a broader national or international area. Weimar was no exception because its significance was dependent upon individual personalities and died with them, whereas the metropolis is characterised by its essential independence even of the most significant individual personalities; this is rather its antithesis and it is the price of independence which the individual living in it enjoys. The most significant aspect of the metropolis lies in this functional magnitude beyond its actual physical boundaries and this effectiveness reacts upon the latter and gives to it life, weight, importance and responsibility. A person does not end with limits of his physical body or with the area to which his physical activity is immediately confined but embraces, rather, the totality of meaningful effects which emanates

from him temporally and spatially. In the same way the city exists only in the totality of the effects which transcend their immediate sphere. These really are the actual extent in which their existence is expressed. This is already expressed in the fact that individual freedom, which is the logical historical complement of such extension, is not only to be understood in the negative sense as mere freedom of movement and emancipation from prejudices and philistinism. Its essential characteristic is rather to be found in the fact that the particularity and incomparability which ultimately every person possesses in some way is actually expressed, giving form to life. That we follow the laws of our inner nature – and this is what freedom is – becomes perceptible and convincing to us and to others only when the expressions of this nature distinguish themselves from others; it is our irreplaceability by others which shows that our mode of existence is not imposed upon us from the outside.

Cities are above all the seat of the most advanced economic division of labor. They produce such extreme phenomena as the lucrative vocation of the *quatorzieme* in Paris. These are persons who may be recognized by shields on their houses and who hold themselves ready at the dinner hour in appropriate costumes so they can be called upon on short notice in case thirteen persons find themselves at the table. Exactly in the measure of its extension the city offers to an increasing degree the determining conditions for the division of labor. It is a unit which, because of its large size, is receptive to a highly diversified plurality of achievements while at the same time the agglomeration of individuals and their struggle for the customer forces the individual to a type of specialized accomplishment in which he cannot be so easily exterminated by the other. The decisive fact here is that in the life of a city, struggle with nature for the means of life is transformed into a conflict with human beings and the gain which is fought for is granted, not by nature, but by man. For here we find not only the previously mentioned source of specialization but rather the deeper one in which the seller must seek to produce in the person to whom he wishes to sell ever new and unique needs. The necessity to specialize one's product in order to find a source of income which is not yet exhausted and also to specialize a function which cannot be easily supplanted is conducive to differentiation, refinement and enrichment of the needs of the public which obviously must lead to increasing personal variation within this public.

All this leads to the narrower type of intellectual individuation of mental qualities to which the city gives rise in proportion to its size. There is a whole series of causes for this. First of all there is the difficulty of giving one's own personality a certain status within the framework of metropolitan life. Where quantitative increase of value and energy has reached its limits, one seizes on qualitative distinctions, so that, through taking advantage of the existing sensitivity to differences, the attention of the social world can, in some way, be won for oneself. This leads ultimately to the strangest eccentricities, to specifically metropolitan extravagances of self-distanciation, of caprice, of fastidiousness, the meaning of which is no longer to be found in the content of such activity itself but rather in its being a form of "being different" – of making oneself noticeable. For many types of persons these are still the only means of saving for oneself, through the attention gained from others, some sort of self-esteem and the sense of filling a position. In the same sense there operates an apparently insignificant factor which in its effects however is perceptibly

cumulative, namely, the brevity and rarity of meetings which are allotted to each individual as compared with social intercourse in a small city. For here we find the attempt to appear to-the-point, clear-cut and individual with extraordinarily greater frequency than where frequent and long association assures to each person an unambiguous conception of the other's personality.

This appears to me to be the most profound cause of the fact that the metropolis places emphasis on striving for the most individual forms of personal existence – regardless of whether it is always correct or always successful. The development of modern culture is characterised by the predominance of what one can call the objective spirit over the subjective; that is, in language as well as in law, in the technique of production as well as in art, in science as well as in the objects of domestic environment, there is embodied a sort of spirit [*Geist*], the daily growth of which is followed only imperfectly and with an even greater lag by the intellectual development of the individual. If we survey for instance the vast culture which during the last century has been embodied in things and in knowledge, in institutions and comforts, and if we compare them with the cultural progress of the individual during the same period – at least in the upper classes – we would see a frightful difference in rate of growth between the two which represents, in many points, rather a regression of the culture of the individual with reference to spirituality, delicacy and idealism. This discrepancy is in essence the result of the success of the growing division of labor. For it is this which requires from the individual an ever more one-sided type of achievement which, at its highest point, often permits his personality as a whole to fall into neglect. In any case this overgrowth of objective culture has been less and less satisfactory for the individual. Perhaps less conscious than in practical activity and in the obscure complex of feelings which flow from him, he is reduced to a negligible quantity. He becomes a single cog as over against the vast overwhelming organization of things and forces which gradually take out of his hands everything connected with progress, spirituality and value. The operation of these forces results in the transformation of the latter from a subjective form into one of purely objective existence. It need only be pointed out that the metropolis is the proper arena for this type of culture which has outgrown every personal element. Here in buildings and in educational institutions, in the wonders and comforts of space-conquering technique, in the formations of social life and in the concrete institutions of the State is to be found such a tremendous richness of crystallizing, depersonalized cultural accomplishments that the personality can, so to speak, scarcely maintain itself in the face of it. From one angle life is made infinitely more easy in the sense that stimulations, interests, and the taking up of time and attention, present themselves from all sides and carry it in a stream which scarcely requires any individual efforts for its ongoing. But from another angle, life is composed more and more of these impersonal cultural elements and existing goods and values which seek to suppress peculiar personal interests and incomparabilities. As a result, in order that this most personal element be saved, extremities and peculiarities and individualizations must be produced and they must be over-exaggerated merely to be brought into the awareness even of the individual himself. The atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture lies at the root of the bitter hatred which the preachers of the most extreme individualism, in the footsteps of Nietzsche, directed against the metropolis. But it is also the explanation of why indeed they are so passionately loved in the metropolis and indeed appear to its residents as the saviors of their unsatisfied yearnings.

When both of these forms of individualism which are nourished by the quantitative relationships of the metropolis, i.e., individual independence and the elaboration of personal peculiarities, are examined with reference to their historical position, the metropolis attains an entirely new value and meaning in the world history of the spirit. The eighteenth century found the individual in the grip of powerful bonds which had become meaningless – bonds of a political, agrarian, guild and religious nature – delimitations which imposed upon the human being at the same time an unnatural form and for a long time an unjust inequality. In this situation arose the cry for freedom and equality – the belief in the full freedom of movement of the individual in all his social and intellectual relationships which would then permit the same noble essence to emerge equally from all individuals as Nature had placed it in them and as it had been distorted by social life and historical development. Alongside of this liberalistic ideal there grew up in the nineteenth century from Goethe and the Romantics, on the one hand, and from the economic division of labor on the other, the further tendency, namely, that individuals who had been liberated from their historical bonds sought now to distinguish themselves from one another. No longer was it the "general human quality" in every individual but rather his qualitative uniqueness and irreplaceability that now became the criteria of his value.

In the conflict and shifting interpretations of these two ways of defining the position of the individual within the totality is to be found the external as well as the internal history of our time. It is the function of the metropolis to make a place for the conflict and for the attempts at unification of both of these in the sense that its own peculiar conditions have been revealed to us as the occasion and the stimulus for the development of both. Thereby they attain a quite unique place, fruitful with an inexhaustible richness of meaning in the development of the mental life. They reveal themselves as one of those great historical structures in which conflicting life-embracing currents find themselves with equal legitimacy. Because of this, however, regardless of whether we are sympathetic or antipathetic with their individual expressions, they transcend the sphere in which a judge-like attitude on our part is appropriate. To the extent that such forces have been integrated, with the fleeting existence of a single cell, into the root as well as the crown of the totality of historical life to which we belong – it is our task not to complain or to condone but only to understand.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Simmel on Modern Culture

Using the illustration of life in the modern city, Georg Simmel (1858–1918) suggests here some distinctive features of culture in modern, complex societies (in contrast with the smaller, premodern societies which anthropologists like Ruth Benedict mostly studied). In large and highly differentiated modern societies, the multiple social circles, the money economy, and the specialized division of labor lead to increasing rationalization and objectification in culture. Simmel also suggests that while the possibilities of individuality and individualism grow,

individual experience becomes more shallow, and that objective cultural products multiply and come to dominate subjective meanings and values.

Simmel received his doctorate at the University of Berlin in 1881 and was active for most of his life in Berlin's intellectual circles; he was a prolific writer and popular lecturer on many topics in philosophy, history, and sociology. In addition to other essays published in Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, edited with an introduction by Donald Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), see for instance David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, eds., *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997); Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*, trans. Kurt Wolff and Reinhard Bendix, with a foreword by Everett Hughes (New York: The Free Press, 1955); Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, David Frisby, ed., translated by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby from a first draft by Kaethe Mengelberg (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); and *Georg Simmel on Women, Sexuality and Love*, translated with an introduction by Guy Oakes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). For more on Simmel's ideas see Lewis Coser, "Georg Simmel, 1858–1918," pp. 177–215 in *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, 2nd edn. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977); Donald Levine, "Simmel Reappraised: Old Images, New Scholarship," pp. 173–207 in Charles Camic, ed., *Reclaiming the Sociological Classics: The State of the Scholarship* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); Michael Kaern, Bernard Phillips, and Robert Cohen, eds., *Georg Simmel and Contemporary Sociology* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), Stanley Aronowitz, "The Simmel Revival: A Challenge to American Social Science," *Sociological Quarterly* 35 (1994): 397–414, and the articles collected in *Theory, Culture, and Society* 8 (3) August 1991, "Special Issue on Georg Simmel." For updated discussion of the contrast Simmel draws between objective and subjective culture see Mike Featherstone, "Archiving Cultures," *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (2000): 161–84, and Deena Weinstein and Michael Weinstein, "Simmel and the Dialectic of the Double Boundary: The Case of the Metropolis and Mental Life," *Sociological Inquiry* 59 (1989): 48–59.

Simmel's claims about the cultural impact of modernity resonate here with the themes of alienation, anomie, and rationalization in modern life developed by other classical sociological theorists like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. They also prefigure two topics which became increasingly important to students of twentieth-century culture – the impact of mass cultural production, and the impact of increasing individualism. On mass culture see also the excerpt from Horkheimer and Adorno's classic essay and DiMaggio's discussion of mass culture theory in this volume; for discussion of individualism see Lichterman, excerpted this volume, and accompanying notes.

3 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

The sociological theory that the loss of the support of objectively established religion, the dissolution of the last remnants of precapitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialization, have led to cultural chaos is disproved every day; for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. . . .

Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors' incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed.

Interested parties explain the culture industry in technological terms. It is alleged that because millions participate in it, certain reproduction processes are necessary that inevitably require identical needs in innumerable places to be satisfied with identical goods. The technical contrast between the few production centers and the large number of widely dispersed consumption points is said to demand organization and planning by management. Furthermore, it is claimed that standards were based in the first place on consumers' needs, and for that reason were accepted with so little resistance. The result is the circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger. No mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest. A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. It is the coercive nature of society alienated from itself. Automobiles, bombs, and movies keep the whole thing together until their leveling element shows its strength in the very wrong which it furthered. It has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production, sacrificing whatever involved a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system. This is the result not of a law of movement in technology as such but of its function in today's economy. The need which might resist central control has already been suppressed by the control of the individual consciousness. The step from the telephone to the radio has clearly distinguished the roles. The former still allowed the subscriber to play the role of subject, and was liberal. The latter is democratic: it turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same. No machinery of rejoinder has been devised, and private

broadcasters are denied any freedom. They are confined to the apocryphal field of the "amateur," and also have to accept organization from above. But any trace of spontaneity from the public in official broadcasting is controlled and absorbed by talent scouts, studio competitions and official programs of every kind selected by professionals. Talented performers belong to the industry long before it displays them; otherwise they would not be so eager to fit in. The attitude of the public, which ostensibly and actually favors the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system and not an excuse for it. If one branch of art follows the same formula as one with a very different medium and content; if the dramatic intrigue of broadcast soap operas becomes no more than useful material for showing how to master technical problems at both ends of the scale of musical experience – real jazz or a cheap imitation; or if a movement from a Beethoven symphony is crudely "adapted" for a film sound-track in the same way as a Tolstoy novel is garbled in a film script: then the claim that this is done to satisfy the spontaneous wishes of the public is no more than hot air. We are closer to the facts if we explain these phenomena as inherent in the technical and personnel apparatus which, down to its last cog, itself forms part of the economic mechanism of selection. In addition there is the agreement – or at least the determination – of all executive authorities not to produce or sanction anything that in any way differs from their own rules, their own ideas about consumers, or above all themselves.

In our age the objective social tendency is incarnate in the hidden subjective purposes of company directors, the foremost among whom are in the most powerful sectors of industry – steel, petroleum, electricity, and chemicals. Culture monopolies are weak and dependent in comparison. They cannot afford to neglect their appeasement of the real holders of power if their sphere of activity in mass society (a sphere producing a specific type of commodity which anyhow is still too closely bound up with easygoing liberalism and Jewish intellectuals) is not to undergo a series of purges. The dependence of the most powerful broadcasting company on the electrical industry, or of the motion picture industry on the banks, is characteristic of the whole sphere, whose individual branches are themselves economically interwoven. All are in such close contact that the extreme concentration of mental forces allows demarcation lines between different firms and technical branches to be ignored. The ruthless unity in the culture industry is evidence of what will happen in politics. Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended. The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda.

How formalized the procedure is can be seen when the mechanically differentiated products prove to be all alike in the end. That the difference between the Chrysler range and General Motors products is basically illusory strikes every child with a keen interest in varieties. What connoisseurs discuss as good or bad points serve only to perpetuate the semblance of competition and range of choice. The same applies to the Warner Brothers and Metro Goldwyn Mayer productions. But even the differences between the more expensive and cheaper models put out by the same firm steadily diminish: for automobiles, there are such differences as the number of cylinders, cubic capacity, details of patented gadgets; and for films there are the number of stars, the extravagant use of technology, labor, and equipment, and the introduction of the latest psychological formulas. The universal criterion of merit is the amount of "conspicuous production," of blatant cash investment. The varying budgets in the culture industry do not bear the slightest relation to factual values, to the meaning of the products themselves. . . .

The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his schematizing for him. Kant said that there was a secret mechanism in the soul which prepared direct intuitions in such a way that they could be fitted into the system of pure reason. But today that secret has been deciphered. While the mechanism is to all appearances planned by those who serve up the data of experience, that is, by the culture industry, it is in fact forced upon the latter by the power of society, which remains irrational, however we may try to rationalize it; and this inescapable force is processed by commercial agencies so that they give an artificial impression of being in command. There is nothing left for the consumer to classify. Producers have done it for him. Art for the masses has destroyed the dream but still conforms to the tenets of that dreaming idealism which critical idealism balked at. Everything derives from consciousness: for Malebranche and Berkeley, from the consciousness of God; in mass art, from the consciousness of the production team. Not only are the hit songs, stars, and soap operas cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types, but the specific content of the entertainment itself is derived from them and only appears to change. The details are interchangeable. The short interval sequence which was effective in a hit song, the hero's momentary fall from grace (which he accepts as good sport), the rough treatment which the beloved gets from the male star, the latter's rugged defiance of the spoilt heiress, are, like all the other details, ready-made clichés to be slotted in anywhere; they never do anything more than fulfill the purpose allotted them in the overall plan. Their whole *raison d'être* is to confirm it by being its constituent parts. As soon as the film begins, it is quite clear how it will end, and who will be rewarded, punished, or forgotten. In light music, once the trained ear has heard the first notes of the hit song, it can guess what is coming and feel flattered when it does come. The average length of the short story has to be rigidly adhered to. Even gags, effects, and jokes are calculated like the setting in which they are placed. They are the responsibility of special experts and their narrow range makes it easy for them to be apportioned in the office. The development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself – which once expressed an idea, but was liquidated together with the idea. When the detail won its freedom, it became rebellious and, in the period from Romanticism to Expressionism, asserted itself as free expression, as a vehicle of protest against the organization. In music the

single harmonic effect obliterated the awareness of form as a whole; in painting the individual color was stressed at the expense of pictorial composition; and in the novel psychology became more important than structure. The totality of the culture industry has put an end to this. Though concerned exclusively with effects, it crushes their insubordination and makes them subserve the formula, which replaces the work. The same fate is inflicted on whole and parts alike. The whole inevitably bears no relation to the details – just like the career of a successful man into which everything is made to fit as an illustration or a proof, whereas it is nothing more than the sum of all those idiotic events. The so-called dominant idea is like a file which ensures order but not coherence. The whole and the parts are alike; there is no antithesis and no connection. Their prearranged harmony is a mockery of what had to be striven after in the great bourgeois works of art. In Germany the graveyard stillness of the dictatorship already hung over the gayest films of the democratic era.

The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer's guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. This purpose has been furthered by mechanical reproduction since the lightning takeover by the sound film.

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theater of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality. The stunting of the mass-media consumer's powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have to be traced back to any psychological mechanisms; he must ascribe the loss of those attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves, especially to the most characteristic of them, the sound film. They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts. Even though the effort required for his response is semi-automatic, no scope is left for the imagination. Those who are so absorbed by the world of the movie – by its images, gestures, and words – that they are unable to supply what really makes it a world, do not have to dwell on particular points of its mechanics during a screening. All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. The entertainments manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses, whether at work or at leisure – which is akin to work. From every sound film and every broadcast program the social effect can be inferred which is exclusive to none but is shared by all alike. The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product. All the agents of this process, from the producer to the women's clubs, take good care that the simple reproduction of this mental state is not nuanced or extended in any way.

The art historians and guardians of culture who complain of the extinction in the West of a basic style-determining power are wrong. The stereotyped appropriation of everything, even the inchoate, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigor and general currency of any "real style," in the sense in which cultural *cognoscenti* celebrate the organic pre-capitalist past. . . .

By subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying men's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture which the philosophers of personality contrasted with mass culture. . . .

[W]hat is new is that the irreconcilable elements of culture, art and distraction, are subordinated to one end and subsumed under one false formula: the totality of the culture industry. It consists of repetition. That its characteristic innovations are never anything more than improvements of mass reproduction is not external to the system. It is with good reason that the interest of innumerable consumers is directed to the technique, and not to the contents – which are stubbornly repeated, outworn, and by now half-discredited. The social power which the spectators worship shows itself more effectively in the omnipresence of the stereotype imposed by technical skill than in the stale ideologies for which the ephemeral contents stand in.

Nevertheless the culture industry remains the entertainment business. Its influence over the consumers is established by entertainment; that will ultimately be broken not by an outright decree, but by the hostility inherent in the principle of entertainment to what is greater than itself. Since all the trends of the culture industry are profoundly embedded in the public by the whole social process, they are encouraged by the survival of the market in this area. Demand has not yet been replaced by simple obedience. As is well known, the major reorganization of the film industry shortly before World War I, the material prerequisite of its expansion, was precisely its deliberate acceptance of the public's needs as recorded at the box-office – a procedure which was hardly thought necessary in the pioneering days of the screen. The same opinion is held today by the captains of the film industry, who take as their criterion the more or less phenomenal song hits but wisely never have recourse to the judgment of truth, the opposite criterion. Business is their ideology. It is quite correct that the power of the culture industry resides in its identification with a manufactured need, and not in simple contrast to it, even if this contrast were one of complete power and complete powerlessness. Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work. It is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again. But at the same time mechanization has such power over a man's leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself. The ostensible content is merely a faded foreground; what sinks in is the automatic succession of standardized operations. What happens at work, in the factory, or in the office can only be escaped from by approximation to it in one's leisure time. All amusement suffers from this incurable malady. Pleasure hardens into boredom because, if it is to remain pleasure, it must not demand any effort and therefore moves rigorously in the worn grooves of association. No independent thinking must be expected from the

audience: the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure (which collapses under reflection), but by signals. Any logical connection calling for mental effort is painstakingly avoided. As far as possible, developments must follow from the immediately preceding situation and never from the idea of the whole. For the attentive movie-goer any individual scene will give him the whole thing. . . .

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu. In front of the appetite stimulated by all those brilliant names and images there is finally set no more than a commendation of the depressing everyday world it sought to escape. Of course works of art were not sexual exhibitions either. However, by representing deprivation as negative, they retracted, as it were, the prostitution of the impulse and rescued by mediation what was denied. The secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfillment as a broken promise. The culture industry does not sublimate; it represses. By repeatedly exposing the objects of desire, breasts in a clinging sweater or the naked torso of the athletic hero, it only stimulates the unsublimated forepleasure which habitual deprivation has long since reduced to a masochistic semblance. There is no erotic situation which, while insinuating and exciting, does not fail to indicate unmistakably that things can never go that far. The Hays Office merely confirms the ritual of Tantalus that the culture industry has established anyway. Works of art are ascetic and unashamed; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish. Love is downgraded to romance. And, after the descent, much is permitted; even license as a marketable speciality has its quota bearing the trade description "daring." The mass production of the sexual automatically achieves its repression. Because of his ubiquity, the film star with whom one is meant to fall in love is from the outset a copy of himself. Every tenor voice comes to sound like a Caruso record, and the "natural" faces of Texas girls are like the successful models by whom Hollywood has typecast them. The mechanical reproduction of beauty, which reactionary cultural fanaticism wholeheartedly serves in its methodical idolization of individuality, leaves no room for that unconscious idolatry which was once essential to beauty. The triumph over beauty is celebrated by humor – the *Schadenfreude* that every successful deprivation calls forth. There is laughter because there is nothing to laugh at. Laughter, whether conciliatory or terrible, always occurs when some fear passes. It indicates liberation either from physical danger or from the grip of logic. Conciliatory laughter is heard as the echo of an escape from power; the wrong kind overcomes fear by capitualting to the forces which are to be feared. It is the echo of power as something inescapable. Fun is a medicinal bath. The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it. It makes laughter the instrument of the fraud practised on happiness. . . .

Today the culture industry has taken over the civilizing inheritance of the entrepreneurial and frontier democracy – whose appreciation of intellectual deviations was never very finely attuned. All are free to dance and enjoy themselves, just as they have been free, since the historical neutralization of religion, to join any of the innumerable sects. But freedom to choose an ideology – since ideology always reflects economic coercion – everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same. The way in which a girl accepts and keeps the obligatory date, the inflection on the telephone or in the most intimate situation, the choice of words in conversation, and the whole inner life as classified by the now somewhat devalued depth psychology, bear witness to man's attempt to make himself a proficient apparatus, similar (even in emotions) to the model served up by the culture industry. The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion: personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Horkheimer and Adorno on the Culture Industry

In this famous 1944 essay, Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903–69) examine the rationalized, capitalist organization of cultural production in modern societies. Their rich analysis of mass culture organization and content, and its psychological and political consequences, was among the most wide-ranging and original of scholars' attempts to come to grips with the impact of movies and radio, and continues to offer insights into later forms of mass culture like television. For Horkheimer and Adorno, when art and entertainment are commodified for the mass market in concentrated, rationalized businesses, culture becomes formulaic, commercialized, imaginatively limited, and critically stunted; and audiences became passive, conformist, and uncritical. True individuality is absorbed, true human needs are repressed, and even intimacy is reified.

Horkheimer and Adorno were core members of the Frankfurt School, an interdisciplinary group of German scholars organized as the Institute for Social Research from the 1920s. They aimed to develop Marx's and Weber's ideas about modern exploitation and rationalization in critical theory which applied to twentieth-century problems in western countries, so they incorporated in their critical theory numerous cultural, psychological, and aesthetic themes beyond those typical of traditional Marxism. After fleeing Nazism in 1933, members of the Frankfurt School continued their work in exile; this essay was written while Horkheimer and Adorno were in Santa Monica, California. For examples of other writing on issues raised in this selection see Theodor Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," *New German Critique* 6 (1975): 12–19; Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," pp. 17–34 in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981 [1967]); "Culture and Administration," *Telos* 97 (1978): 93–111; "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column," *Telos* 19 (1974): 13–90; and "Analytical Study of the NBC *Music Appreciation Hour*," *Musical Quarterly* 78 (1994): 325–77; see also Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978). For further historical and intellectual background see Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1984); Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996 [1973]); Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Robert Witkin, "Why Did Adorno 'Hate' Jazz?" *Sociological Theory* 18 (2000): 145–70; Seyla Benhabib, Wolfgang Bonß, and John McCole, *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993). For some discussion of key Frankfurt School ideas see, for instance, Douglas Kellner, "Critical Theory and the

Culture Industries: A Reassessment," *Telos* #62 (1984–5): 196–206, and Nico Israel, "Damage Control: Adorno, Los Angeles, and the Dislocation of Culture," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10 (1997): 85–113.

Another member of the Frankfurt School who made substantial contributions on art, literature and popular culture was Leo Lowenthal (1900–93), who taught at the University of California at Berkeley from 1956; see, for instance, "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture," *American Journal of Sociology* 55 (1950): 323–32; "Sociology of Literature in Retrospect," pp. 11–25 in Philippe Desan, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, and Wendy Griswold, eds., *Literature and Social Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and the essays collected in his *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1961). For an influential early analysis of cultural production in modernity see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," pp. 217–51 in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968). Concerns about modern cultural production are also expressed from a somewhat different point of view by Simmel (see excerpt this volume). Raymond William's work, also excerpted here, demonstrates a different direction in which Marx's theory of ideology was developed in the twentieth century, a direction with more affinities with Antonio Gramsci than with the Frankfurt School.

For a recent general theory and history of the media see John Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). Useful collections of twentieth-century debates about American mass culture can be found in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957) and Rosenberg and White, eds., *Mass Culture Revisited* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971); see especially the editors' introductions.

Within cultural sociology, several developments draw on and go beyond Horkheimer and Adorno's theses. First, the concept of the culture industry has been developed and specified to focus on midrange variations in the organizational conditions of cultural production: see DiMaggio's discussion of mass culture theory and Peterson's exemplar of "cultural production" analysis, both in this volume. Second, assumptions about audience effects are challenged by examining the active and critical ways audiences can interpret and respond to mass culture; see, for example, the excerpt from Hunt's *Screening the Los Angeles Riots* in this volume, and accompanying editor's notes. For an application of critical theory which also emphasizes active class conflict see David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of Automobile Design* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). For a recent reassessment and new theory of the possibility of aesthetic judgment see Nancy Weiss Hanrahan, *Difference in Time: A Critical Theory of Culture* (Westport CT and London: Praeger, 2000), and for a similar contribution regarding democracy see Orville Lee, "Culture and Democratic Theory: Toward a Theory of Symbolic Democracy," *Constellations* 5 (1998): 433–55.

4 Center and Periphery

Edward Shils

Society has a center. There is a central zone in the structure of society. This central zone impinges in various ways on those who live within the ecological domain in which the society exists. Membership in the society, in more than the ecological sense of being located in a bounded territory and of adapting to an environment affected or made up by other persons located in the same territory, is constituted by relationship to this central zone.

The central zone is not, as such, a spatially located phenomenon. It almost always has a more or less definite location within the bounded territory in which the society lives. Its centrality has, however, nothing to do with geometry and little with geography.

The center, or the central zone, is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. It is the center of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern the society. It is the center because it is the ultimate and irreducible; and it is felt to be such by many who cannot give explicit articulation to its irreducibility. The central zone partakes of the nature of the sacred. In this sense, every society has an "official" religion, even when that society or its exponents and interpreters, conceive of it, more or less correctly, as a secular, pluralistic, and tolerant society. The principle of the Counterreformation – *Cuius regio, eius religio* – although its rigor has been loosened and its harshness mollified, retains a core of permanent truth.

The center is also a phenomenon of the realm of action. It is a structure of activities, of roles and persons, within the network of institutions. It is in these roles that the values and beliefs which are central are embodied and propounded.

The larger society appears, on a cursory inspection and by the methods of inquiry in current use, to consist of a number of interdependent subsystems – the economy, the status system, the polity, the kinship system, and the institutions which have in their special custody the cultivation of cultural values, e.g. the university system, the ecclesiastical system, etc. (I use "ecclesiastical" to include the religious institutions of societies which do not have a church in the Western sense of the term.) Each of these subsystems itself comprises a network of organizations which are connected, with varying degrees of affirmation, through a common authority, overlapping personnel, personal relationships, contracts, perceived identities of interest, a sense of affinity within a transcendent whole, and a territorial location possessing symbolic value. (These subsystems and their constituent bodies are not equally affirmative vis-à-vis each other. Moreover the degree of affirmation varies through time, and is quite compatible with a certain measure of alienation within each elite and among the elites.)

Each of these organizations has an authority, an elite, which might be either a single individual or a group of individuals, loosely or closely organized. Each of thes elites makes decisions, sometimes in consultation with other elites and sometimes,

largely on its own initiative, with the intention of maintaining the organization, controlling the conduct of its members and fulfilling its goals. (These decisions are by no means always successful in the achievement of these ends, and the goals are seldom equally or fully shared by the elite and those whose actions are ordained by its decisions.)

The decisions made by the elites contain as major elements certain general standards of judgment and action, and certain concrete values, of which the system as a whole, the society, is one of the most preeminent. The values which are inherent in these standards, and which are espoused and more or less observed by those in authority, we shall call the *central value system* of the society. This central value system is the central zone of the society. It is central because of its intimate connection with what the society holds to be sacred; it is central because it is espoused by the ruling authorities of the society. These two kinds of centrality are vitally related. Each defines and supports the other.

The central value system is not the whole of the order of values and beliefs espoused and observed in the society. The value systems obtaining in any diversified society may be regarded as being distributed along a range. There are variants of the central value system running from hyperaffirmation of some of the components of the major, central value system to an extreme denial of some of these major elements in the central value system; the latter tends to, but is not inevitably associated with, an affirmation of certain elements denied or subordinated in the central value system. There are also elements of the order of values and beliefs which are as random with respect to the central value system as the value and beliefs of human beings can be. There is always a considerable amount of unintegratedness of values and beliefs, both within the realm of value of representative individuals and among individuals and sections of a society.

The central value system is constituted by the values which are pursued and affirmed by the elites of the constituent subsystems and of the organizations which are comprised in the subsystems. By their very possession of authority, they attribute to themselves an essential affinity with the sacred elements of their society, of which they regard themselves as the custodians. By the same token, many members of their society attribute to them that same kind of affinity. The elites of the economy affirm and usually observe certain values which should govern economic activity. The elites of the polity affirm and usually observe certain values which should govern political activity. The elites of the university system and the ecclesiastical system affirm and usually practice certain values which should govern intellectual and religious activities (including beliefs). On the whole, these values are the values embedded in current activity. The ideals which they affirm do not far transcend the reality which is ruled by those who espouse them.[1] The values of the different elites are clustered into an approximately consensual pattern.[2]

One of the major elements in any central value system is an affirmative attitude toward established authority. This is present in the central value systems of all societies, however much these might differ from each other in their appreciation of authority. There is something like a "floor," a minimum of appreciation of authority in every society, however liberal that society might be. Even the most libertarian and equalitarian societies which have ever existed possess at least this minimum appreciation of authority. Authority enjoys appreciation because it arouses sentiments of

sacredness. Sacredness by its nature is authoriative. Those persons, offices, or symbols endowed with it, however indirectly and remotely, are therewith endowed with some measure of authoritativeness.

The appreciation of authority entails the appreciation of the institutions through which authority works and the rules which it enunciates. The central value system in all societies asserts and recommends the appreciation of these authoritative institutions.

Implicitly, the central value system rotates on a center more fundamental even than its espousal by and embodiment in authority. Authority is the agent of *order*, an order which may be largely embodied in authority or which might transcend authority and regulate it, or at least provide a standard by which existing authority itself is judged and even claims to judge itself. This order, which is implicit in the central value system, and in the light of which the central value system legitimates itself, is endowed with dynamic potentialities. It contains, above all, the potentiality of critical judgment on the central value system and the central institutional system. To use Mannheim's terminology, while going beyond Mannheim, every "ideology" has within it a "utopian" potentiality. To use my own terminology, every central value system contains within itself an ideological potentiality. The dynamic potentiality derives from the inevitable tendency of every concrete society to fall short of the order which is implicit in its central value system.

Closely connected with the appreciation of authority and the institutions in which it is exercised, is an appreciation of the *qualities* which qualify persons for the exercise of authority or which are characteristic of those who exercise authority. These qualities, which we shall call secondary values, can be ethnic, educational, familial, economic, professional; they may be ascribed to individuals by virtue of their relationships or they may be acquired through study and experience. But whatever they are, they enjoy the appreciation of the central value system simply because of their connection with the exercise of authority. (Despite their ultimately derivative nature, each of them is capable of possessing an autonomous status in the central zone, in the realm of the sacred; consequently, severe conflicts can be engendered.)

The central value system thus comprises secondary as well as primary values. It legitimates the existing distribution of roles and rewards to persons possessing the appropriate qualities which in various ways symbolize degrees of proximity to authority. It legitimates these distributions by praising the properties of those who occupy authoritative roles in the society, by stressing the legitimacy of their incumbency of those roles and the appropriateness of the rewards they receive. By implication, and explicitly as well, it legitimates the smaller rewards received by those who live at various distances from the circles in which authority is exercised.

The central institutional system may thus be described as the set of institutions which is legitimated by the central value system. Less circularly, however, it may be described as those institutions which, through the radiation of their authority, give some form to the life of a considerable section of the population of the society. The economic, political, ecclesiastical, and cultural institutions impinge compellingly at many points on the conduct of much of the population in any society through the actual exercise of authority and the potential exercise of coercion, through the provision of persuasive models of action, and through a partial control of

the allocation of rewards. The kinship and family systems, although they have much smaller radii, are microcosms of the central institutional system and do much to buttress its efficiency.

The existence of a central value system rests, in a fundamental way, on the need which human beings have for incorporation into something which transcends and transfigures their concrete individual existence. They have a need to be in contact with symbols of an order which is larger in its dimensions than their own bodies and more central in the "ultimate" structure of reality than is their routine everyday life....

The need for established and created order, the respect for creativity, and the need to be connected with the center do not exhaust the forces which engender central value systems. To fill out the list, we must consider the nature of authority itself. Authority has an expansive tendency. It has a tendency to expand the order which it represents toward the saturation of territorial space. The acceptance of the validity of that order entails a tendency toward its universalization within the society over which authority rules. Ruling indeed consists in the universalization – within the boundaries of society – of the rules inherent in the order. Rulers, just because of their possession of authority and the impulses which it generates, wish to be obeyed and to obtain assent to the order which they symbolically embody. The symbolization of order in offices of authority has a compelling effect on those who occupy those offices.

In consequences of this, rulers seek to establish a universal diffusion of the acceptance and observance of the values and beliefs of which they are the custodians through incumbency in those offices. They use their powers to punish those who deviate and to reward with their favor those who conform. Thus, the mere existence of authority in society imposes a central value system on that society. I would regret an easy misunderstanding to which the foregoing sentences might give rise. There is much empirical truth in the common observations that rulers "look after their own," that they are only interested in remaining in authority, in reinforcing their possession of authority and in enhancing their security of tenure through the establishment of a consensus built around their own values and beliefs. Nonetheless these observations seem to me to be too superficial. They fail to discern the dynamic property of authority as such, and particularly of authority over society.

Not all persons who come into positions of authority possess the same responsiveness to the inherently dynamic and expansive tendency in authority. Some are more attuned to it; others are more capable of resisting it. Tradition, furthermore, acts as a powerful brake upon expansiveness, as does the degree of differentiation of the structure of elites and of the society as a whole.

The central institutional system of modern societies, probably even in revolutionary crises, is the object of a substantial amount of consensus. The central value system which legitimates the central institutional system is widely shared, but the consensus is never perfect. There are differences within even the most consensual society about the appreciability of authority, the institutions within which it resides, the elites which exercise it, and the justice of its allocation of rewards.

Even those who share in the consensus do so with different degrees of intensity, whole-heartedness, and devotion. As we move from the center of society, the center in which authority is possessed, to the hinterland or the periphery, over which authority is exercised, attachment to the central value system becomes attenuated. The central institutional system is neither unitary nor homogeneous, and some levels have more majesty than others. The lower one goes in the hierarchy, or the further one moves territorially from the locus of authority, the less one appreciates authority. Likewise, the further one moves from those possessing the secondary traits associated with the exercise of authority into sectors of the population which do not equally possess those qualities, the less affirmative is the attitude towards the reigning authority, and the less intense is that affirmation which does exist.

Active rejection of the central value system is, of course, not the sole alternative to its affirmation. Much more widespread, in the course of history and in any particular society, is an intermittent, partial, and attenuated affirmation of the central value system.

For the most part, the mass of the population in premodern societies have been far removed from the immediate impact of the central value system. They have possessed their own value systems, which were occasionally and fragmentarily articulated with the central value system. These pockets of approximate independence have not, however, been completely incompatible with isolated occasions of articulation and of intermittent affirmation. Nor have these intermittent occasions of participation been incompatible with occasions of active rejection and antagonism to the central institutional system, to the elite which sits at its center, and to the central value system which that elite puts forward for its own legitimation.

The more territorially dispersed the institutional system, the less the likelihood of an intense affirmation of the central value system. The more inegalitarian the society, the less the likelihood of an intense affirmation of the central value system, especially where, as in most steeply hierarchial societies, there are large and discontinuous gaps between those at the top and those below them. Indeed, it might be said that the degree of affirmation inevitably shades off from the center of the exercise of authority and of the promulgation of values.

As long as societies were loosely coordinated, as long as authority lacked the means of intensive control, and as long as much of the economic life of the society was carried on outside any market or almost exclusively in local markets, the central value system invariably became attenuated in the outlying reaches. With the growth of the market, and the administrative and technological strengthening of authority, contact with the central value system increased.

When, as in modern society, a more unified economic system, political democracy, urbanization, and education have brought the different sections of the population into more frequent contact with each other and created even greater mutual awareness, the central value system has found a wider acceptance than in other periods of the history of society. At the same time these changes have also increased the extent, if not the intensity, of active "dissensus" or rejection of the central value system.

The same objects which previously engaged the attention and aroused the sentiments of a very restricted minority of the population have in modern societies become concerns of much broader strata of the population. At the same time that increased contact with authority has led to a generally deferential attitude, it has also

run up against the tenacity of prior attachments and a reluctance to accept strange gods. Class conflict in the most advanced modern societies is probably more open and more continuous than in premodern societies, but it is also more domesticated and restricted by attachments to the central value system. Violent revolutions and bloody civil wars are much less characteristic of modern societies than of premodern societies. Revolutionary parties are feeble in modern societies which have moved toward widespread popular education, a greater equality of status, etc. The size of nominally revolutionary parties in France and Italy is a measure of the extent to which French and Italian societies have not become modernized in this sense. The inertness, from a revolutionary point of view, of the rank and file of these parties is partially indicative of the extent to which, despite their revolutionary doctrines, the working classes in these countries have become assimilated into the central value system of their respective societies.

The old gods have fallen, religious faith has become much more attenuated in the educated classes, and suspicion of authority is much more overt than it has ever been. Nonetheless in the modern societies of the West, the central value system has gone much more deeply into the heart of their members than it has ever succeeded in doing in any earlier society. The "masses" have responded to their contact with a striking measure of acceptance.

The power of the ruling class derives from its incumbency of certain key positions in the central institutional system. Societies vary in the extent to which the ruling class is unitary or relatively segmental. Even where the ruling class is relatively segmental, there is, because of centralized control of appointment to the most crucial of the key positions or because of personal ties or because of overlapping personnel, some sense of affinity which, more or less, unites the different sectors of the elite.[3]

This sense of affinity rests ultimately on the high degree of proximity to the center which is shared by all these different sectors of the ruling class. They have, it is true, a common vested interest in their position. It is not, however, simply the product of a perception of a coalescent interest; it contains a substantial component of mutual regard arising from a feeling of a common relationship to the central value system.

The different sectors of the elite are never equal. One or two usually predominate, to varying degrees, over the others, even in situations where there is much mutual respect and a genuine sense of affinity. Regardless, however, of whether they are equal or unequal, unitary or segmental, there is usually a fairly large amount of consensus among the elites of the central institutional system. This consensus has its ultimate root in their common feeling for the transcendent order which they believe they embody or for which they think themselves responsible. This does not obtain equally for all elites. Some are much more concerned in an almost entirely "secular" or manipulative way with remaining in power. Nonetheless, even in a situation of great heterogeneity and much mutual antipathy, the different sectors of the elite tend to experience the "transforming" transcendental overtones which are generated by incumbency in authoritative roles, or by proximity to "fundamentally important things." . . .

[G]reater incorporation carries with it also an inherent tension. Those who participate in the central institutional and value systems – who feel sufficiently closer to the center now than their forebears ever did – also feel their position as outsiders, their remoteness from the center, in a way in which their forebears probably did not feel it. The modern trade union movement, which has disappointed those whose revolutionary hopes were to be supported by the organized working classes, illustrates this development. The leaders of the trade unions have come to be part of the central institutional system and accordingly, at least in part, they fulfill the obligations which are inherent in the action within that system. At the same time, the unions' rank and file members also have come to share more widely and intensely in the central value system and to affirm more deeply and continuously than in the past the central institutional system. Nonetheless, the leaders, deriving from sections of the society which have felt themselves to be outside the prevailing society, still and necessarily carry traces of that position in their outlook; the rank and file, less involved in the central institutional system than the leadership, experience even more acutely their position as outsiders vis-à-vis the central value system. The more sensitive among them are the most difficult for the leaders of the unions to hold in check.

Parallel with this incorporation of the mass of the population into society – halting, spotty, and imperfect as this incorporation is – has gone a change in the attitudes of the ruling classes of the modern states of the West. (In Asia and Africa, the process is even more fragmentary, corresponding to the greater fragmentariness of the incorporation of the masses into those societies.) In the modern Western states, the ruling classes have come increasingly to acknowledge the dispersion, into the wider reaches of the society, of the charisma which informs the center. The qualities which account for the expansiveness of authority have come to be shared more widely by the population, far from the center in which the incumbents of the positions of authority reside. In the eyes of the elites of the modern states of the West, the mass of the population have somehow come to share in the vital connection with the "order" which inheres in the central value system and which was once thought to be in the special custody of the ruling classes.

The elites are, of course, more responsive to sectors of society which have voting powers and, therewith, legislative power, and which possess agitational and purchasing powers as well. These would make them simulate respect for the populace even where they did not feel it. Mixed with this simulated respect, however, is a genuine respect for the mass of the population as bearers of a true individuality, and a genuine, even if still limited, appreciation of their intrinsic worth as fellow members of the civil society and, in the deepest sense, as vessels of the charisma which lives at the center of society.

There is a limit to consensus. However comprehensive the spread of consensus, it can never be all-embracing. A differentiated large-scale society will always be compelled by professional specialization, tradition, the normal distribution of human capacities, and an inevitable antinomianism to submit to inequalities in participation in the central value system. Some persons will always be a bit closer to the center; some will always be more distant from the center.

Nonetheless, the expansion of individuality attendant on the growth of individual freedom and opportunity, and the greater density of communications, have contributed greatly to narrowing the range of inequality. The peak at the center is no longer so high; the periphery is no longer so distant.

The individuality which has underlain the entry into the consensus around the central value system might in the end also be endangered by it. Liberty and privacy live on islands in a consensual sea. When the tide rises they may be engulfed. This is another instance of the dialectical relationships among consensus, indifference, and alienation, but further consideration must be left for another occasion.

Notes

1 This set of values corresponds to what Karl Mannheim called "ideologies," i.e., values and beliefs, which are congruent with or embodied in current reality (*seinskongruent*). I do not wish to use the term "ideology" to describe these value orientations. One of the most important reasons is that in the past few decades the term "ideology" has been used to refer to intensely espoused value orientations which are extremely *seinstranszendent*, which transcend current reality by a wide margin, which are explicit, articulated, and hostile to the existing order. (For example, Bolshevist doctrine, National Socialist doctrine, Fascist doctrine, etc.) Mannheim called these "utopias." Mannheim's distinction was fundamental, and I accept it, our divergent nomenclature notwithstanding.

2 The degree of consensuality differs among societies and times. There are societies in which the predominant elite demands a complete consensus with its own more specific values and beliefs. Such is the case in modern totalitarian societies. Absolutist regimes in past epochs, which were rather indifferent about whether the mass of the population was party to a consensus, were quite insistent on consensus among the elites of their society.

3 The segmentation or differentiation in the structure of elites is an important factor in limiting the expansiveness of authority among the elites. A differentiated structure of elites brings with it a division of powers, which can be totally overcome only by draconic measures. It can be done, as the Soviet Union has shown, but it is a perpetual source of strain, as recent Soviet developments have also shown.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Shils on Central Value Systems

Edward Shils (1911–95) argued that shared values, beliefs and traditions are essential for social cohesion even in highly differentiated and individualistic modern societies. In every society, central institutions reproduce and promote an authoritative central value system which is both charismatic and functional, ultimately overriding the disintegrative consequences of dissent, apathy, and domination. Moreover, Shils holds that the influence of the central value system has spread further in modern societies than was possible in premodern times.

Among Shils's many influences on American intellectual life was his collaboration with Talcott Parsons and others in developing a theory of culture emphasizing values and focusing on shared values which guide action and pattern differences between groups and societies. Although Shils's ideas ultimately differed from the Parsonian theory of culture (see Turner, cited below), this collaboration was important because value analysis dominated sociological work on culture from the 1950s to the 1980s, and subsequent cultural sociology reacted against value analysis by focusing more on the cognitive and the conflictual in culture. For Parsonian perspectives on culture see Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, eds., *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), especially "Systems of Value Orientation," 159–89, and Clyde Kluckhohn, "Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification," pp. 388–433; and Talcott Parsons, "Introduction to Part Four, Culture and the Social System," pp. 963–93 in Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Kaspar Naegele, and Jesse Pitts, eds., *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1961). For an important application see Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Value Patterns of Democracy: A Case Study in Comparative Analysis," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 515–31, and for further examples, summaries, and critiques of value theory see for instance James Spates, "The Sociology of Values," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 27–49, and Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273–86. See also Alexander and Smith, excerpted in this volume, for a recent reformulation of value analysis.

Shils divided his time between the University of Chicago and Cambridge. He was a prolific writer whose longstanding interests included macrosociological theory, intellectuals and higher education, mass communication and the arts, Indian society, and the connections between ideology, liberalism, and civility. In addition to other essays by Shils collected in *The Constitution of Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), see especially "Charisma, Order, and Status," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 199–213; *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and his volumes of selected papers in *The Calling of Sociology and Other Essays on the Pursuit of Learning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980); *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1975); *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1972). See also Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark, eds., *Culture and its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), Liah Greenfeld and Michel Martin, eds., *Center: Ideas and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), and Stephen Turner "The Significance of Shils," *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999): 125–45. Center–periphery images and theories are also discussed in S. N. Eisenstadt, *Power, Trust and Meaning: Essays in Sociological Theory and Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Cultural Orientations, Institutional Entrepreneurs and Social Change: Comparative Analysis on Traditional Civilizations," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1980): 840–69. For a nuanced account of conflicts over a cultural and material center sacred to different groups, see Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, *To Rule Jerusalem* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

5 Base and Superstructure

Raymond Williams

Any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering the proposition of a determining base and a determined superstructure. From a strictly theoretical point of view this is not, in fact, where we might choose to begin. It would be in many ways preferable if we could begin from a proposition which originally was equally central, equally authentic: namely the proposition that social being determines consciousness. It is not that the two propositions necessarily deny each other or are in contradiction. But the proposition of base and superstructure, with its figurative element and with its suggestion of a fixed and definite spatial relationship, constitutes, at least in certain hands, a very specialized and at times unacceptable version of the other proposition. Yet in the transition from Marx to Marxism, and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis.

The source of this proposition is commonly taken to be a well-known passage in Marx's 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological – forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. (*Selected Works* 1. 362–4)

This is hardly an obvious starting-point for any cultural theory. It is part of an exposition of historical materialist method in the understanding of legal relations and forms of state. The first use of the term 'superstructure' is explicitly qualified as 'legal and political'. (It should incidentally be noted that the English translation in most common use has a plural – "legal and political superstructures" – for Marx's singular "juristicher und politischer Überbau".) 'Definite forms of social consciousness' are further said to 'correspond' to it (*entsprechen*). Transformation of the

'entire immense superstructure', in the social revolution which begins from the altered relations of productive forces and relations of production, is a process in which 'men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' in 'ideological forms' which now include the 'religious, aesthetic, or philosophic' as well as the legal and political. Much has been deduced from this formulation, but the real context is inevitably limited. Thus it would be possible, simply from this passage, to define 'cultural' ('religious, aesthetic or philosophic') forms in which 'men become conscious of this conflict', without necessarily supposing that these specific forms are the whole of 'cultural' activity.

There is at least one earlier use, by Marx, of the term 'superstructure'. It is in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, 1851–2*:

> Upon the several forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, a whole superstructure is reared of various and peculiarly shaped feelings (*empfindungen*), illusions, habits of thought and conceptions of life. The whole class produces and shapes these out of its material foundation and out of the corresponding social conditions. The individual unit to whom they flow through tradition and education may fancy that they constitute the true reasons for and premises of his conduct. (*Selected Works* 1. 272–3)

This is an evidently different use. The 'superstructure' is here the whole 'ideology' of the class: its 'form of consciousness'; its constitutive ways of seeing itself in the world. It would be possible, from this and the later use, to see three senses of 'superstructure' emerging: (a) legal and political forms which express existing real relations of production; (b) forms of consciousness which express a particular class view of the world; (c) a process in which, over a whole range of activities, men become conscious of a fundamental economic conflict and fight it out. These three senses would direct our attention, respectively, to (a) institutions; (b) forms of consciousness; (c) political and cultural practices.

It is clear that these three areas are related and must, in analysis, be interrelated. But on just this crucial question of interrelation the term itself is of little assistance, just because it is variably applied to each area in turn. Nor is this at all surprising, since the use is not primarily conceptual, in any precise way, but metaphorical. What it primarily expresses is the important sense of a visible and formal 'superstructure' which might be analysed on its own but which cannot be understood without seeing that it rests on a 'foundation'. The same point must be made of the corresponding metaphorical term. In the use of 1851–2 it is absent, and the origins of a particular form of class consciousness are specified as 'forms of property' and 'social conditions of existence'. In the use of 1859 it appears in almost conscious metaphor: 'the economic structure of society – the real foundation (*die reale Basis*), on which rises (*erhebt*) a legal and political superstructure (*Überbau*)'. It is replaced, later in the argument, by 'the economic foundation' (*ökonomische Grundlage*). The continuity of meaning is relatively clear, but the variation of terms for one part of the relationship ('forms of property, social conditions of existence'; 'economic structure of society'; 'real basis'; 'real foundation'; *Basis*; *Grundlage*) is not matched by explicit variation of the other term of the relationship, though the actual signification of this term (*Überbau*; superstructure) is, as we have seen, variable. It is part of the

complexity of the subsequent argument that the term rendered in English explication (probably first by Engels) as 'base' is rendered in other languages in significant variations (in French usually as *infrastructure*, in Italian as *struttura*, and so on, with some complicating effects on the substance of the argument).

In the transition from Marx to Marxism, and then in the development of expository and didactic formulations, the words used in the original arguments were projected, first, as if they were precise concepts, and second, as if they were descriptive terms for observable 'areas' of social life. The main sense of the words in the original arguments had been relational, but the popularity of the terms tended to indicate either (a) relatively enclosed categories or (b) relatively enclosed areas of activity. These were then correlated either temporally (first material production, then consciousness, then politics and culture) or in effect, forcing the metaphor, spatially (visible and distinguishable 'levels' or 'layers' – politics and culture, then forms of consciousness, and so on down to 'the base'). The serious practical problems of method, which the original words had indicated, were then usually in effect bypassed by methods derived from a confidence, rooted in the popularity of the terms, in the relative enclosure of categories or areas expressed as 'the base', 'the superstructure'.

It is then ironic to remember that the force of Marx's original criticism had been mainly directed against the separation of 'areas' of thought and activity (as in the separation of consciousness from material production) and against the related evacuation of specific content – real human activities – by the imposition of abstract categories. The common abstraction of 'the base' and 'the superstructure' is thus a radical persistence of the modes of thought which he attacked. That in the course of other arguments he gave some warrant for this, within the intrinsic difficulties of any such formulation, is certainly true. But it is significant that when he came to any sustained analysis, or to a realization of the need for such analysis, he was at once specific and flexible in his use of his own terms. He had already observed, in the formulation of 1859, a distinction between analysing 'the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science' and the analysis of 'ideological forms', for which methods were evidently less precise. In 1857 he had noted:

> As regards art, it is well known that some of its peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society; nor do they therefore to the material substructure, the skeleton as it were of its organization.

His solution of the problem he then discusses, that of Greek art, is hardly convincing, but the 'by no means correspond' is a characteristic practical recognition of the complexity of real relations. Engels, in his essay *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, still argued specifically, showing how the 'economic basis' of a political struggle could be dulled in consciousness or altogether lost sight of, and how a legal system could be projected as independent of its economic content, in the course of its professional development. Then:

> Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion. Hence the interconnection

> between conceptions and their material conditions of existence becomes more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the interconnection exists.

This relational emphasis, including not only complexity but recognition of the ways in which some connections are lost to consciousness, is of course very far from the abstract categories (though it supports the implication of separate areas) of 'superstructure' and 'base'.

In all serious Marxist analysis the categories are of course not used abstractly. But they may have their effect none the less. It is significant that the first phase of the recognition of practical complexities stressed what are really *quantitative* relations. By the end of the nineteenth century it was common to recognize what can best be described as disturbances, or special difficulties, of an otherwise regular relationship. This is true of the idea of 'lags' in time, which had been developed from Marx's observation that some of the 'peaks' of art 'by no means correspond to the general development of society'. This could be expressed (though Marx's own 'solution' to this problem had not been of this kind) as a matter of *temporal* 'delay' or 'unevenness'. The same basic model is evident in Engels's notion of the relative *distance* ('still further removed') of the 'higher ideologies'. Or consider Engels's letter to Bloch of September 1890:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogma – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

This is a vital acknowledgement of real and methodological complexities. It is particularly relevant to the idea of 'determination', which will be separately discussed, and to the decisive problem of consciousness as 'reflexes' or 'reflection'. But within the vigour of his contrast between real history and a 'meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase', and alongside his recognition of a new (and theoretically significant) exception – 'the endless host of accidents' – Engels does not so much revise the enclosed categories – 'the basis' ('the economic element', 'the economic situation', 'the economic movement') and 'the various elements' (political, juridical, theoretical) of 'the superstructure' – as reiterate the categories and instance certain exceptions, indirectnesses, and irregularities which obscure their otherwise regular

relation. What is fundamentally lacking, in the theoretical formulations of this important period, is any adequate recognition of the indissoluble connections between material production, political and cultural institutions and activity, and consciousness. The classic summary of 'the relationship between the base and the superstructure' is Plekhanov's distinction of 'five sequential elements: (i) the state of productive forces; (ii) the economic conditions; (iii) the socio-political regime; (iv) the psyche of social man; (v) various ideologies reflecting the properties of this psyche' (*Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Moscow, 1922, 76). This is better than the bare projection of 'a base' and 'a superstructure', which has been so common. But what is wrong with it is its description of these 'elements' as 'sequential', when they are in practice indissoluble: not in the sense that they cannot be distinguished for purposes of analysis, but in the decisive sense that these are not separate 'areas' or 'elements' but the whole, specific activities and products of real men. That is to say, the analytic categories, as so often in idealist thought, have, almost unnoticed, become substantive descriptions, which then take habitual priority over the whole social process to which, as analytic categories, they are attempting to speak. Orthodox analysts began to think of 'the base' and 'the superstructure' as if they were separable concrete entities. In doing so they lost sight of the very processes – not abstract relations but constitutive processes – which it should have been the special function of historical materialism to emphasize. I shall be discussing later the major theoretical response to this loss: the attempt to reconstitute such processes by the idea of 'mediation'.

A persistent dissatisfaction, within Marxism, about the proposition of 'base and superstructure', has been most often expressed by an attempted refinement and revaluation of 'the superstructure'. Apologists have emphasized its complexity, substance, and 'autonomy' or autonomous value. Yet most of the difficulty still lies in the original extension of metaphorical terms for a relationship into abstract categories or concrete areas *between* which connections are looked for and complexities or relative autonomies emphasized. It is actually more important to observe the character of this extension in the case of 'the base' than in the case of the always more varied and variable 'superstructure'. By extension and by habit, 'the base' has come to be considered virtually as an object (a particular and reductive version of 'material existence'). Or, in specification, 'the base' is given very general and apparently uniform properties. 'The base' is the real social existence of man. 'The base' is the real relations of production corresponding to a stage of the development of material productive forces. 'The base' is a mode of production at a particular stage of its development. Of course these are, in practice, different propositions. Yet each is also very different from Marx's central emphasis on productive *activities*. He had himself made the point against reduction of 'the base' to a category:

> In order to study the connexion between intellectual and material production it is above all essential to conceive the latter in its determined historical form and not as a general category. For example, there corresponds to the capitalist mode of production a type of intellectual production quite different from that which corresponded to the medieval mode of production. Unless material production itself is understood in its specific historical form, it is impossible to grasp the characteristics of the intellectual production which corresponds to it or the reciprocal action between the two. (*Theorien über den Mehrwert*, cit. Bottomore and Rubel, 96–7.)

We can add that while a particular stage of 'real social existence', or of 'relations of production', or of a 'mode of production', can be discovered and made precise by analysis, it is never, as a body of activities, either uniform or static. It is one of the central propositions of Marx's sense of history, for example, that in actual development there are deep contradictions in the relationships of production and in the consequent social relationships. There is therefore the continual possibility of the dynamic variation of these forces. The 'variations' of the superstructure might be deduced from this fact alone, were it not that the 'objective' implications of 'the base' reduce all such variations to secondary consequences. It is only when we realize that 'the base', to which it is habitual to *refer* variations, is itself a dynamic and internally contradictory process – the specific activities and modes of activity, over a range from association to antagonism, of real men and classes of men – that we can begin to free ourselves from the notion of an 'area' or a 'category' with certain fixed properties for deduction to the variable processes of a 'superstructure'. The physical fixity of the terms exerts a constant pressure against just this realization.

Thus, contrary to a development in Marxism, it is not 'the base' and 'the superstructure' that need to be studied, but specific and indissoluble real processes, within which the decisive relationship, from a Marxist point of view, is that expressed by the complex idea of 'determination'.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Raymond Williams on Base and Superstructure

Raymond Williams (1921–88) challenges here one of the most widespread assumptions about culture, the idea that meanings and values are determined by some more objective material reality (a model most well known from the Marxist theories of ideology Williams discusses, but also implicit in many other theories of society). The book develops a more supple model of cultural determination which recognizes cultural elements in material production, material and structural elements of meaning and value, and a relationship of "limits and pressures" rather than strict causal determination between them.

Born in Wales, Williams studied at Cambridge, where he later became Professor of Drama, having previously spent fifteen years teaching adult education classes for the Workers Educational Association. He was also a socialist writer and activist, making notable contributions to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the New Left in Britain. He wrote over thirty books and hundreds of articles on culture and politics, publishing literary criticism, cultural theory, drama, and novels. Other works important to cultural sociology include *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); *The Sociology of Culture*, with a new foreword by Bruce Robbins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983 [1958]); and *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975). See also Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Terry Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989); and Alan O'Connor, *Raymond Williams; Writing, Culture, Politics* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1989).

Williams's work makes a counterpoint both to idealist views that values are the main force driving social action and to theories of ideology which view culture as simply reflecting material and structural forces. In contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno (see excerpt this volume), he introduces influences from Gramsci to critical theories of culture: see for example Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1985). For useful overviews of the rich variety of Marxist theories of culture, see, for instance, Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991); Robert Wuthnow, "Infrastructure and Superstructure: Revisions in Marxist Sociology of Culture," pp. 145–70 in Richard Münch and Neil Smelser, eds., *Theory of Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); Gene Burns, "Materialism, Ideology, and Political Change," pp. 248–62 in Robert Wuthnow, ed., *Vocabularies of Public Life: Empirical Essays in Symbolic Structure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), and Albert Bergesen, "The Rise of Semiotic Marxism," *Sociological Perspectives* 36 (1993): 1–22. See also Alvin Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar, and Future of Ideology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976) for another nuanced development of ideology theory, and for a more direct argument against any necessary relationship between ideas and economic structure see Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980).

Williams influenced the formation of Cultural Studies as a new intellectual field: see Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1977); Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," pp. 277–94 in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), Richard Johnson, "Reinventing Cultural Studies: Remembering the Best Version," pp. 452–88 in Elizabeth Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), and, for a critique, Kenneth Parker, "Writing Dis-location: Black Writers and Postcolonial Britain," *Social Identities* 4 (1998): 177–201. For a comparison between cultural studies and cultural anthropology built on Williams's work, see Richard Handler, "Raymond Williams, George Stocking and Fin-de-Siècle U.S. Anthropology," *Cultural Anthropology* 13 (1998): 447–63.

6 Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture

Clifford Geertz

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. But this pronouncement, a doctrine in a clause, demands itself some explication...

In anthropology, or anyway social anthropology, what the practioners do is ethnography. And it is in understanding what ethnography is, or more exactly *what doing ethnography is*, that a start can be made toward grasping what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge. This, it must immediately be said, is not a matter of methods. From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description."

Ryle's discussion of "thick description" appears in two recent essays of his (now reprinted in the second volume of his *Collected Papers*) addressed to the general question of what, as he puts it, "*Le Penseur*" is doing: "Thinking and Reflecting" and "The Thinking of Thoughts." Consider, he says, two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one, this is an involuntary twitch; in the other, a conspiratorial signal to a friend. The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-a-camera, "phenomenalistic" observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and a wink is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows. The winker is communicating, and indeed communicating in a quite precise and special way: (1) deliberately, (2) to someone in particular, (3) to impart a particular message, (4) according to a socially established code, and (5) without cognizance of the rest of the company. As Ryle points out, the winker has not done two things, contracted his eyelids and winked, while the twitcher has done only one, contracted his eyelids. Contracting your eyelids on purpose when there exists a public code in which so doing counts as a conspiratorial signal *is* winking. That's all there is to it: a speck of behavior, a fleck of culture, and – *voilà!* – a gesture.

That, however, is just the beginning. Suppose, he continues, there is a third boy, who, "to give malicious amusement to his cronies," parodies the first boy's wink, as

amateurish, clumsy, obvious, and so on. He, of course, does this in the same way the second boy winked and the first twitched: by contracting his right eyelids. Only this boy is neither winking nor twitching, he is parodying someone else's, as he takes it, laughable, attempt at winking. Here, too, a socially established code exists (he will "wink" laboriously, overobviously, perhaps adding a grimace – the usual artifices of the clown); and so also does a message. Only now it is not conspiracy but ridicule that is in the air. If the others think he is actually winking, his whole project misfires as completely, though with somewhat different results, as if they think he is twitching. One can go further: uncertain of his mimicking abilities, the would-be satirist may practice at home before the mirror, in which case he is not twitching, winking, or parodying, but rehearsing; though so far as what a camera, a radical behaviorist, or a believer in protocol sentences would record he is just rapidly contracting his right eyelids like all the others. Complexities are possible, if not practically without end, at least logically so. The original winker might, for example, actually have been fake-winking, say, to mislead outsiders into imagining there was a conspiracy afoot when there in fact was not, in which case our descriptions of what the parodist is parodying and the rehearser rehearsing of course shift accordingly. But the point is that between what Ryle calls the "thin description" of what the rehearser (parodist, winker, twitcher...) is doing ("rapidly contracting his right eyelids") and the "thick description" of what he is doing ("practicing a burlesque of a friend faking a wink to deceive an innocent into thinking a conspiracy is in motion") lies the object of ethnography: a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake-winks, parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted, and without which they would not (not even the zero-form twitches, which, *as a cultural category*, are as much nonwinks as winks are nontwitches) in fact exist, no matter what anyone did or didn't do with his eyelids.

Like so many of the little stories Oxford philosophers like to make up for themselves, all this winking, fake-winking, burlesque-fake-winking, rehearsed-burlesque-fake-winking, may seem a bit artificial. In way of adding a more empirical note, let me give, deliberately unpreceded by any prior explanatory comment at all, a not untypical excerpt from my own field journal to demonstrate that, however evened off for didactic purposes, Ryle's example presents an image only too exact of the sort of piled-up structures of inference and implication through which an ethnographer is continually trying to pick his way:

> The French [the informant said] had only just arrived. They set up twenty or so small forts between here, the town, and the Marmusha area up in the middle of the mountains, placing them on promontories so they could survey the countryside. But for all this they couldn't guarantee safety, especially at night, so although the *mezrag*, trade-pact, system was supposed to be legally abolished it in fact continued as before.
>
> One night, when Cohen (who speaks fluent Berber), was up there, at Marmusha, two other Jews who were traders to a neighboring tribe came by to purchase some goods from him. Some Berbers, from yet another neighboring tribe, tried to break into Cohen's place, but he fired his rifle in the air. (Traditionally, Jews were not allowed to carry weapons; but at this period things were so unsettled many did so anyway.) This attracted the attention of the French and the marauders fled.
>
> The next night, however, they came back, one of them disguised as a woman who knocked on the door with some sort of a story. Cohen was suspicious and didn't want to let "her" in, but the other Jews said, "oh, it's all right, it's only a woman." So they opened the door and the whole lot came pouring in. They killed the two visiting Jews, but Cohen managed to barricade himself in an adjoining room. He heard the robbers planning to burn him alive in the shop after they removed his goods, and so he opened the door and, laying about him wildly with a club, managed to escape through a window.
>
> He went up to the fort, then, to have his wounds dressed, and complained to the local commandant, one Captain Dumari, saying he wanted his *'ar* – i.e., four or five times the value of the merchandise stolen from him. The robbers were from a tribe which had not yet submitted to French authority and were in open rebellion against it, and he wanted authorization to go with his *mezrag*-holder, the Marmusha tribal *sheikh*, to collect the indemnity that, under traditional rules, he had coming to him. Captain Dumari couldn't officially give him permission to do this, because of the French prohibition of the *mezrag* relationship, but he gave him verbal authorization, saying, "If you get killed, it's your problem."
>
> So the *sheikh*, the Jew, and a small company of armed Marmushans went off ten or fifteen kilometers up into the rebellious area, where there were of course no French, and, sneaking up, captured the thief-tribe's shepherd and stole its herds. The other tribe soon came riding out on horses after them, armed with rifles and ready to attack. But when they saw who the "sheep thieves" were, they thought better of it and said, "all right, we'll talk." They couldn't really deny what had happened – that some of their men had robbed Cohen and killed the two visitors – and they weren't prepared to start the serious feud with the Marmusha a scuffle with the invading party would bring on. So the two groups talked, and talked, and talked, there on the plain amid the thousands of sheep, and decided finally on five-hundred-sheep damages. The two armed Berber groups then lined up on their horses at opposite ends of the plain, with the sheep herded between them, and Cohen, in his black gown, pillbox hat, and flapping slippers, went out alone among the sheep, picking out, one by one and at his own good speed, the best ones for his payment.
>
> So Cohen got his sheep and drove them back to Marmusha. The French, up in their fort, heard them coming from some distance ("Ba, ba, ba" said Cohen, happily, recalling the image) and said, "What the hell is that?" And Cohen said, "That is my *'ar*." The French couldn't believe he had actually done what he said he had done, and accused him of being a spy for the rebellious Berbers, put him in prison, and took his sheep. In the town, his family, not having heard from him in so long a time, thought he was dead. But after a while the French released him and he came back home, but without his sheep. He then went to the Colonel in the town, the Frenchman in charge of the whole region, to complain. But the Colonel said, "I can't do anything about the matter. It's not my problem."

Quoted raw, a note in a bottle, this passage conveys, as any similar one similarly presented would do, a fair sense of how much goes into ethnographic description of even the most elemental sort – how extraordinarily "thick" it is. In finished anthropological writings, including those collected here, this fact – that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to – is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined. (Even to reveal that this little drama took place in the highlands of central Morocco in 1912 – and was recounted there in 1968 – is to determine much of our understanding of it.)

There is nothing particularly wrong with this, and it is in any case inevitable. But it does lead to a view of anthropological research as rather more of an observational and rather less of an interpretive activity than it really is. Right down at the factual base, the hard rock, insofar as there is any, of the whole enterprise, we are already explicating: and worse, explicating explications. Winks upon winks upon winks.

Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification – what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic – and determining their social ground and import. Here, in our text, such sorting would begin with distinguishing the three unlike frames of interpretation ingredient in the situation, Jewish, Berber, and French, and would then move on to show how (and why) at that time, in that place, their copresence produced a situation in which systematic misunderstanding reduced traditional form to social farce. What tripped Cohen up, and with him the whole, ancient pattern of social and economic relationships within which he functioned, was a confusion of tongues.

I shall come back to this too-compacted aphorism later, as well as to the details of the text itself. The point for now is only that ethnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with – except when (as, of course, he must do) he is pursuing the more automatized routines of data collection – is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render. And this is true at the most down-to-earth, jungle field work levels of his activity: interviewing informants, observing rituals, eliciting kin terms, tracing property lines, censusing households... writing his journal. Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.

Culture, this acted document, thus is public, like a burlesqued wink or a mock sheep raid. Though ideational, it does not exist in someone's head; though unphysical, it is not an occult entity. The interminable, because unterminable, debate within anthropology as to whether culture is "subjective" or "objective," together with the mutual exchange of intellectual insults ("idealist!" – "materialist!"; "mentalist!" – "behaviorist!"; "impressionist!" – "positivist!") which accompanies it, is wholly misconceived. Once human behavior is seen as (most of the time; there *are* true twitches) symbolic action – action which, like phonation in speech, pigment in painting, line in writing, or sonance in music, signifies – the question as to whether culture is patterned conduct or a frame of mind, or even the two somehow mixed together, loses sense. The thing to ask about a burlesqued wink or a mock sheep raid is not what their ontological status is. It is the same as that of rocks on the one hand and dreams on the other – they are things of this world. The thing to ask is what their import is: what it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said....

The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its author's ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask or a carving, but on the degree to which he is able to clarify what goes on in such

places, to reduce the puzzlement – what manner of men are these? – to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise. This raises some serious problems of verification, all right – or, if "verification" is too strong a word for so soft a science (I, myself, would prefer "appraisal"), of how you can tell a better account from a worse one. But that is precisely the virtue of it. If ethnography is thick description and ethnographers those who are doing the describing, then the determining question for any given example of it, whether a field journal squib or a Malinowski-sized monograph, is whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones. It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers. It is not worth it, as Thoreau said, to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Clifford Geertz on Meaning and Interpretation

Clifford Geertz's essay on "thick description" is an eloquent and famous statement of what makes the study of culture distinctive and difficult – careful attention to meaning and interpretation. He challenges reductionist social explanation which ignores the symbolic dimensions of social life, but also criticizes reified cultural analysis of abstract codes, preferring instead ethnography's close examination of grounded, concrete sequences of action and their contexts. Geertz emphasizes that culture is public and collective, not simply an attribute of individuals; he also makes the important methodological point that cultural analysis should not be treated as idiosyncratic but rather that it should be assessed on criteria appropriate to the subject.

Geertz's work has had a big interdisciplinary impact. William Sewell, in "Geertz, Cultural Systems, and History: From Synchrony to Transformation," pp. 35–55 in Sherry Ortner, ed., *The Fate of "Culture": Geertz and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) compares his influence to that of fellow anthropologist Ruth Benedict, also excerpted here. In the 1970s and 1980s his essays became foundational in cultural sociology: for an analysis and assessment see for instance Ann Swidler, excerpt this volume; Swidler, "Geertz's Ambiguous Legacy," *Contemporary Sociology* 25 (1996): 299–302; and Orville Lee III, "Observations on Anthropological Thinking About the Culture Concept: Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 33 (1988): 115–30. Thick ethnographic description of the sort Geertz recommends can be seen in work by Eliasoph, Lichterman, Nippert-Eng, and Kunda, excerpted this volume. Geertz's work invites debate on the key methodological issues in the study of culture; the relative importance of causal explanation and interpretive understanding, the ethics and politics of ethnography, and the relation between particular and general. An entry into these debates, and further commentary, can be found in Aletta Biersack, "Local Knowledge and Local History: Geertz and Beyond," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999), and Ortner, ed., *The Fate of "Culture."*

Born in 1926, Geertz studied at Harvard's Department of Social Relations in the 1950s. He taught at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, and subsequently became Professor of Social Science at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study for many years. He did ethnographic research in Indonesia and Morocco, and he has published numerous books and articles on

religion, economic development, politics, and village life, as well as on cultural theory. In addition to the classic collection of essays from which this excerpt is drawn, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), see, for instance, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); and *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). For more on Geertz and his work see Richard Handler, "An Interview with Clifford Geertz," *Current Anthropology* 32 (1991): 603–13, and Fred Inglis, *Clifford Geertz: Culture, Customs, and Ethics* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

7 Cultural Power

Pierre Bourdieu

The Perception of the Social World and Political Struggle

The most resolutely objectivist theory must take account of agents' representation of the social world and, more precisely, of the contribution they make to the construction of the vision of this world, and, thereby to the very construction of this world, via the *labour of representation* (in all senses of the term) that they continually perform in order to impose their own vision of the world or the vision of their own position in this world, that is, their social identity. The perception of the social world is the product of a double social structuring: on the 'objective' side, this perception is socially structured because the properties attached to agents or institutions do not make themselves available to perception independently, but in combinations whose probability varies widely (and just as feathered animals have a greater chance of having wings than furry animals, so the possessors of a substantial cultural capital are more likely to be museum visitors than those who lack such capital); on the 'subjective' side, it is structured because the schemes of perception and evaluation susceptible of being brought into operation at a given moment, including all those which are laid down in language, are the product of previous symbolic struggles and express, in a more or less transformed form, the state of symbolic relations of power. The fact remains, none the less, that the objects of the social world can be perceived and expressed in different ways because, like the objects of the natural world, they always include a certain indeterminacy and vagueness – because, for example, the most constant combinations of properties are never founded on anything other than statistical connections between interchangeable features; and also because, as historical objects, they are subject to variations in time and their meaning, in so far as it depends on the future, is itself in suspense, in a pending and deferred state, and is thus relatively indeterminate. This element of risk, of uncertainty, is what provides a basis for the plurality of world views, a plurality which is itself linked to the plurality of points of view, and to all the symbolic struggles for the production and imposition of the legitimate vision of the world and, more precisely, to all the cognitive strategies of *fulfilment* which produce the meaning of the objects of the social world by going beyond the directly visible attributes by reference to the future or the past. This reference may be implicit and tacit, through what Husserl calls protension and retention, practical forms of prospection or retrospection excluding the positioning of past and future as such; or it may be explicit, as in political struggles in which the past, with the retrospective reconstruction of a past adjusted to the needs of the present ('La Fayette, here we are!'), and especially the future, with the creative foresight associated with it, are continually invoked, in order to determine, delimit, and define the ever-open meaning of the present.

To point out that perception of the social world implies an act of construction is not in the least to accept an intellectualist theory of knowledge: the essential part of one's experience of the social world and of the labour of construction it implies takes

place in practice, without reaching the level of explicit representation and verbal expression. Closer to a class unconscious than to a 'class consciousness' in the Marxist sense, the sense of the position one occupies in the social space (what Goffman calls the 'sense of one's place') is the practical mastery of the social structure as a whole which reveals itself through the sense of the position occupied in that structure. The categories of perception of the social world are essentially the product of the incorporation of the objective structures of the social space. Consequently, they incline agents to accept the social world as it is, to take it for granted, rather than to rebel against it, to put forward opposed and even antagonistic possibilities. The sense of one's place, as the sense of what one can or cannot 'allow oneself', implies a tacit acceptance of one's position, a sense of limits ('that's not meant for us') or – what amounts to the same thing – a sense of distances, to be marked and maintained, respected, and expected of others. And this is doubtless all the more true when the conditions of existence are more rigorous and the reality principle is more rigorously imposed. (Hence the profound realism which most often characterizes the world view of the dominated and which, functioning as a sort of socially constituted instinct of conservation, can appear conservative only with reference to an external and thus normative representation of the 'objective interest' of those whom it helps to live or to survive.)

If the objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in visions of the social world which contribute to the permanence of those relations, this is therefore because the structuring principles of the world view are rooted in the objective structures of the social world and because the relations of power are also present in people's minds in the form of the categories of perception of those relations. But the degree of indeterminacy and vagueness characteristic of the objects of the social world is, together with the practical, pre-reflexive and implicit character of the patterns of perception and evaluation which are applied to them, the Archimedean point which is objectively made available to truly political action. Knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories which make it possible, are the stakes *par excellence* of the political struggle, a struggle which is inseparably theoretical and practical, over the power of preserving or transforming the social world by preserving or transforming the categories of perception of that world.

The capacity for bringing into existence in an explicit state, of publishing, of making public (i.e. objectified, visible, sayable, and even official) that which, not yet having attained objective and collective existence, remained in a state of individual or serial existence – people's disquiet, anxiety, expectation, worry – represents a formidable social power, that of bringing into existence groups by establishing the *common sense*, the explicit consensus, of the whole group. In fact, this labour of categorization, of making things explicit and classifying them, is continually being performed, at every moment of ordinary existence, in the struggles in which agents clash over the meaning of the social world and their position in it, the meaning of their social identity, through all the forms of speaking well or badly of someone or something, of blessing or cursing and of malicious gossip, eulogy, congratulations, praise, compliments, or insults, rebukes, criticism, accusations, slanders, etc.

It is easy to understand why one of the elementary forms of political power should have consisted, in many archaic societies, in the almost magical power of *naming*

and bringing into existence by virtue of naming. Thus in traditional Kabylia, the function of making things explicit and the labour of symbolic production that poets performed, particularly in crisis situations, when the meaning of the world is no longer clear, conferred on them major political functions, those of the war-lord or ambassador. But with the growing differentiation of the social world and the constitution of relatively autonomous fields, the labour of the production and imposition of meaning is performed in and through struggles in the field of cultural production (and especially in the political sub-field); it becomes the particular concern, the specific interest, of the professional producers of objectified representations of the social world, or, more precisely, of the methods of objectification.

If the legitimate mode of perception is such an important stake in different struggles, this is because on the one hand the movement from the implicit to the explicit is in no way automatic, the same experience of the social being recognizable in very different expressions, and on the other hand, the most marked objective differences may be hidden behind more immediately visible differences (such as, for example, those which separate ethnic groups). It is true that perceptual configurations, social *Gestalten*, exist objectively, and that the proximity of conditions and thus of dispositions tends to be re-translated into durable links and groupings, immediately perceptible social units such as socially distinct regions or districts (with spatial segregation), or sets of agents possessing altogether similar visible properties, such as Weber's *Stände*. But the fact remains that socially known and recognized differences exist only for a subject capable not only of perceiving the differences, but of recognizing them as significant and interesting, i.e., exists only for a subject endowed with the aptitude and the inclination to *establish* the differences which are held to be significant in the social world under consideration.

In this way, the social world, particularly through properties and their distribution, attains, in the objective world itself, the status of a *symbolic system* which, like a system of phonemes, is organized in accordance with the logic of difference, of differential deviation, which is thus constituted as significant *distinction*. The social space, and the differences that 'spontaneously' emerge within it, tend to function symbolically as *a space of life-styles* or as a set of *Stände*, of groups characterized by different life-styles. . . .

Distinction – in the ordinary sense of the world – is the difference written into the very structure of the social space when it is perceived in accordance with the categories adapted to that structure; and the Weberian *Stand*, which people so often like to contrast with the Marxist class, is the class adequately constructed when it is perceived through the categories of perception derived from the structure of that space. Symbolic capital – another name for distinction – is nothing other than capital, of whatever kind, when it is perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the incorporation of the structure of its distribution, i.e. when it is known and recognized as self-evident. Distinctions, as symbolic transformations of *de facto* differences, and, more generally, the ranks, orders, grades and all the other symbolic hierarchies, are the product of the application of schemes of construction which – as in the case, for instance, of the pairs of adjectives used to express most social judgements – are the product of the incorporation of the very structures to which they are applied; and recognition of the most absolute legitimacy is nothing other than an apprehension of the everyday social world as taken for

granted, an apprehension which results from the almost perfect coincidence of objective structures and incorporated structures.

It follows, among other consequences, that symbolic capital is attracted to symbolic capital and that the – real – autonomy of the field of symbolic production does not prevent this field from remaining dominated, in its functioning, by the constraints which dominate the social field as a whole. It also follows that objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic relations of power, in visions of the social world which contribute to ensuring the permanence of those relations of power. In the struggle for the imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world, in which science itself is inevitably involved, agents wield a power which is proportional to their symbolic capital, that is, to the recognition they receive from a group. The authority which underlies the performative effectiveness of discourse about the social world, the symbolic force of visions and pre-visions aimed at imposing the principles of vision and division of this world, is a *percipi*, a being known and recognized (*nobilis*), which allows a *percipere* to be imposed. It is the most *visible* agents, from the point of view of the prevailing categories of perception, who are the best placed to change the vision by changing the categories of perception. But they are also, with a few exceptions, the least inclined to do so.

The Symbolic Order and the Power of Naming

In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly of legitimate *naming* as the official – i.e. explicit and public – imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world, agents bring into play the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles, in particular all the power that they possess over the instituted taxonomies, those inscribed in people's minds or in the objective world, such as qualifications. Thus all the symbolic strategies through which agents aim to impose their vision of the divisions of the social world and of their position in that world can be located between two extremes: the insult, that *idios logos* through which an ordinary individual attempts to impose his point of view by taking the risk that a reciprocal insult may ensue, and the *official naming*, a symbolic act of imposition which has on its side all the strength of the collective, of the consensus, of common sense, because it is performed by a delegated agent of the state, that is, the holder of the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*. On the one hand, there is the world of particular perspectives, of individual agents who, on the basis of their particular point of view, their particular position, produce namings – of themselves and others – that are particular and self-interested (nicknames, insults, or even accusations, indictments, slanders, etc.), and all the more powerless to gain recognition, and thus to exert a truly symbolic effect, the less their authors are *authorized*, either personally (*auctoritas*) or institutionally (by delegation), and the more directly they are concerned to gain recognition for the point of view that they are seeking to impose. On the other hand, there is the authorized point of view of an agent who is personally authorized, such as a great critic or prestigious preface-writer or established author (Zola's '*J'accuse*'), and above all the legitimate point of view of the authorized spokesperson, the delegate of the state, the official naming, or the *title* or qualification which, like an educational

qualification, is valid on all markets and which, as an official definition of one's official identity, saves its bearers from the symbolic struggle of all against all, by establishing the authorized perspective, the one recognized by all and thus universal, from which social agents are viewed. The state, which produces official classifications, is to some extent the supreme tribunal to which Kafka was referring when he made Block say, speaking of the advocate and his claim to be among the 'great advocates': 'any man can call himself "great", of course, if he pleases, but in this matter the Court tradition must decide.' The truth is that scientific analysis does not have to choose between perspectivism and what has to be called absolutism: indeed, the truth of the social world is the stake in a struggle between agents who are very unequally equipped to attain absolute, that is, self-verifying, vision and pre-vision. . . .

But the logic of official naming is most clearly demonstrated in the case of the *title* – whether titles of nobility, educational qualifications or professional titles. This is a symbolic capital that is socially and even legally guaranteed. The nobleman is not only someone who is known, famous, and even renowned for his good qualities, prestigious, in a word, *nobilis*: he is also someone who is recognized by an *official* authority, one that is 'universal', i.e. known and recognized by all. The professional or academic title is a sort of legal rule of social perception, a being-perceived that is guaranteed as a right. It is symbolic capital in an institutionalized, legal (and no longer merely legitimate) form. More and more inseparable from the educational qualification, by virtue of the fact that the educational system tends more and more to represent the ultimate and unique guarantor of all professional titles, it has a value in itself and, although we are dealing with a common noun, it functions like a great name (the name of some great family or a proper name), one which procures all sorts of symbolic profit (and goods that one cannot directly acquire with money). It is the symbolic scarcity of the title in the space of the names of professions that tends to govern the rewards of the profession (and not the relation between the supply of and demand for a certain form of labour). It follows that the rewards associated with the title tend to become autonomous with regard to the rewards associated with the work. In this way, the same work can receive different remunerations depending on the titles and qualifications of the person doing it (e.g. a permanent, official post-holder as opposed to a part-timer or someone acting in that capacity, etc.). The qualification is in itself an *institution* (like language) that is more durable than the intrinsic characteristics of the work, and so the rewards associated with the qualification can be maintained despite changes in the work and its relative value: it is not the relative value of the work which determines the value of the name, but the institutionalized value of the title which acts as an instrument serving to defend and maintain the value of the work.

This means that one cannot establish a science of classifications without establishing a science of the struggle over classifications and without taking into account the position occupied, in this struggle for the power of knowledge, for power through knowledge, for the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, by each of the agents or groups of agents involved in it, whether they be ordinary individuals, exposed to the vicissitudes of everyday symbolic struggle, or authorized (and full-time) professionals, which includes all those who speak or write about social classes, and who can be distinguished by the extent to which their classifications involve

the authority of the state, as holder of the monopoly of *official naming*, of the right classification, of the right order.

While the structure of the social field is defined at each moment by the structure of the distribution of capital and the profits characteristic of the different particular fields, the fact remains that in each of these arenas, the very definition of the stakes and the trump cards can be called into question. Every field is the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition of the legitimate principles of division of the field. The question of legitimacy arises from the very possibility of this questioning, from this break with the doxa which takes the ordinary order for granted. That being said, the symbolic force of the parties involved in this struggle is never completely independent of their positions in the game, even if the specifically symbolic power of naming constitutes a force which is relatively independent of the other forms of social power. The constraints of the necessity inscribed in the very structure of the different fields still weigh on the symbolic struggles which aim to preserve or transform that structure. The social world is, to a great extent, something which agents make at every moment; but they have no chance of unmaking and remaking it except on the basis of a realistic knowledge of what it is and of what they can do to it by virtue of the position they occupy in it.

In short, scientific work aims to establish an adequate knowledge both of the space of objective relations between the different positions which constitute the field and of the necessary relations that are set up, through the mediation of the habitus of those who occupy them, between these positions and the corresponding stances, i.e. between the points occupied in that space and the points of view on that very space, which play a part in the reality and development of that space. In other words, the objective delimitation of constructed classes, of *regions* of the constructed space of positions, enables one to understand the source and effectiveness of the classificatory strategies by means of which agents seek to preserve or modify this space, in the forefront of which we must place the constitution of groups organized with a view to defending the interests of their members.

Analysis of the struggle over classifications brings to light the political ambition which haunts the gnoseological ambition to produce the correct classification: an ambition which properly defines the *rex*, the one who has the task, according to Benveniste, of *regere fines* and *regere sacra*, of tracing in speech the frontiers between groups, and also between the sacred and the profane, good and evil, the vulgar and the distinguished. If social science is not to be merely a way of pursuing politics by other means, social scientists must take as their object the intention of assigning others to classes and of thereby telling them what they are and what they have to be (herein lies all the ambiguity of forecasting); they must analyse, in order to repudiate it, the ambition of the creative world vision, that sort of *intuitus originarius* which would make things exist in conformity with its vision (herein lies all the ambiguity of the Marxist conception of class, which is inseparably both a being and an ought-to-be). They must objectify the ambition of objectifying, of classifying from outside, objectively, agents who are struggling to classify others and themselves. If they do happen to classify – by carving up, for the purposes of statistical analysis, the continuous space of social positions – it is precisely so as to be able to objectify *all* forms of objectification, from the individual insult to the official naming, without forgetting the claim, characteristic of science in its positivist and

bureaucratic definition, to arbitrate in these struggles in the name of 'axiological neutrality'. The symbolic power of agents, understood as a power of making people see – *theorein* – and believe, of producing and imposing the legitimate or legal classification, depends, as the case of *rex* reminds us, on the position they occupy in the space (and in the classifications that are potentially inscribed in it). But to objectify objectification means, above all, objectifying the field of production of the objectified representations of the social world, and in particular of the legislative taxonomies, in short, the field of cultural or ideological production, a game in which the social scientist is himself involved, as are all those who debate the nature of social classes.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Bourdieu on Cultural Power

Pierre Bourdieu argues that social explanation must take into account the subjective categories in which people understand their worlds, the pre-conscious practices in which those categories are articulated, the power exercised in social categorization, and the politics of categorical distinctions. Cultural categorization and the power of authoritative categorization are important stakes in social struggles and central to the understanding of inequality and social change. Moreover, intellectuals and social scientists are not only analysts but important participants in symbolic politics, and their work demands an ethic of reflexivity.

Born in southern France in 1930, Bourdieu studied philosophy at the École normale supérieure in Paris and spent some years in Algeria during the war for independence in the 1950s. He published several books on Algerian society and this work also informed his cultural theory in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). From the 1960s he worked at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris on a number of collaborative projects on French culture and education, and founded the Centre de sociologie européenne. In 1982 he was appointed Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France in Paris. His many books and articles address numerous aspects of cultural power, treating topics in the sociology of education, art, aesthetics, intellectuals, sport, the media, politics, language, stratification, and status attainment. In addition to his theoretical writing cited above, and the collection of essays from which this selection is drawn, probably the most influential of his writings in the English-speaking world has been *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), a massive, rigorously analyzed investigation of the relations between social position and cultural taste in France. Other representative or influential works include Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claud Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice, foreword by Tom Bottomore (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977); *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990); Pierre Bourdieu with Luc Boltanski et al., *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited and introduced by Randal Johnson (Columbia University Press, 1993); Bourdieu et al., *Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*, trans. Richard Teese (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and *On Television*, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (New York: New Press, 1998). Usefully

informal reflections can be found in Pierre Bourdieu, "Thinking about Limits," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 9 (1992): 37–49, Pierre Bourdieu and Terry Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life," *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 111–21, and Loïc Wacquant, "Toward a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 7 (1989): 26–63.

Like Geertz, Bourdieu has been influential in many disciplines, and his work has been agenda setting in recent cultural sociology (see Orville Lee III, "Observations on Anthropological Thinking About the Culture Concept: Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 33 (1988): 115–30). Cultural sociologists have been influenced in two ways by Bourdieu: first, his theories of habitus, fields, and symbolic and social capital make culture more central to the investigation of many classic sociological issues; and second, more specifically, his theory of cultural capital has generated a thriving research program on the links between taste, symbolic boundaries and status groups (see excerpts from work by Lamont and Bryson and related editor's notes sections, this volume).

The many reflections on Bourdieu's work include David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone, eds., *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Vera Zolberg, "Debating the Social: A symposium on and with Pierre Bourdieu," *Contemporary Sociology* 21 (1992): 151–61; Rogers Brubaker "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu" *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 745–75; Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Culture: An Introduction," *Media Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 209–23; and Paul DiMaggio, "Review Essay: On Pierre Bourdieu," *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (1979): 1460–74.

David Gartman challenges Bourdieu's theory from the point of view of Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory (see chapter 3 this volume) in "Culture as Class Symbolization or Mass Reification? A Critique of Bourdieu's *Distinction*," *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1991): 421–47. Some of the many other assessments and challenges from different points of view include T. M. S. Evans, "Bourdieu and the Logic of Practice: Is All Giving Indian-Giving or is 'Generalized Materialism' Not Enough?" *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999): 3–31; Lois McNay, "Gender, Habitus, and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16 (1999): 95–117; John Myles, "From Habitus to Mouth: Language and Class in Bourdieu's Sociology of Language," *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 879–901; Rodney Benson, "Field Theory in Comparative Context: A New Paradigm for Media Studies," *Theory and Society* 28 (1998): 463–98; Jeffrey Alexander, "The Reality of Reduction: the Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu," pp. 128–217 in *Fin de Siècle Social Theory; Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason* (London: Verso, 1995); Leslie McCall, "Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism and Conceptions of Social Order," *Theory and Society* 21 (1992): 837–68, and Christian Joppke, "The Cultural Dimensions of Class Formation and Class Struggle: On the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 31 (1986): 53–78.

Part II

Cultural Repertoires: Identities and Practices