

## **Cultura:**

Brooker, Peter. A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999 (50-52).

Culture An indispensable but multi-accented term with a complex and still open history which in itself expresses the complexity of general human history. At its extremes, culture is used on the one hand, as in its early usage, to refer to organic cultivation, as of soil and crops, or to a biological 'culture' made in the laboratory and so by extension to individual human accomplishment (as in descriptions of a 'cultured gentleman'). On the other, it is used to refer to intellectual and artistic works or practices which in their very forms and meanings define human society as socially constructed rather than natural. Sometimes this second meaning is then generalized to produce descriptions of the tenor or 'spirit' of a social group or whole society, period or nation. 'Culture' is therefore used to refer to individual style or character, to a stage of artistic or intellectual development, to the expressive life and traditions of a social group, to a social-historical moment or a broad epoch. We talk about a cultured left foot, about the culture of football, about film culture, AfricanAmerican or Scottish culture, eighteenth-century or mod culture, or the culture of the 1960s or 1980s.

Perhaps the most profitable way of studying such a mutable term is along the lines of Raymond Williams's account of its European usage over the last three centuries (1976b). Williams suggests that in its 'most widespread use' culture has referred in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the world of the arts (literature, music, painting, sculpture, theatre, film). In this sense the term has nevertheless been understood and invariably valued in different ways. In a traditional perspective it is seen as embodied

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in a selective CANON of works (comprising 'high culture') and valued above commercial or POPULAR artistic forms ('low' or 'MASS culture', to which some might wish to deny any genuine 'artistic' status).

Of underlying and fundamental importance to this view, as to other less traditional perspectives, is the attitude taken towards mass or industrial or, in the twentieth century, advanced consumer society. Debates about culture in this most familiar sense have indeed accompanied and been prompted by the social and economic developments of this period. Culture has therefore been defined in relation to this historical form of society, traditionally once more in terms which see one as opposed to the other. The resulting defence of culture as equivalent or necessary to authentic moral or spiritual values sets art works - pre-eminently a selective tradition of literary texts - against the mechanical and materialist order of industrial society.

So defined, as in the writings of Matthew Arnold, F.R Leavis, and T.S. Eliot, among others, culture is mobilized to serve a liberal or radical conservative IDEOLOGY. However, a similar defence has also informed the opposition to mass society of Marxists such as Theodor Adorno and others associated with the Frankfurt School. In both traditions the valued culture is that of a minority or an ELITE, though the authors, artists, genres and individual works may be as different as the Greek classics, the realist novel, and the contemporary AVANT-GARDE. In a reverse evaluation, the 'popular' culture of punk or jungle or of commercial cinema might be preferred to any of the above. This comprises a radical, contemporary shift of definition and of the terms of valuation. Nevertheless, all these views share the assumption that culture can have an active, shaping influence upon ideas, attitudes and experience. As such, they contrast with the

position which sees culture as secondary to and as a reflex of other processes in the society and economy which are thought to be more fundamental and determining than culture itself. This latter view has been associated with an economistic or 'vulgar' MARXISM but in more refined versions still draws on the Marxist model of (an economic) BASE AND (ideological/cultural) SUPERSTRUCTURE which most commentators feel it necessary to address.

However complex, therefore, the definition of culture is vital to notions of the objects of study, the methods and aims of a range of academic disciplines (including Philosophy, Linguistics, and Education as well as the more obvious Anthropology, Sociology, Literary, Media and Cultural Studies). Its use and meanings in these contexts may be inconsistent and more or less descriptive or evaluative. However, the study of culture can never be free of assumptions of VALUE or an involvement in meaningful, value-making activity on the part of the researcher or the works or social actors being studied. Perhaps the most influential conception of culture in this academic work, especially in the Humanities and Cultural Studies, has been Raymond Williams's own founding definition of culture as 'a whole way of life of a social group or whole society'.

Work along these lines has developed straightforwardly from neither the liberal-conservative nor Marxist traditions but from a critical engagement with each. Writing in 1981, Williams sees a convergence of the idea of culture as 'a whole way of life' and its association with intellectual and artistic activity. What unites these emphases, he says, is the idea of culture as a signifying system, 'through which necessarily ... a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored' (1981: 13). This thinking has helped inspire a conception of creative work and cultural practice as constituting rather

than 'expressing' a given social order and stimulated new directions in the Sociology of Culture and Cultural Studies as elsewhere.

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However, it would be false to suggest there is a consensual definition of culture in the contemporary period; even that the idea of culture as a 'whole way of life' is universally accepted. In an early response to Williams, the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson proposed an alternative definition of culture not as a 'whole way of life' but as a 'whole way of struggle' (1961). In a later phase the influence of contemporary feminist, poststructuralist, postmodern and postcolonial theory have led many to reiterate the critique of earlier notions of minority culture in terms now of their white, Western and malecentred bias. In addition, many would raise doubts concerning the homogenizing conception of 'the whole' and unified, or the desire for this, in the realm of culture as in other fields. The variant meanings of culture are now more readily understood as the necessary expression of a range of signifying practices across different media and discourses. We are brought therefore to a pluralized and dialogic conception of cultures of dissonance, difference and diversity and to the debates this in turn engenders (Hall in Morley and Chen [eds] 1996; Bhabha 1994).

See also COMMON CULTURE; COMMUNITY

Culture industries A description used to refer to commercially and stateowned organizations in the arts and media, committed to the direct PRODUCTION, sponsorship, display and distribution of cultural goods and services. These can range from exhibitions, sports events, books, newspapers and associated kinds of journalism, film, video and TV production, and all kinds of musical production from opera to Pop. Louis Althusser includes these organizations in his account Of IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSeS

but this category includes institutions (education, the family, the legal system) which are not cultural organizations in the present sense.

The changing recent histories of the major culture industries (especially the communications and entertainment industries) show an increasing commercialization, concentration of ownership and use of expanded world markets for the purposes of wider distribution and increased profit. This is accompanied by competition between industries, a heavy investment in advertising, and generally expanding consumption of the goods and services they provide. Communications and media industries also increasingly make use of advanced computer technologies and MASS production techniques, and a flexible labour force, all of which characterize these industries as themselves products of developments in industrial and consumer capitalism. What distinguishes the culture industries in this general picture of multinational and global capitalism is the nature of their product and its role in shaping attitudes and ideologies. Hence the description sometimes employed of 'consciousness industries' (Enzensberger 1970).

In one main tradition of analysis associated with Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer (1972) and members of the so-called Frankfurt School (see CRITICAL THEORY), the forms and effects of mass culture are seen to serve the ends of commodification and to duplicate the social relations of capitalism in the realm of IDEOLOGY. The culture industries (the term was first coined by Adorno) are therefore seen as manipulative and their audiences as passive consumers. They are then contrasted in both respects with the non-commercial forms of authentic art, thought of as a product of the lone artist of integrity.

**Raymond Williams:**

Juan, E San Jr. "Raymond Williams and the idea of cultural revolution". College Literature 26 (2): 118-136. Spring 1999.

In his major statement of principles, *The Long Revolution* (1961), that Williams attacks head-on the liberal bourgeois tradition (from Locke and Hobbes to the utilitarians) by a new theorizing of culture. Culture is not just "a whole way of life," but the differentiated totality and dynamics of social practices in history. Art and literature cannot be privileged or idealized since they are "part of the general process that creates conventions and institutions, through which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active." Williams proposes a relational and processual view of culture that breaks down the confines separating literature, culture, politics, everyday life in general. He emphasizes connections, dissonance, and interactive negotiations, unfolding the conflicts and changes implicated in patterns of learning and communication.

The stress on culture as a constellation of activities, forms of the disposition of human energy, is crucial here. This is meant to resolve the subject/object antinomy, to mediate the consciousness/external world dualism that underpins the abstract rationalism and empiricism of bourgeois thought. In a later work, *The Sociology of Culture*, Williams approaches culture "as the signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored". Culture then is not solely equivalent to high art, rare artifacts, or stereotyped representations. It encompasses both articulated expressions and their experiential matrices, the rich and volatile conjunctures of these polarities.

## **Stuart Hall**

Martin, Jacques. "Cultural Revolutions". New Statesman. Vol. 126, Issue 4363. 1997. 24-27.

Several decades on, Hall observes that the place of culture has been revolutionised. "You can no longer think primarily in terms of the economic and the material and then add the cultural icing afterwards. You have to treat culture as formative of human life, human agency and of historical process."

For Hall, culture is now central to understanding how society works and the distribution of power. "Culture has transformed our conception of power, which we used to think of in a rather crude and reductionist way. Instead of seeing power simply in terms of government or the military, it is everywhere, from the family and gender relations to sport and personal relationships. Our very identities and subjectivities are formed culturally."

Culture is central to the way organisations function and change. It has become intrinsic to modern management. "You can force people to go to work when they have to clock on and off, but you don't own their souls. With the management of culture in the modern corporation, however, the idea is that people regulate themselves, they are invited to share ownership of the project, they become a new kind of entrepreneurial subject. Foucault uses the wonderful term 'subjectification', which means at one and the same time to become a subject and to be subjected to. In other words it is double-edged."

"Culture can become everything. You can manipulate the symbols without

altering the realities. Through language, dress or mode of behaviour, for example, they signal a new kind of egalitarianism, while in practice they make little dent on the underlying causes of inequality."

**Michel de Certeau:**

De Certeau, Michel. Culture in the Plural. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997. (103-04)

The term culture intervenes in the "diffusion of culture," "popular culture," "politics of culture," and so on. Six different uses-characterized by as many different approaches-can be designated:

1. The features of "cultivated" human beings, that is, corresponding to the model developed in stratified societies through a category that introduces its norms wherever it imposes its power.
2. A patrimony of "works" to be preserved or diffused, or in relation to which to be situated (for example, classical culture, humanistic culture, Italian culture, English culture, etc.). Added to the idea of "works" to be disseminated is that of "creations" and "creators" to be privileged in view of a renewal of a given patrimony.
3. The image, perception, or comprehension of a world belonging to a given milieu (rural, urban, Indian, etc.) or to a time (medieval, contemporary, etc.): Max Weber's Weltanschauung, A. O. Lovejoy's Unit Idea, and so on. To this conception, which ascribes to its tacit "ideas" the role of organizing experience,



can be compared André Malraux's social aesthetics, a substitute for philosophical or religious visions of the world.

4. Modes of behavior, institutions, ideologies, and myths that compose frames of reference and whose totality, whether it is coherent or not, distinguishes one society from another. Since E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), it has become a key concept in cultural anthropology (cf. "patterns of culture"). An entire spectrum of positions exists whereby one privileges practices and behaviors or ideologies and myths.

5. Things acquired, insofar as they are distinguished from things innate. Culture leans in the direction of creation  
artifice, and operativity in a dialectic that is opposed to it and combines it with nature.

6. A system of communication, conceived according to models developed in theories of verbal language. Especially underscored are the rules that organize the passage of signifiers or, in a related field, media (cf. A. Moles). Here the meaning of 4 above must be retained to determine a level 104 / Cultural Politics of analysis with the goal of specifying a way of taking up the problem.

Subculture and counterculture need to be distinguished. The former designates the culture of a subgroup, of a minority, and so on. The latter refers to the judgment that a majority makes of subcultures or subgroups and whose social implications the subgroups often confirm when they take them up in order to define themselves.'

Cultural appears in a series of frequently used expressions: "cultural action," "cultural activity," "cultural affairs," "cultural agents," "cultural center," "cultural chain,"

"cultural discourse," "cultural development," "cultural foyer," "cultural engineer," "cultural leisures," "cultural politics," "cultural revolution," "cultural system," "cultural life," and so on. Out of this almost endless list a few themes emerge.

Cultural action, an expression parallel to "union action" or "political action," designates an intervention linking the agents to specific goals (or "targets"). It is also an operational segment in which the means of mobilizing a project are more important than the goals to be defined.

Cultural activity locates activity in an inherited and patented culture (cf. meanings 1 and 2 of culture above), that is, in "cultivated culture" (Edgar Morin).

Cultural agents mean those who exercise one of the functions or one of the positions defined by the cultural field: creator, animator, critic, disseminator, consumer, and so on.

Cultural politics could be considered the more or less coherent totality of objectives, means, and actions aiming at modifying behavior according to explicit principles or criteria.

Cultural discourse can be understood as all language that deals with cultural problems insofar as a relation exists between a form and a content.

Cultural development submits to the law of a homogeneous growth the reforms needed for an extension of production or consumption. An ideology of continuity and, in particular, of the invariability of the socioeconomic system upholds the concept of development and opposes it to those of "cultural revolution" or "structural" changes.

As a result, the concept of "development" extends its power to mobilize, but only as cultural problems are introduced and reclassified in the sphere of long-range planning.

A triple revolution accompanies this technocratic reclassification:

1. Thematics progressively ceases to appeal to a social origin and norm in order to concentrate on the idea of a present that needs to be managed and a future that has to be controlled.

2. Institutions that were formerly private and militant are increasingly drawn into structures of state and into an administration of long-term planning.

3. Objectives that initially aimed at revising social equilibrium turn in the direction of the organization of techniques, organisms, and professions (that raise consciousness, cultural engineers, etc.) endowed with an instrumental value with the aim of facilitating participation in a politics defined elsewhere, in high places.

### **Clifford Geertz**

Geertz Clifford. *The interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973

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The term "culture" has by now acquired a certain aura of ill-repute in social anthropological circles because of the multiplicity of its referents and the studied vagueness with which it has all too often been invoked. (Though why it should suffer more for these reasons than "social structure" or "personality" is something I do not entirely understand.) In any case, the culture concept to which I adhere has neither multiple referents nor, so far as I can see, any unusual ambiguity: it denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. Of course, terms

such as meaning," "symbol," and "conception" cry out for explication. But that is precisely where the widening, the broadening, and the expanding come in. If Langer is right that "the concept of meaning, in all its varieties, is the dominant philosophical concept of our time," that "sign, symbol, denotation, signification, communication . . . are our [intellectual] stock in trade," it is perhaps time that social anthropology, and particularly that part of it concerned with the study of religion, became aware of the fact.

### **Nestor García Canclini**

García Canclini, Néstor. Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad. México, D. F.: Grijalbo, 1989.

#### **FASCINADOS CON LO PRIMITIVO Y LO POPULAR**

¿Por qué los promotores de la modernidad, que la anuncian como superación de lo antiguo y lo tradicional, sienten cada vez más atracción por referencias del pasado? No es posible dar la respuesta sólo en este capítulo. Habrá que explorar las necesidades culturales de conferir un significado más denso al presente y las necesidades políticas de legitimar mediante el prestigio del patrimonio histórico la hegemonía actual. Tendremos que indagar, por ejemplo, por qué el folclor encuentra eco en los gustos musicales de los jóvenes y en los medios electrónicos.

Aquí nos ocuparemos de la importancia ascendente que los críticos y museógrafos contemporáneos dan al arte premoderno y al popular. El auge que los pintores latinoamericanos hallan a fines de los ochenta y principios de los noventa en los museos y mercados de Estados Unidos y Europa, no se entiende como parte de la apertura a lo no moderno iniciada algunos años antes.

Un modo de averiguar qué buscan los protagonistas del arte contemporáneo en lo

primitivo y lo popular, es examinar cómo lo ponen en escena los museos y qué dicen para justificarlo en los catálogos. Una exposición sintomática fue la realizada en 1984 por el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York sobre El primitivismo en el arte del siglo xx. La institución que en las dos últimas décadas fue la instancia máxima de legitimación y consagración de las nuevas tendencias, propuso una lectura de los artistas de la modernidad que marcaba, en vez de la autonomía y la innovación, las semejanzas formales de sus obras con piezas antiguas. Una mujer de Picasso encontraba su espejo en una máscara kwakiutl; las figuras alargadas de Giacometti en otras de Tanzania; la Máscara del temor de Klee, en un dios guerrero de los zuni; una cabeza de pájaro de Max Ernst, en una máscara tusyan. La exhibición revelaba que las dependencias de los modernos hacia lo arcaico abarcan desde los fauves hasta los expresionistas, desde Brancusi hasta los artistas de la tierra y los que desarrollan performances inspirados en rituales "primitivos".

Es de lamentar que las preocupaciones explicativas del libro-catálogo se hayan concentrado en interpretaciones detectivescas: establecer si Picasso compró máscaras del Congo en el mercado de pulgas de París, o si Klee visitaba los museos etnológicos de Berlín y Basilea. El descentramiento del arte occidental y moderno queda a mitad de camino al preocuparse sólo por reconstruir los procedimientos a través de los cuales objetos de África, Asia y Oceanía llegaron a Europa y los Estados Unidos, y de qué modo los asumieron artistas occidentales, sin comparar los usos y significados originarios con los que les dio la modernidad. Pero nos interesa, sobre todo, registrar que este tipo de muestras de gran resonancia relativizan la autonomía del campo cultural de la modernidad.

Otro caso destacable fue la exposición de 1978 en el Museo de Arte Moderno de París que reunió a artistas llamados ingenuos o populares. Paisajistas, constructores de capillas y castillos personales, decoradores barrocos de sus cuartos cotidianos, pintores y escultores autodidactas, fabricantes de muñecos insólitos y máquinas inútiles. Algunos, como Ferdinand Cheval, eran conocidos por la difusión de historiadores y artistas que supieron valorar obras extrañas al mundo del arte. Pero la mayor parte carecía de toda formación y reconocimiento institucional. Produjeron sin preocupaciones publicitarias, lucrativas o estéticas -en el sentido de las bellas artes o las vanguardias- trabajos en los que aparecen una originalidad o una novedad. Dieron tratamientos no convencionales a materiales, formas y colores, que los especialistas organizadores de esta exposición juzgaron presentables en un museo. El libro-catálogo preparado para la muestra tiene cinco prólogos, como si el Museo hubiera sentido mayor necesidad que en otras exhibiciones de explicar y prevenir. Cuatro de ellos, en vez de buscar lo específico de los artistas expuestos, quieren entenderlos relacionándolos con tendencias del arte moderno. A Michael Ragon le recuerdan a los expresionistas y surrealistas por su "imaginación delirante", a Van Gogh por su "anormalidad", y los declara artistas porque son "individuos solitarios e inadaptados", "dos características de todo artista verdadero".

El prólogo más sabroso es el de la directora del Museo, Suzanne Page, quien explica haber denominado la exposición *Les singuliers de l'art* porque los participantes son "individuos libremente propietarios de sus deseos, de sus extravagancias, que imponen sobre el mundo el sello vital de su irreductible unicidad". Asegura que el Museo no hace esta muestra por buscar una alternativa a "una vanguardia fatigada", sino para "renovar la mirada y reencontrar lo que hay de salvaje en este arte cultural".

¿A qué se debe esta insistencia en la unicidad, lo puro, lo inocente, lo salvaje, al mismo tiempo que reconocen que estos hombres y mujeres producen mezclando lo que aprendieron en las páginas rosas del Petit Larousse, Paris Match, La Tour Eiffel, la iconografía religiosa, los diarios y revistas de su época? ¿Por qué el museo que intenta deshacerse de las parcialidades ya insostenibles de "lo moderno" necesita clasificar lo que se le escapa, no sólo en relación con las tendencias legitimadas del arte sino con los casilleros creados para nombrar lo heterodoxo? El prólogo de Raymon de Moulin da varias claves. Después de señalar que desde el comienzo del siglo xx la definición social del arte se extiende en forma incesante y que la incertidumbre así generada llevó a etiquetar también incesantemente las manifestaciones extrañas, propone considerar a estas obras "inclasificables", y se pregunta por las razones por las que fueron elegidas. Ante todo, porque para la mirada culta estos artistas ingenuos "logran su salvación artística" en tanto "transgreden parcialmente las normas de su clase"; luego, porque... redescubren en el uso creador del tiempo libre -el del ocio, o, más a menudo, de la jubilación- el saber perdido del trabajo indiviso. Aislados, protegidos de todo contacto y de todo compromiso con los circuitos culturales o comerciales, no son sospechosos de haber obedecido a otra necesidad que la interior: ni magníficos, ni malditos, sino inocentes [...]. En sus obras, la mirada cultivada de una sociedad desencantada cree percibir la reconciliación del principio de placer y del principio de realidad.