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ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

Marx and the contemporary theory of culture*

Inherent in the concept of culture of the last decades is a troubling ambiguity. In order to comprehend the roots of this ambiguity, we must trace the term through the historic progression of its application.

It emerged in the Greece of the 6th and 7th centuries B. C. at the time when Archilocus, Sappho and Anacreon experienced for the first time "the discord between desire and duty, and between duty and necessity", and transformed their personal experiences through the medium of lyric poetry into a social phenomenon; a time when a human being began to be considered as a "personality" as well as "possessing a personality"; when, in harnessing nature, the Greeks developed their "techne", the art of manipulation and transformation, of shaping and framing, which enabled them to manipulate all things, including man's personality. The ancient Greeks were the first, and if we consider the originality of the discovery, the only civilization, to approach the world, including the world of the spirit, as an object of cultivation.

The Greek concept of culture was immortalized by Plutarch in his famous metaphor: the soil produces ripe and sweet fruits only when cultivated by an ingenious and skillful farmer who assiduously and painstakingly selects the seed of top quality. Man likewise requires the best seed and the most meticulous cultivation. By means of cultivation — of both "agri" and "animi" — we can turn wilderness into fertile soil, the pri-

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mitive into the perfect, and the intractable into the tame. The soil can be developed into an olive grove or a vineyard through cultivation. The human being is turned man by breeding. This latter process in man is achieved by the tutor who moulds man from the primitive material supplied by nature. The tutor sows the noble seed of the human way of life and attends to the ripening fruits. It is his endeavours and the seed he uses which are the two elements of the "cultura animi".

The semantic tradition, which was consolidated by the Sophists and Plutarch, has persisted in current usage to this day. Thus we speak of a "cultured person", and appeal for the promotion or dissemination of "culture"; we praise persons for their "culture", or deplore them for their "lack of culture". The idea that man acquires culture by breeding is deeply rooted in human thinking, as well as the conviction that culture is good and praiseworthy.

The active striving for the perfection of the human being presupposes a "breeding ideal". In this context, culture very clearly becomes a partisan or evaluative category. Not every kind of conduct will be evaluated as "cultured", and man's way of life may be considered as either "cultured" or "uncultured", or, depending on its closeness to the ideal, ranked anywhere between the two extremes. The transmission of culture is equivalent in this case to the moulding of the human being into something he had not been before. The rational basis of this process is common to all breeding systems, but in each it is filled with different content, according to the ideal pattern of culture of a given system.

For centuries it has been class domination which has provided the basic mechanism for the construction of breeding ideals, and hence also the evaluative concept of culture. The economically dominating class has exercised its ideological rule over a nation or group by forcing a universal identification of its way of life with culture. The code of virtue for nobles, or Areta, for example provided a model for the Greek ideal of culture.

Class categories have for centuries coincided with the division between those who must work in order to live and those who live without working. For this reason, culture has come to be associated with the immaterial, the spiritual and the intellectual. With the exception of periods in which warriors occupied the top of the social hierarchy, as in the "dark ages" of Clovis and his Germanic successors, spiritual values have ranked higher than physical values. The principal ideal of culture in these societies has been the spiritually refined human being whose thinking is deeply rooted in the arts and philosophy, and the purpose of breeding has been to make these spheres accessible and comprehensible to man.

Cultural differentiation, however, has had a diacritical function in relation to social structure. In the caste or estate societies, in those societies in which separate social ranks have been strictly maintained and social mobility is practically nonexistent, intimate contact with "culture" is available to only the "upper classes". Cultural goods are not accessible to everyone and cannot be acquired merely by individual effort. Instead,

they are reserved for individuals with a definite social rank. In this context culture is used in defense of the superiority of the upper class, and also serves as an indispensable and inalienable attribute of that superiority.

The same cultural goods may function in these societies over a very long period as diacritical signs. As these goods are resistant to dissemination, they do not become obsolete. They are invariably associated with a particular class and signify one and the same privileged social rank. Thus, the less "democratic" a culture, the more it is stable, immutable and stagnant. Conversely, as soon as an efficient social mechanism for the dissemination of goods associated with the ideal pattern of culture, *i. e.*, a mechanism of democratization of culture is developed, cultural goods are deprived of their semiotic-structural function. Their diacritical function, on the other hand, calls for ever new signs, this demand being a very effective stimulus for cultural development. The democratization of culture is thus the best guarantee of its development. Conversely, caste-like tendencies are forebodings of inevitable stagnation. Under these conditions, creativity finds an outlet in endless transformations of an immutable pattern, as, for example, Byzantine painting, the Turkish gazelles, and Arab ornamentation. There is an increasing refinement of form, but rarely new patterns or content.

The 19th century socialist movement called for the reformation of the social structure and the abolition of class privileges, and also demanded the vindication of culture. The cultural model which had functioned as the ideal of the European civilization since ancient times, but had been reserved for the chosen ones in the class society, should now become universally accessible. The democratization of culture was a principal element in the European socialist programme, and also the most "European" element of that programme, as it had been conditioned by the peculiar Greek concept of the human being "ripening" through a process of cultivation.

The dissemination of education and the arts in the socialist societies indicates that this objective of the socialist movement has been carried into practice. One of the goals of socialism is to abolish the distinction between "cultured" and "uncultured" people, and hence to implement the principle that everybody has equal rights to culture. While completely destroying the diacritical function of the successive layers of culture, the consistent implementation of this principle may release a powerful drive towards the development of ever new cultural signs, and hence an unprecedented development of culture.

Marx could scarcely have had a different notion of "culture" than the traditional one of Europe. Conforming with the German linguistic tradition, Marx applied the term "culture" to such manifestations of the spirit as scientific thinking, art and moral codes. Such a notion of culture has persisted in popular usage to this date, even though there is another, value-free notion, which has been gaining ground in the sciences of culture for nearly 100 years. Any interpretation of the term, however,

rather than being an indication of the author's views on the reality he has chosen to describe in a given language, is merely participation in the communication code of the given epoch and is associated with the choice of a language. If we consider the essence of Marx's views, however, instead of the verbal signs employed in the designation of these views, we cannot fail to notice that in his writing he covered a fair number of the problems which would now be subsumed under the contemporary scientific category of "culture".

The value-free notion of culture, which has been gaining ground in the cultural sciences, grew out of an encounter between Europe and that part of the world which developed in relative isolation from Europe. The old continent "discovered" this other world at a time when the ideological basis of European economic and military supremacy was clearly formed. Initially Europe was bound to view the newly discovered world as "primitive", as traditionally strange customs were interpreted as "lack of culture". European experience in internal class relations, conceived in terms of the value-loaded concept of culture, resulted in a spontaneous hierarchization of the newly discovered customs. Both the American Indians and the African Negroes appeared to the European as savages, *i. e.*, uncultivated human beings who had not been subjected to the long-standing spiritual perfection of the "enlightened" European. This pattern of thinking was common to those persons who projected on the "savages" a mixture of pity, contempt and disdain, as well as those who sought in these "savages" a confirmation of the persistent legend of a past golden age.

There were, on the one hand, the willful as well as unwitting ideologists in favor of colonialism, for example William Strachey and John Wesley, who considered even the most ruthless cruelty of the "cultured" Europeans an undeserved blessing for the savages who had been deprived of the necessary cultivation. There were, on the other, men like Michel de Montaigne, the ideological precursor of romanticism in the Enlightenment, who spoke tenderly and with affection of the virtues preserved by the "savages" in complete purity, and which had been either distorted or expunged in Europeans by civilization. The former as well as the latter made unrestricted use of the axiological concept of culture, arranging the explored systems in a similar hierarchy. The difference was merely in the evaluation: what appeared to one as a virtue appeared to the other as a vice. They quarrelled about values, not about the meaning of the term "culture".

A new concept of culture, unlike both the colonialist and romantic notions, seems first to have appeared in 1848, in a work by Gustav Klemm. He was the first to apply the term "culture" to everything produced by man rather than to selected products of the human mind. According to Klemm, culture included all those things that man has added to nature and that would not have existed without him. To bury the dead in earth is just as much an element of culture as to cremate their corpses; egalitarian marriage as much as the purchase or abduction of a woman; magic

rites as much as highly sophisticated theologies; the stone axe as much as the steam engine, etc. With the application of this definition, the distinction between "cultured" and "uncultured" people becomes meaningless. Every human being is cultured insofar as being cultured is a specific feature of *Homo sapiens*. But there are cultural differences between men. The body of the deceased can be disposed of in different ways, and the ratio between marriage partners may likewise assume different magnitudes.

Klemm's contemporaries were not immediately aware of the logical implications of his definitions. The linear schemes of evolution dominated nineteenth century thought, which imply the grading of culture forms on a scale, their hierarchization. It is a logical construct found in association with the axiological concept of culture.

The students of culture of the second half of the nineteenth century : Bachofen, Maine, Morgan, Bastian and Tylor, radically expanded the ancient notion of culture to include new forms. Nevertheless, to these men the concept of culture preserved its hierarchical value, and also its axiological character insofar as axiology is an inherent premise of any hierarchization. Borrowing from Morgan's image of linear evolution, Engels made use of the most recent advances in contemporary science. It was not his fault that his successors did not also follow closely new developments in science, blindly holding to this image even when it had been discarded by science. At the same time, it appears quite natural that Marx's contemporaries, including some of his followers, acted in conformity with the spirit of the epoch rather than with Marx's pioneering ideas, by interpreting his periodic division of the European civilization into socio-economic formations as one more scheme of linear evolution, invoking the classical evolutionist conception, which is more Spencerian than Marxian, of "progress from lower to higher forms".

The conceptual revolution latent in Klemm's definition was developed with utmost consistency by Bronislaw Malinowski and, independently, by Franz Boas in America. The former was interned by the British on the Trobriand Islands during the First World War and was forced to spend several years with the aborigines. Speaking the native language, the Polish anthropologist was the first European with ethnological training who succeeded in approaching and interpreting the elements of an exotic culture in terms of their interrelations rather than artificially separated, and considering them as components in a whole which serves to meet the people's needs. Employing Koehler's allegory, Malinowski refused to put one heart next to another heart, but studied the heart in its functional relationship with the lung, the liver, etc. Rather than giving specific culture elements an "historical" dimension for museum classification purposes, for example, claiming that the iron axe is an "offspring" of the stone axe in the same way as — writes Lévi-Strauss — *Equus calallus* is an offspring of Hipparion, Malinowski referred each culture element to a genuine, synchronic system within which the meaning of each element was determined

by its place in the co-temporal structure rather than by its individual history. Malinowski's ahistoricism — so often and correctly criticized — was essentially an unpremeditated side-effect of the research framework forced upon him by his condition, but which was later supplemented by a theoretical rationalization. The anthropologists who duplicated his method, however, have persisted for decades in their ahistoricism because of the logic of the method rather than on theoretical grounds.

Anglo-American anthropology has been burdened by another aspect of Malinowski's functionalism : the holism of the postulate which states that each element of culture should be referred to the entire way of life of the given society. It was this holism which precipitated the initial revolution in the concept of culture, whether intended or not. For the first time in the history of the Hellenic-European *oikoumene*, "our" culture ceased to function, hypothetically at least, as a frame of reference for the classification and evaluation of "alien" cultures, a function which had been implied in all evolutionary schemes. Even Lubbock had applied as a criterion of evaluation "Do they, or do they not know the genuine, *i. e.*, our, European kinship system?" for the evolutionary hierarchy of non-European peoples. Malinowski's work has invalidated this and similar questions. As a result, the term "culture" has lost the remaining evaluative overtones, even in current usage.

A cognitive method used with consistency yet without sufficient reflection resembles a slot machine which is out of order and which keeps returning the coin dropped into it. The rapidly growing record of field research, organized in line with Malinowski's directives, has produced, in the same manner, ample "evidence" of the correctness of his theory. The customs of innumerable African, Polynesian and South American peoples have been described in a manner suggesting that they form closed systems, isolated in both space and time, and one thousand such descriptions have been taken as irrefutable evidence of actual isolation.

Out of these developments grew the epistemological premises which would mean a reversal of the evolutionary approach to culture. This was fully accomplished by Ruth Benedict in her *Patterns of culture*, which amounts to both an assertion of the independence of culture and a mortal blow at any axiological interpretation of the term "culture".

In place of the many parallel development lines converging — at possibly a different rate — upon an identical form of "superior culture", Ruth Benedict displayed a colourful mosaic of highly varied and unrelated forms. Cultures are neither superior nor inferior to one another; instead, they are interchangeable on a single plane and amount to equitable, although alternative, ways of life chosen by the given society from among thousands of theoretical possibilities. It is the job of the student of culture to classify and elaborate typologies, rather than to search for developmental sequences or periodic schemes.

From an ideological point of view, the theoretical approach outlined by Ruth Benedict is somewhat ambiguous. It may be taken, on one hand,

as a final renunciation of the colonialist *Kulturkampf* waged by the European civilization which has dominated the world, and hence a belated recognition of the equality of peoples, the equity of their culture assets, and their right to a specific way of life. But at the same time, the theoretical framework underlying Benedict's work may be and is being used by those who would like to relieve their own and other people's consciences by stating that the miserable living standards of the "primitive" peoples, when compared with European standards, is outweighed by other values which are rated higher by these peoples than a full stomach and comfortable lodgings. The colonialists of the past era had vain scruples, they claim, and there is no need to raise the living standards of peoples who are judged on an European scale to be economically backward. On the contrary, according to Margaret Mead, this would amount to the imposition on these people of undesirable values and patterns. By a peculiar coincidence, the idea of "equity" and alternativeness of cultures reached the peak of its popularity precisely at that time when the vast majority of the "primitive" peoples accepted the European-like pattern of life, and ceased to be satisfied with their poverty, which followed the final destruction of their traditional social structures by the world market. The European and the non-European worlds have exchanged positions, but are still in opposition.

The ideological ambiguity of the currently popular theory of culture is becoming increasingly evident, and efforts are made to overcome it with greater frequency. But there can be no adjustment of this antinomy by a mere reversal to the idea of linear evolution. To consider all non-European cultures as at inferior stages of development which may develop to the level of European culture would be incompatible not only with the knowledge accumulated by man, but also with the ethos of the second half of the twentieth century. The destruction wrought by the contemporaries of Malinowski and Benedict cannot be undone. Any progress in the theory of culture must account for their contributions. The evolutionist idea could be vindicated, in a modified form, only by means of a "negation of the negation", *i. e.*, by assimilating the criticism levelled by the second stage at the first stage and by overcoming the limitations of the second stage, which shares the limitation of the first as the two stages are in diametrical opposition.

The most far-reaching and inclusive theoretical proposals have come from Lévi-Strauss. The French anthropologist turned to Marxian dialectics for inspiration. Human culture is to him both a unity and a plurality. The diverse forms of culture are but varieties of essentially one structure, the joint product of neolithic man. The structures developed within the neolithic culture provide the common basis for all subsequent "deviation" from the basic development trend. They further constitute the foundation of all cultures known today, however refined and sophisticated some of the forms may have become. The basic structures also serve the most universal and most essential human needs, in light of the premise of "unity

in variety " represented by *Homo sapiens*. Obviously, this is not a biological foundation since " human nature " has an inherent social component. " Natural man " is at the same time " social man ".

An outline of Lévi-Strauss' revolutionary programme is contained in the final paragraphs of his *Tristes tropiques*, where he suggests that what appear to be marked distinctions between individual societies are reduced to minor variations when a large number of societies are compared. This encouraged him to search for the immutable foundations of human society. The " ethnographic " questionnaire, he writes, has a double role in this respect. For one, it shows that European civilization does not provide such a foundation. In fact, of all the societies studied, ours is apparently the least suited. For the other, " ethnography " is instrumental in determining a topology which is never fully represented by a single society but, by means of this science, features common to most societies can be isolated. The type in question is to be found at the level of the neolithic culture. It is at this level, writes Lévi-Strauss in reference to Rousseau, that " human nature " manifests itself more fully than at any other, having not yet undergone degeneration. Contrary to Diderot's interpretation, " human nature " was to Rousseau by no means a pre-social phenomenon. Rather, it was something that could not exist outside society. He considered man's capacity for socialization inherent in his nature. According to Lévi-Strauss, man's potentiality is realized through its objectivization within human society in the forms of the pertinent spheres of human interaction : language, the legal order, etc. Generally speaking, man becomes truly human only when he has become a citizen. To explore human nature implies the study of the most primordial forms of his socialization, at a stage at which the " cold ", clock-like, cyclical social mechanism has not yet been transformed into the " hot ", unidirectional, entropy-generating steam engine. It is at this stage that human nature manifests itself in human institutions : myths, ceremonies, kinship systems, those symbolic patterns which are built, and destroyed, and rebuilt, in a kaleidoscopic way, from the same fragments of the human spirit.

According to Lévi-Strauss, the actual form of the primordial way of life, the essence disguised by the phenomenal sphere, is not available to persons lacking the modern methods of structural analysis. Once in command of these methods, the investigator may transform the unconscious into the conscious, and the sensual into the comprehensible. In *Tristes tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss discovers in the skewed symmetry of a Kadiueo ornamental tattoo the contradictions of a social structure. In his *Structural anthropology*, he offers a functional interpretation of the appositions obsessively emphasized in kinship systems. In *La pensée sauvage*, he elaborates a theory of totemism in order to explain why one clan has adopted the bear, and another the eagle, as a totem. We need not inquire into the mythical relationships between these clans and between the bear and the eagle. According to Lévi-Strauss, we should rather investigate the isomorphism of the appositions . clan A : clan B = bear : eagle. Beneath the pheno-

menal sphere we find structures rather than individual or collective needs. The essence of culture is in the structure. To comprehend culture, it is necessary to uncover the common structure underlying the technologically specialized spheres of human activity. Yes, but what structure? The structure of human thinking, states Lévi-Strauss in *Le cru et le cuit*, the structure of the human spirit, he repeats in *Du miel aux cendres*.

Whereas ethnography is essentially a description of customs and institutions, anthropology is by no means a science of customs and institutions. It is the scientific study of the structure of human thinking as revealed in customs and institutions. The model of society is in every detail a "direct manifestation of the structure of thinking, and apart from thinking, possibly also of the brain", he writes in *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*. This structure is basically the same for the entire human race. It is the objectified manifestations which differ. Yet each manifestation is a product of a transformation of the basic structure, and it can be traced as such. To trace these transformations is the real mission of the anthropologist.

Lévi-Strauss has repeatedly stressed the influence of structural linguistics upon his approach to culture. The "most up-to-date method of analysis" has been developed by linguists, and it should be applied in the analysis of primordial reasoning. It is significant that during the development of his conception of anthropology and its responsibilities, he was under the strong influence of those structural linguists who have paid little attention to semantic issues, who acted on the assumption that it is possible to analyze the structure of a linguistic system of signs without recourse to semantics. The mounting influence of these linguists on the theories of Lévi-Strauss can be seen by tracing its development from *Tristes tropiques* to *Mythologiques*. Ten years ago he maintained that the function of structural appositions, rather than the structures themselves, should be studied by the anthropologist. In *Mythologiques*, we find little reference to functions. The author concentrates on structures and their transformations. He skirts the question of meaning in structures when he answers evasively: structures mean one another. He does not attach much importance to this question for, to him, the structure of human culture is one of the "ultimate facts" about which we may ask "how?", but not "why?". Such is simply the structure of human thinking. It may be based on the structure of the brain, but this would be outside the realm of the anthropologist. But what has happened to the function of structuralization which was to be studied by the anthropologist in the first place?

There is a diminishing attempt to answer this question in Lévi-Strauss' successive studies. One cannot inquire into the function of an ultimate fact. Moreover, it is impossible to substantiate the existence of an ultimate fact by referring to its relationship with any other fact. Its very existence is its only substantiation. Thus, we dare not inquire into either its function or its meaning.

If we can speak of a continuation of the age-old dispute over the mate-

rialistic versus the idealistic interpretation of man in contemporary social science, it is here that we can look for an example. It would be unjustified, however, to accuse Lévi-Strauss of epistemological idealism. His analyses are always thorough, for example his analysis of the properties of the South American honey-bee *Melipona* and its peculiar honey, produced from all but the nectar of flowers, in order to identify the position and category of this honey in the structure of thinking; or the conscientiousness with which he investigates specific features of various animal species used in totemic systems, with the purpose of discovering their symbolic functions; and elsewhere, his censuring of literary scholars, in his interview for *Les lettres françaises*, who propose that the "pure" structural method be applied to the analysis of literary works. Whereas the structural analysis of a myth which originated in "nonhistoric" society presupposes a thorough knowledge of ethnographic, biological or botanic, and other data, the analysis of a literary work which was created and has functioned in quite a different society presupposes a knowledge of history, economic conditions, and many other "traditional" elements. The hope of literary scholars that structuralism would free them from the tedium of traditional erudition is in vain.

From these manifestations of Lévi-Strauss' epistemological position we can see the "materialistic" character of his epistemology, in the most current application of this adjective. However, if we approach it on the plane of sociological ontology, it is a different picture: what exactly is the "ultimate fact" in the realm of human affairs?

According to Lévi-Strauss, it is the structure of human thinking, the means by which intellectual structures which reproduce or project the alternatives of human existence are constructed. To Marx, on the other hand, it is the existing human being, the active human being who creates and consumes goods and is actively engaged in organizing his world. With such a philosophical approach, questions regarding the functions of intellectual structures become meaningful once again. It is increasingly difficult to pose these questions in the framework of Lévi-Strauss' philosophy. At the same time, however, it is a fundamental concern in Marxian philosophy.

In what way can Lévi-Strauss contribute towards a satisfactory response to these questions? It seems that it is primarily through his structural method of inquiry into the meaning of cultural phenomena, *i. e.*, by splitting the cultural phenomenon into appositions whereby the underlying structure can be determined, a procedure he borrowed from structural linguistics and applied to anthropological material. Accordingly, it is simply a question of identifying the structure, after having decided on which plane of man's existence it is to be sought. In other words, without renouncing any of Lévi-Strauss' methodological discoveries, we must try to avoid the blind alley into which he was led by his philosophy. We must designate the reality in relation to which culture — that specifically human aspect of active existence — functions as a sign.

It is at this point that we can fully appreciate the lasting scientific value of the Marxian image of the world. It is more comprehensive than only those issues discussed by Marx under the heading "culture". What is meant here is the Marxian approach to the extensive sphere of patterns of behaviour : technology, law, theoretical thinking, religion, and all other phenomena designated as culture elements by contemporary theoreticians of culture.

The most striking feature in the Marxian interpretation of cultural phenomena is the continual transformation of both the "natural" and "social" world, the process of constant mutual readjustment between man and the world he lives in. The center of gravity in Marxian doctrine is in the category of "praxis" and not in "economic determinism", as is falsely assumed by some interpreters of this theory. This human praxis is essentially the introduction of a "human" order into the substantially natural world. It is primarily accomplished through the social process involving the production and distribution of goods, and it is these goods which serve man to satisfy his needs. The function of the sphere of signs and meanings, *i. e.*, the sphere called culture today, in relation to this structure is both creative and reproductive. The sphere of signs and meaning provides human interaction with a form which has been predetermined by that structure and which serves as a means of informing the participants interacting within the form. Thus, human praxis considered as a whole, comprising both social structure and culture, is conceived by Marx as a system in which, as Lucien Goldmann has rightly pointed out, some elements become meaningful only in the context of some other elements.

Soviet scholars must be credited with the development of concepts and theoretical models for the interpretation of the origins and social functions of culture which combine the advantages of structural analysis and the philosophical premises of Marxist sociology : the psychological research of L. Vygotski; the linguistic and semiotic studies of Apresyan, Zinoviev, Martynov, Boyko and others; the application of semiotic methods to the analysis of culture correlates by Ivanov, Toporov, Zalizniak. Bahtin and others, to mention only a few contributors in the development of a truly Marxist and modern theory of culture.

It is characteristic of the Soviet school of semiotics to stress the active and directive role of designation and information. Accordingly, the passive structures are considered as the instruments of an active organization. Soviet semiotics is more concerned with structuralization than structures, with the process of control than with the structure of information. Derived from cybernetic thinking, this active approach clearly reflects the influence of Marxian tradition, which has been unequalled in its dynamic, subject-oriented interpretation of social phenomena. It is precisely this activism which constitutes the essential characteristic of Soviet semiotics, a characteristic of utmost importance in the development of a theory of culture.

If we take for granted that the structured system differs from the amorphous system in that the former has a more consistent internal arrangement

and, therefore, is more predictable and "manipulative", culture can be conceived of as a kind of structurization, or arrangement, of the social environment. It is effectuated through the process of historical praxis by which the environment is made more predictable and, hence, more easily manipulated by man. This process of structurization is comprised of two aspects : the passive, reproductive, orientational one; and the active ordering one, which involves the elimination of some alternatives and making some others more probable. The first aspect pertains to the identification of the "natural" structure of the environment, the potential information contained therein, and to the communication of knowledge about the structure, while the second aspect concerns the "introduction" of a social structure into the environment which would otherwise be deprived of such structure.

The use of a sign system is the specifically cultural method for solving the general tasks of a social organization. The totality of signs is equivalent to the culture system, provided these signs are interpreted in a roughly similar manner by members of a given community. By labelling the material reality with signs and by ensuring, through breeding of the individual human being, an identical identification of these signs, man has been able to establish, or is trying to establish, an ordered co-existence of individuals within society, and to acquire a maximum knowledge of the environment through which he must fulfill his needs. A human community becomes a cultural community by employing a specific sign system and by ascribing to each sign a definite, universally accepted, control function.

The labelling of reality through the use of signs is particularly important in relation to the social, non-natural, section of that reality. In comparison with the large number of status and role differentiations which emerge out of the structure of society, for example, there are relatively few "natural" signs. These sets of conventional signs facilitate both the control and the orientation of social components in a working situation. Besides the verbal signs, there are a variety of others, such as dress, residence, size of office, quality of the carpet therein, number of telephones on the desk, differentiation in behaviour according to the relative roles of the two partners of an interaction, etc. Each of these signs serves a specific function; each contributes to the differentiation of elements in an homogeneous social reality. And each sign derives its specific, culturally based meaning by its apposition to either another sign or a situation in which it does not appear.

Thus, the function of culture is at the same time cognitive and directive. The isolation of a separate conceptual plane which mediates in the relationships between the organism and its environment implies the possibility of a split in these two aspects of the function. A considerable part of the information which may be contained in the structure of the environment usually remains unmarked and unidentified, while at the same time each sign system comprises numerous "redundant" appositions, *i. e.*, signs which have not yet been assigned their meaning. Nevertheless, a

smoothly functioning model culture excludes the possibility of such a split and derangement.

Any statement about the function of a phenomenon is bound to be elliptic so long as we do not specify the system to which the respective function is related. We may consider the function of culture in relation to the entire community or society which has, in a specific way, restricted the indeterminacy of its world. In such a case, we would be interested in knowing the instruments used in the process of accommodation and assimilation by a given community, the correlation between social structure and the structure of the contingencies contained in the "natural" environment, including the fund of socially available technologies. Also we would want information about the discriminable and meaningful appositions of the real as well as potential worlds which should include, among other things, art and ideology. Furthermore, we would be interested in the means by which a section of the natural world, chosen by a given community as its habitat, had been ordered or assimilated : landscape shaping, thermal isolation of the home from outside weather conditions, etc.

As soon as we turn to the function of culture in relation to the individual, however, the intra-systemic aspect of culture becomes the target of assimilation and, from the viewpoint of the individual, an external aspect. Above all, man's environment is made up of people : the individual is separated from the goods which serve to meet his needs by other people who either hamper or facilitate his access to these goods. The problem of individual accommodation reduces to an isomorphism involving the structure of individual behaviour and the structure of the community which constitutes the individual's environment. This task is accomplished through the mechanism of culture appreciation, the communication of knowledge and its internalization.

Combining these two viewpoints, the social and the individual, we find that culture is both a way of ordering and structuring the environment of the individual, and a manner of correlating the pattern of the individual's behaviour with the pattern of this environment. In relation to the individual, culture functions as an extension of a capacity common to all organisms, and therefore important for their adaptation, of associating a given behaviour with a given stimulus. A salient peculiarity of this culture mechanism in human beings is that these stimuli signals are predominantly defined by human behaviour, and are themselves products of culture. The "structure" of the environment and the "structure" of individual behaviour, however, are not, or need not be, autonomous and independently determined systems. Even under the worst of conditions, this is only partially true. These systems are usually realized by a common set of mechanisms. In a sense, the structure of the symbolic culture system is a projection, although always incomplete and inaccurate, of both the personality structure and the social structure.

Whereas for understanding the natural components of human environment one must concentrate on the "identification of signs as such",

this does not apply to the components of the environment which are the result of human activity, and which prevail in the whole structure of the environment. These components may function solely as a result of the "marking" of reality. The distinctions relating to the distribution of goods, for example, are by far the most numerous in human society, but they cannot be correlated with any natural human distinctions. For this reason, a great number of artificial sign appositions must be designed within the social structure which will enable the former distinctions to become fully effective in their directive function. As the arm is extended by the spear, in a similar manner the semiotic paucity of the human body is supplemented by distinctions in dress and ornaments, demeanour and etiquette, residence and food habits, etc.

The semiotic-directive function is the only acceptable explanation for the existence of some of these distinctions. In some cases the need-satisfaction function, including both individual and collective needs, interferes with the semiotic function, in which case an unequivocal analysis is rather difficult, for example, the dual functions of eating, dressing and habitation. It is the task of the anthropologist to make an inventory for the diverse functions and to study the psychological, economic and social mechanism which is responsible for their correlation, as well as the mechanisms which interfere with the achievement of a full correlation.

Marxist sociology has been very successful in analyzing the external and material determinants of social phenomena. Its greatest contribution lies in the discovery and investigation of the role played by social structure, considered as a system of interdependencies between large human groups which were formed in the course of the production, distribution and appropriation of goods required for the satisfaction of human needs, in the determination of social processes. But in the course of concentrating on these external, material determinants of human behaviour, some investigators disregarded the other system of determinants intervening in each social situation, *i. e.*, the system of culture. Human behaviour, whether individual or collective, invariably results from two factors : on one hand, the cognitive systems and the goals and patterns of behaviour as defined by the culture system, and on the other, the system of real contingencies as defined by the social structure. Complete comprehension of social processes can be achieved only when both systems, as well as their interaction, are taken into consideration.

Modern society is characterized by a succession of maladjustments in culture and social structure. The constraints to which a human being is subjected appear to him as external and unavoidable; in fact, they are considered to be exempt from the control of culture. In numerous instances these contingencies and constraints contradict the injunctions which have been internalized through breeding, *i. e.*, culture. These contradictions are experienced by man as a conflict between his "duty" and "necessity", or between his own interests and the opportunities for their realization. He discovers in this situation that there are numerous components which

lack cultural meaning, and at the same time he is unable establish the real correlation of numerous meanings which were internalized by the culture. This discrepancy is particularly glaring and painful in a class society, in which we find, on the one hand, a conflict between the egalitarian nature of the cultural training which produces the desire to obtain the same kinds of goods as are acquired by other people, and, on the other, the realities of the social structure in which only the members of the privileged class may reach their goals and obtain the culturally valued goods. In such a situation there is a continuous tension which results from the disparity between the cultural and social structure. Restoration of their coincidence, however, cannot be attained in a class society, and huge amounts of social energy are expended in this struggle. The developing socialist societies are for the first time attempting to solve this problem in a radically different manner, through subordination of the social structure to the cultural system. This is accomplished through a practical arrangement of the social situation so as to correspond with the goals and models set up by the cultural system.

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