The Resonance of "Culture": Framing a Problem in Global Concept-History

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In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "culture" achieved the status of a truly global concept. We find discourses of "culture" emerging to prominence in the German-speaking world during the second half of the eighteenth century (with the closely associated linguistic arenas of the Netherlands and Scandinavia rapidly following suit); in the English-speaking world starting in the first half of the nineteenth century; in Eastern Europe, East Asia, and South Asia starting in the second half of the nineteenth century; and just about everywhere else in the course of the twentieth century. "Culture" began to circulate far beyond the European sites of its modern genesis, sometimes through the direct transfer of lexical items from Western European languages (e.g., Russian *kul'tura;* the use of *kalcar* in various South Asian languages); and more often through the construction of new translative equivalencies with preexisting words or concepts most often signifying purification, refinement, or improvement (e.g., Japanese *bun-ka;* Chinese *wen-hua;* Bangla and Hindi *sanskriti;* Urdu *tamaddun*).[1]

However creatively deployed in however divergent a range of contexts, the power, resonance, and usefulness of any conceptual vocabulary must surely derive from the denotative and connotative baggage accumulated in the course of the history of its prior deployment. Any attempt to understand the global dimensions of the dissemination and circulation of modern cultural discourses must proceed, then, from some initial understanding of what was being disseminated and circulated. Without for a moment thinking that a global concept-

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[1] For a discussion of the formation of "translative equivalents" as an object of specifically *historical* study that goes "beyond the deconstructionist stage of trying to prove that equivalencies do not exist" and instead looks "into their *manner of becoming,*" see Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity. China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 16.

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history could be reducible to its Western origin, we nevertheless might well wonder what the history that preceded the culture-concept's journey beyond the narrower confines of Western Europe might tell us about the logic of its global dissemination. What was this concept, "culture," that people in these disparate places were adopting? Proceeding from the recognition that this particular concept was found powerful, resonant, and useful in numerous and diverse historical contexts as the appropriate thought-form for certain kinds of social analysis and critique, this paper sets out first of all to challenge the disaggregative instincts of contemporary intellectual historians by identifying a single, broadly pan-European modern culture-concept that has traversed the boundaries of the specific discourse-formations of pedagogy, aesthetics, anthropology, and so on. This culture-concept, I suggest, has articulated a claim about the *fundamental underdetermination of human subjectivity,* and has done so fairly consistently since its emergence into philosophical importance in the eighteenth century. From the perspective of this analysis, the global dissemination of the culture-concept consequently becomes susceptible to a more systematic historical analysis than is suggested by fragmentary histories of the transmission of intellectual influences or the reproduction of discursive apparatus. Reading the global history of the culture-concept as the dissemination of a category of *autonomous agency* does not foreclose the investigation of the specific conditions of its reception in particular times and places; rather, it forms the starting point for an investigation into the ubiquitous centrality of discourses of "culture" to critiques of alien bureaucracy, of colonial domination, and of the anarchic and anomic tendencies of commercial society.

I.

Matthew Arnold's well-known espousal of the term "culture" in the 1860s immediately identified him in the eyes of his contemporaries as a spokesman for what the Victorians termed "Germanism."[2] "Culture" and "cultivation" were two mostly synonymous English words that were closely bound throughout the nineteenth century to two German words, *Kultur* and *Bildung,* which at least until the end of the eighteenth century still had fuzzy enough contours to be sometimes used interchangeably: Immanuel Kant, for example, used them more or less interchangeably, while Moses Mendelsohn's pragmatic juxtaposition of the two terms was necessarily self-conscious.[3] *Bildung* began its career

[2] The prominent English Comtean, Frederic Harrison, for instance, wrote good-humoredly of Arnold's "fiddlestick, or sauerkraut, or culture (call it as you please)," in "Culture: A Dialogue," *Fortnightly Review* 2 (July–Dec. 1867), 603–14.

[3] In his essay *Über Pädagogik* (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer and Sons, 1883), Kant refers in §1 to "*Unterweisung nebst der Bildung,*" and in §7 to "*Kultur (so kann man die Unterweisung nennen).*" Mendelssohn's contrastive definitions in his essay, "*Über die Frage, was heisst aufklären?*" are cited in Rudolph Vierhaus, "*Bildung,*" in O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historiches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland,* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1972), vol. 1, 508.

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as a translation from Latin: *Bild* = *imago* (*dei*). In the course of the eighteenth century, however, it shed its Pietist roots and instead came to signify the process of active self-cultivation envisioned by the philhellenist neohumanists.[4] The term *Kultur* was assimilated into German from an earlier French usage (*la culture*), which also had an early English off-shoot (culture), all of which were in turn ultimately derived from Latin (most famously, Cicero's stoic conception of *cultura animi*). In early usage, "culture" was typically accompanied by a genitive phrase ("of the spirit," "of the mind," "of literature," or even "of the body") in keeping with its foundation in the agricultural metaphor. But from as early as the late sixteenth century we find it gradually emerging as a freestanding concept. Samuel Pufendorf's juxtaposition of a *status naturalis* and a *status culturae* (identified in turn with the *status civilis*) may be the first important instance of such a usage; and this early formulation of the nature/culture opposition already seemed to presage the later importance of the concept.[5]

"Culture" has had a long and intimate relationship with the more expansive concept of *civilization,* a term that emerged in mid-eighteenth-century French (and English very soon thereafter) with the aspiration to unite the disparate themes of *police, politesse, civilité,* and *doux commerce* under the single heading of an overarching social process.[6] To say *Kultur* in German has most often meant implicitly to translate *civilisation* (or its English twin); for *Kultur* was most often understood on a collective scale to name the degree to which some specific people or nation had progressed in overcoming their subjection to Nature—in other words, the overcoming of scarcity, the development of technical capacities, the institution of a rule of law and/or rational administration, the progress of knowledge and the softening of manners that were at the core of the various narratives of "civilization."[7] Conversely, both the British and the French would translate the word *Kultur* as "civilization" wherever the usages seemed consonant, including in some rather prominent instances: Burkhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance* was translated into English as *The Civilization of the Renaissance,* and into French as *La Civilisation de la Renaissance* soon after its publication in 1860; and Freud's 1930 essay, *Das Unbehagen in der Kul-*

[4] See Anthony La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. ch. 9; Vierhaus, "*Bildung.*"

[5] Jörg Fisch, "*Zivilisation, Kultur,*" in O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Kosellek, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historiches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland,* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), vol. 7, 685, 700–3; Philippe Bénéton, *Histoire de mots: Culture et civilisation* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1975), 30. The *OED* cites Wordsworth's *Preludes* (1805) as the earliest example of this stand-alone usage in English, but one could certainly find significantly earlier examples.

[6] Lucien Febvre, "*Civilisation:* Evolution of a Word and a Group of Ideas," in Peter Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 219–57; and Emile Benveniste, "Civilization: A Contribution to the History of the Word," *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, Fl.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 289–96.

[7] Cf. Fisch, "*Zivilisation, Kultur,*" 679.

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tur, became *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Le Malaise dans la Civilisation.*

But the concept has also been slipperier than such an easy translative equation might suggest. "The German word *Kultur,*" explained W. D. Robson-Scott in a footnote to his 1928 translation of Freud's *Future of an Illusion,* "has been translated sometimes as 'culture' and sometimes as 'civilization,' denoting as it does a concept intermediate between these and at times inclusive of both."[8] In fact, "culture" could be distinguished from "civilization," to begin with, through a simple juxtaposition of part (the spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions of human development) to whole (the total process of social development). However, to disembed culture in this way could already be the first step to making a more radical claim about the autonomous activity of the human subject within or against the objective historical processes of civilizational development, which could in turn be figured in broadly Rousseauvian terms as a corruptive descent back into external or material determinations (selfish interest, materialistic desire, structures of social interdependence). The *Bildungsideal* assumed its centrality in German intellectual discourse in the late eighteenth century precisely as a critique of Enlightenment rationalism's reduction of human beings to functional utility within a (bureaucratic) division of labor, from the standpoint of the natural self's "unconditional right to self-determination."[9] Anthony La Vopa's emphasis on the role of "poor students" in this discourse echoes, even as it complicates, Norbert Elias' classic sketch of the origins of the modern German culture/civilization dichotomy in the exclusion of the middle-class intelligentsia from the (francophone) courtly society of the eighteenth century.[10] Elias' longer *durée* history must of course be tempered with the recognition that the famous *lexical* opposition between the terms *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* was essentially a product of the late nineteenth century, and that the specifically nationalistic understanding of this lexical opposition became commonplace only from around the period of the First World War.[11] Yet in the end, Elias' analysis was seeking to derive the later emergence of the lexical opposition from an earlier, eighteenth-century *conceptual* opposition between external institutions and inner life that was the precondition for nationalistic homologies.[12] In any case, it is quite clear that from the 1870s at least,

[8] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion,* W. D. Robson-Scott, trans. (London: Hogarth Press, 1943), 7 (n. 1).

[9] La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit,* 264–78.

[10] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 3–28.

[11] Fisch, "*Zivilisation, Kultur,*" 681–82, 714–15, 722 (n. 246), 749–52; Bénéton, *Histoire de mots,* chs. 4–5.

[12] In fact, it is worth noting that Elias himself began his discussion with the more nuanced recognition that "the function of the German concept of *Kultur* took on a new life in the year 1919," but that in doing so it was reactivating and re-appropriating an older conceptual antithesis that had its "concrete point of departure" in the "significantly different" historical context of the late eighteenth century. See Elias, *Civilizing Process,* 7. This was a nuance to which Herbert Marcuse was also drawing attention more or less contemporarily, and without at all reducing the concept to its na-

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German writers like Heinrich von Treitschke were increasingly matching stereotypes of France's glossy and formalistic show of *civilisation* with critiques of Britain's allegedly sudsy conception of "civilization," and German academics were beginning to grapple with conceptual oppositions that substantially prefigured the later, more systematic lexical opposition of *Kultur* (authentic subjectivity free from the material determinations of utility and self-interest) and *Zivilisation* (the material progress of human beings).[13]

Conversely, writers in English, drawing directly on these German intellectual influences, would adopt the words "culture" or "cultivation" whenever a distinction from "civilization" was implied.[14] Thus, in 1829, Samuel Coleridge, erecting his political theory on a solid foundation of German classical idealism, had already identified "the permanent *distinction,* and the occasional *contrast,* between cultivation and civilization," adding the observation that "a nation can never be too cultivated, but may easily become an over-civilized race."[15] Arnold himself would echo this formulation forty years later when opposing culture (the "idea of perfection as an inward condition of the mind and spirit") to "the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us."[16] Similarly, while the French might commonly translate *Kultur* as *civilisation,* they could also, working under German intellectual influences that were at least as powerfully felt in nineteenth-century France as in nineteenth-century Britain, reinvigorate the marginalized term, *culture,* where a lexical distinction from *civilisation* was called for, as for instance during the reception of Nietzsche in the

tionalistic homology: "Although the distinction between civilization and culture may have joined only recently the mental equipment of the social and cultural sciences, the state of affairs that it expresses has long been characteristic of the conduct of life and the weltanschauung of the bourgeois era." Herbert Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character of Culture," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 88–133. On the other hand, T.C.W. Blanning has recently restated the importance of the conceptual opposition between Frenchness and Germanness in his *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 232–65.

[13] David Blackbourn has briefly but suggestively linked the emergence of "cultural" discourses in late nineteenth-century Germany to the economic instability of the Great Depression of 1873–1896, and thereby helped to locate the specificities of these discourses within an international frame, in "The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie: Reappraising German History in the Nineteenth Century," in David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, eds., *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 206–21. On the role of Treitschke in leading the shift in German attitudes toward England from the 1870s, see Charles E. McClelland, *The German Historians and England: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), part IV. Fritz Ringer has given the best-known account of the German academy's renewed emphasis on the culture/civilization dichotomy in the later nineteenth century, in *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1990).

[14] Raymond Williams has provided the classic account of the English tradition of cultural criticism in *Culture and Society: 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

[15] John Morrow, ed., *Coleridge's Writings, Volume 1: On Politics and Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 176.

[16] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 48–49.

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1890s.[17] In fact, francophone authors had already in the eighteenth century developed their own terminological opposition between "true" and "false" civilization, the latter being characterized by the superficialities of *civilité,* lacking any real underlying moral substance.[18] This was a theme that would be further elaborated in the early nineteenth century, as the eminent philosopher Victor Cousin worked to establish philosophically, and cultivate practically, the efficacious integrity of a *moi* grounded in the power of volition. Through a critique of the sensationalist doctrines of Locke and Condillac, which threatened to dissolve the self into discrete moments of sense-perception, Cousin sought to elaborate a "self-possessed" form of personhood capable of rational reflection and moral responsibility against the relatively "unselved" form of personhood that functioned merely as the passive instrument of "spontaneous suggestions of consciousness."[19] Even in the French intellectual world, then, the distinction between inner and outer development had been significant since the eighteenth century.

For a liberal like François Guizot, the distinction between the moral and material dimensions of human progress, while clearly conceived, was nonetheless contained within the larger process of *civilisation,* which was the higher synthesis of its two equally necessary subordinate elements.[20] This French faith in the coherence of a unitary civilizational narrative synthesizing both moral and material progress could fairly be described as the norm in both English and German for most of the modern era.[21] In fact, the culture-concept has never been incompatible with liberal thought, even when that liberalism grounded itself in the objective historical processes of civilizational development. "Culture" could supplement the more classically liberal, negative conception of *emancipation from* the illegitimate exercise of State authority, with the positive conception of subjective freedom as a *capacity to.* John Stuart Mill, for instance, shared with other liberals the belief in individual liberty both on grounds of principle and general social utility, and he was hardly eccentric in linking the historical emergence of a liberal society to major transformations in the structure of economy, society, and polity. But what Mill added to the framework of his liberal and utilitarian forebears was the notion that such freedom from external constraint was justified not only because it allowed for the generalized pursuit of material pleasure (Bentham's "happiness") that underpinned the log-

[17] Bénéton, *Histoire de mots,* 56–59, 73–76.

[18] Jean Starobinski, *Blessings in Disguise; or, The Morality of Evil* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 1.

[19] See Jan Goldstein, "Mutations of the Self in Old Regime and Postrevolutionary France," in Lorraine Daston, ed., *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 86–116. Cousin, Bénéton notes (*Histoire de mots,* 56–57), was also instrumental in introducing the French public to the philosophies of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

[20] See Francois Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton, 1928).

[21] A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 29–30.

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ic of political economy; but also because it provided the opportunity for the cultivation of each individual's innate potential through the pursuit of the "higher pleasures" of the spirit or mind.[22] Here, the positive freedom that was at the core of the culture-concept was being nested within a liberal conception of negative freedom.

Yet one can see how easily this kind of liberal culturalism could slip into a culture/civilization opposition: while Mill would on the one hand posit liberty and culture as mutually reinforcing and complementary principles, he could also call for the cultivation of higher virtues on the part of university elites to *counter* the dangerous leveling effects of the democratized mass-society that "civilization" had called forth.[23] It was broadly the same argument that Arnold would make in his manifesto for a "better liberalism" that would eschew "the pedantic application of certain maxims of political economy in the wrong place" in favor of the cultivation of a "*best self.*" By bringing men into harmony under the guidance of an impersonal "right reason," "culture" would provide a "principle of authority" to "counteract the tendency to anarchy which seems to be threatening us." That principle directly implied "the idea of *the State,*" that is, the "organ of our collective best self, our national right reason," "entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage."[24] At such moments, we see "culture" becoming entangled in a wider project that would use the idea of disinterested self-cultivation to construct an "extrapolitical, extraeconomic space" homologous with the universal collective interest represented ideologically by the State.[25] But what this in turn meant was that the ethical State was being positioned, through the language of "culture," as the preeminent organ of the nation's collective spiritual life, so that it served as a force antithetical to the material determinations of petty self-interest that drove "civilization."[26] In the end, even though "culture" could be posited as a complementary or even metonymically subordinate moment of "civilization," wher-

[22] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty,* in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XXI: Essays on Equality, Law and Education* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); and see also Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

[23] John Stuart Mill, "Civilization," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVIII: Essays on Politics and Society* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 117–47.

[24] Fraser Neimann, ed., *Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 105; Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy,* 75, 82, 95–97.

[25] See David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

[26] Stefan Collini has written persuasively concerning the ubiquity of anxieties about the social consequences of the generalized pursuit of self-interest in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, noting Victorian social critics' "obsessive antipathy to selfishness" and their "constant anxiety about the possibility of sinking into a state of psychological malaise or anomie, a kind of emotional entropy assumed to be the consequence of absorption in purely selfish aims," in *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 65.

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ever the progressive course of history was understood to entwine human subjects heteronomously in ever-tighter networks of materialistic desire and instrumentalization, "culture" could always be invoked as a Rousseauvian counter-principle of internality, authenticity, and autonomous self-formation.

II.

Seen from this wider perspective, we might suggest that the culture-concept enjoyed a precarious universality within the European cosmopolis constituted by the heritage of Latin cosmopolitanism and the subsequent history of modern vernacular interpenetration. Yes, this universality was shot through with different emphases, degrees of prominence, discursive functions, homological transformations, and ideological implications within particular national and linguistic arenas. And of course, the instabilities of two centuries of usage render any single and exhaustive definitional generalization outrageous at a strictly lexical level. Yet in the end it seems undeniable that the concept's major fault-lines have followed less the contours of different languages than certain *internal* semantic differentiations.

The well-known "review" of the history of the culture-concept undertaken by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn identified two of the most prominent of these semantic fault-lines. To begin with, the distinction between culture and civilization in Germany seemed, they not unreasonably noted, to correlate with "the spirit-nature dichotomy—*Geist und Natur*—that so deeply penetrated German thought from the eighteenth to the twentieth century."[27] But the exact nature of this correlation was, they observed, fraught with ambiguity. It might seem obvious to those familiar with the discourses of German and English cultural criticism that culture would line up unproblematically with *Geist.* Yet, as Kroeber and Kluckhohn observed, some forms of usage also suggested the very opposite alignment. *Kultur* had often been used, since the late eighteenth century, to refer to the development of man's technical capacities to control nature, much in keeping with the agricultural metaphor at the etymological core of the concept. In contrast to the instrumentalism of *Kultur* then, it would be *Zivilisation* that would bear the burden of both moral and social improvement. This would seem to align culture with nature, and civilization with spirit. It would also seem to imply that the nineteenth-century usage of the term *Kultur* was so puzzlingly broad as to encompass conceptual polarities.

"*Civilization,*" explained Wilhelm von Humboldt, Kroeber and Kluckhohn's most important exemplar of this alternative tradition, "is the humanization of peoples in their outward institutions and customs, and the inner attitudes pertaining thereto. *Culture* adds science and art to this refinement of the social order."[28] Yet only a certain lexical literalism could have led Kroeber and Kluck-

[27] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 26.
[28] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction*

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hohn to ignore the fact that, despite this apparent downgrading of *Kultur* in a definitional passage ripped from its context, Humboldt was indeed still working from within a more familiar form of the culture/civilization dichotomy. He did so, however, by contrasting both *Zivilisation* and *Kultur,* as "outward" forms, to *Bildung,* the kind of cultivation that is "something at the same time higher and more inward, namely the disposition that, from the knowledge and feeling of the entire mental and moral endeavour, pours out harmonious upon temperament and character."[29] *Zivilisation* names the social interconnections that link human beings with each other—"in their *outer institutions and customs* and in their inner attitude *pertaining thereto.*" It has no *necessary* connection with inner cultivation, but can be a wholly external imposition.[30] Inner cultivation, on the other hand, begins with the subordination of an inchoate creative energy to organic form:

> Even in his earlier circumstance, man transcends the *present* moment, and does not remain sunk in mere sensual enjoyment. Among the roughest tribes we find a love of adornment, dancing, music and song, and beyond that forebodings of a world to come, the hopes and anxieties founded on this, and traditions and tales which commonly go back to the origin of man and of his abode. The more strongly and brightly does the *spiritual power,* working independently by its own laws and forms of intuition, pour out its light into this world of the past and future, with which man surrounds his existence of the moment, the more purely and variously does the mass [of his creative energy], simultaneously, take shape. Thus do *science* and *art* arise, and the goal, therefore, of mankind's developing progress is always the fusion of what is produced independently from within with what is given from without, each grasped in its purity and completeness, and bound into the subjection which the current endeavour by its nature demands.[31]

For Humboldt, "contact with the *world*" and "communication of outer exertion and inner perceptions" turn out to be irreducibly necessary for the actual "*formation of character*" that *Bildung* names.[32] Neo-humanists like Humboldt understood *Bildung* to be, in La Vopa's words, a form of "self-cultivation [that] throve on constant and ever varied interaction between the subject and objective reality. Subjectivity acquired substance for its inner articulation in its very self-projection into external forms."[33] This in fact positions *Kultur*—the technical capacity to subordinate nature to inner force that Humboldt himself defined through a direct reiteration of the terms "science and art" in the definitional passage with which we began—as the necessary outward expression of the free and spontaneous agency that characterizes human consciousness.[34] The distinction between "civilization" and "culture" can thus be understood as a distinction between human beings embedded in relationships with other human

and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 26.

[29] Humboldt, *On Language,* 34–35. [30] Ibid., 35.

[31] Ibid., 30. [32] Ibid., 23, 30–31.

[33] La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit,* 272. [34] Humboldt, *On Language,* 34.

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beings, and human beings in their relationship with (inner and outer) nature. It is in their relationship with nature rather than with each other, Humboldt seems to be saying, that human beings are able to give practical expression and meaning to subjective freedom. Yet, as the truly proto-anthropological passage cited at length above makes abundantly clear, this alignment has never precluded the relationship to nature being understood at the level of the collectivity, so long as collectivity is grasped organically rather than in terms of individual interaction.

Humboldt's emphasis on *Kultur* as the practical expression of subjective freedom was fundamentally inspired by Kantian idealism. Kant himself had defined *Kultur* as the process of "[p]roducing in a rational being an aptitude for purposes generally (hence [in a way that leaves] that being free)," where such "aptitude for purposes generally" included both "man's aptitude in general for setting himself purposes," and his aptitude "for using nature (independently of [the element of] nature in man's determination of purposes) as a means [for achieving them] in conformity with the maxims of his free purposes generally."[35] Such a practice of "culture" necessarily founded humanity's acquisition of technical prowess ("*skill*") upon a prior "culture of discipline" that served to constitute a rational "will" capable of casting off the "despotism of desires" (which might otherwise condition or limit the freedom of rational thought to select the ends to which a human being might direct such skills).[36] Kant had read too much Rousseau to confuse culture with a mere denatured artifice, though: "The ideal [*Idee*] of morality belongs to culture," he famously declared; "its use for some simulacrum of morality in the love of honor and outward decorum constitutes mere civilization [*Civilisierung*]."[37] Culture was not, then, the mere artificiality of human sociality, which would ultimately have to derive from the element of nature (specifically, desire and self-love) in man's determination of purposes. Rather, it specifically named those forms of nature-commanding activity that expressed the rational self-determination of the human subject.

"Culture" in this usage might seem, as Raymond Geuss has argued, a profoundly individualized, and even utterly asocial, category.[38] Yet Kant made it clear in his writings on education that it is the pedagogical application of dis-

[35] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Werner S. Pluhar, trans. (Indianapolis: Hacket, 1987), §83, 319, translator's interpolations.

[36] In the first critique, Kant had juxtaposed discipline and culture as negative to positive: the restraint and extirpation of our natural inclination to contravene the dictates of reason, versus the acquisition of skills that can be used to any given end, which may or may not be in accordance with reason. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* Norman Kemp Smith, trans. (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 575 (A 709–10, B 737–38). The formulation just cited from the third critique, however, recognizes that an aptitude is only "culture" (i.e., a properly *human* aptitude) if it is grounded in the "culture of discipline," that is, in the free subjectivity of a rational will.

[37] Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in Lewis White Beck, ed., *On History: Immanuel Kant* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 21.

[38] Raymond Geuss makes this claim in "*Kultur, Bildung, Geist,*" in his *Morality, Culture and History: Essays on German Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33–34.

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cipline (*Disciplin, Zucht*) that, by making possible the subsequent internalization of self-discipline, lays the foundation for the regular exercise of subjective freedom (i.e., skill directed to freely and rationally chosen ends). Unlike the beast, "man requires his own reason. He has no instinct, and must himself construct the plan of his own behavior. Since he is not however immediately capable of doing this . . . others must do it for him. . . . *One generation educates the other.*"[39] Culture is, in other words, something that is formed *within* the realm of the social, and always tends towards the construction of a social framework that encourages conduct in accordance with the moral principles of practical reason.[40] In fact, if the passage of human history can be seen as a transition from "an uncultured, merely animal condition to the state of humanity, from bondage to instinct to rational control—in a word, from the tutelage of nature to the state of freedom"—then it was the role of culture to "bring about such a development of the dispositions of mankind, considered as a *moral* species, as to end the conflict between the natural and the moral species . . . until such time as finally art will be strong and perfect enough to become a second nature" and thus complete "the genuine education of man as man and citizen."[41]

Seen from this perspective, the relationship between what Kroeber and Kluckhohn identified as "contrary" currents of usage appears much less opaque: both Kant and Humboldt agreed that technical prowess could be the logical extension of the critical constitution of the self as a self-determining (autonomous) subject. Even when it seemed to name an instrumental relationship to *res extensa,* "culture" ultimately and crucially retained its affiliation with the "spirit" side of the classic antinomy. But more importantly, we can already identify in these most proto-Hegelian (but still ultimately subject-centered) moments of Kant's philosophy the key problematic that has consistently defined the culture-concept: the practical realization of free subjectivity.

III.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn, however, viewed this first genealogical puzzle as an anachronism that could be largely consigned (as, in their opinion, "mainly an episode in German thought") to the pre-history of the "scientific" culture-concept that was at the heart of their concerns.[42] This previous (apparent) inconsistency in nineteenth-century usage remained firmly within what they termed a "humanistic" understanding of culture—that is, the individual or collective cultivation (understood as either a process or an achieved state) of the "human"

[39] Immanuel Kant, *Über Pädagogik,* §3–4, my emphasis.

[40] Cf. Robert B. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chs. 3 and 4; Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Yirmiahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[41] Kant, "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," in Beck, ed., *On History,* 60–63.

[42] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 29.

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or "spiritual" or "rational" or "higher" or "universal" qualities, and extending from there to include the objectified results of such cultivation (literature, art, etc.). This was, of course, the older usage, and for most of the culture-concept's history it remained the more commonplace. Yet it is true that there has long been an alternative set of meanings to culture that would seem to exceed the terms of the discussion above—what is commonly referred to as the "anthropological" understanding of the concept. Where the humanistic concept would appear to express an achieved *degree* of emancipation from natural determinations ("the despotism of desires"), anthropological culture would instead accord to all human collectivities the fundamental characteristic of self-determining agency—"a set of attributes and products of human societies, and therewith of mankind, which are extrasomatic and transmissible by mechanisms other than biological heredity."[43]

Analytically, then, it would be quite straightforward to assume, as so many have, that the humanistic and anthropological conceptions are in a straightforward sense definitionally distinct. "Culture," in other words, was simply a homonym. But a *historical* investigation cannot afford to leap directly to this analytical premise, without first lingering over some important questions: Why have these two analytically distinct dimensions of the culture-concept been so ubiquitously *conflated* in actual usage (hence provoking the need for recurrent analytical clarifications, of which Kroeber and Kluckhohn's own review merely stands as the best known)? And if the humanistic meanings of the word, "culture," long predate its ethnological meanings, what was it about that earlier usage that made the word available for its new role as the foundational concept of an emergent discipline of "cultural anthropology"?

Genealogies of anthropological culture most commonly begin with German Romanticism, and more particularly with Herder's pluralistic organicism as the antithesis of Kant's abstract universalism. They all too rarely take stock of the fact, however, that Herder's pluralism revolved around the concept of *Volk,* not *Kultur.*[44] The latter term occurs exclusively in the singular. Each people had its own distinct instantiation of "culture," but "culture" itself remained a process of unfolding the inner propensities of each people, who were in turn bound within the single world-historical process of the organic development, as the ultimate end of human nature, of a unitary principle of "humanity"—that is to say, "*reason and equity in all conditions, and in all occupations of men,*" de-

[43] Ibid., 284. Proceeding from this anthropological universalization of "culture," the older part-whole relationship of "culture" and "civilization" could be reversed, so that "civilization" could specify that subset of "cultures" that had achieved certain levels of technical advancement. See for example Robert Redfield, "Civilizations as Things Thought About," in Margaret Park Redfield, ed., *Human Nature and the Study of Society: The Papers of Robert Redfield, Volume I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 367–71.

[44] Raymond Williams appears to be partly responsible for the ubiquity of this misrepresentation. See *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 89.

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fined "not through the will of a sovereign, or the persuasive power of tradition, but through natural laws, on which the essence of man reposes."[45] "Every addition to the useful arts secures men's property, diminishes their labour, extends their sphere of activity, and necessarily lays therewith the foundations of farther cultivation and humanity . . . [L]et us thank the Creator, that he conferred *understanding* on mankind, and made *art* essential to it."[46] Thus, while Herder embraced the diversity of peoples, this pluralism seems to have been inextricably bound to his providentialist attachment to a broadly Kantian understanding of culture. "God made man a deity upon Earth; he implanted in him the principle of *self-activity,* and set this principle in motion from the beginning, by means of the internal and external wants of his nature."[47] This attachment to a universalistic conception of "humanity" was equally characteristic of other late eighteenth-century romantics like Adelung, who sought to extend the semantic range of "culture" to include a properly *social* meaning: "Culture is the transition from a more sensual and animal condition to the more closely knit interrelations of social life," and "consists of the sum of defined concepts and of the amelioration and refinement of the body and of manners."[48] Such moments underline once again the continuity between—indeed, the near coevalness of—humanistic usages and usages that even Kroeber and Kluckhohn were able to recognize as proto-anthropological.

Whether used in the singular as a horizontal conceptual distinction within social process or as a vertical distinction between different social groups, anthropological "culture" has always taken plurality and diversity as its defining object. One can in fact trace through the course of the nineteenth century the gradual "reification" of the culture-concept, along with the word's consequent pluralization.[49] But while the term's assimilation as a constitutive element of new historical and ethnological discourses in the second half of the nineteenth century represented a significant moment in the evolution and extension of the concept, we need to beware of overstating the degree to which the consequent extension of its range of reference constituted a real break in its history. Of course, one might well suspect Kroeber and Kluckhohn themselves of having something of a disciplinary interest in trying to demarcate such a sharp break: they were seeking to ground the integrity of a specifically "cultural" anthropology in a creation myth that would prophylactically seal its core concept from the sullying touch of its pre-disciplinary, humanistic past. But anthropological "culture" enjoyed no immaculate conception. As George Stocking has ob-

[45] Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968, abr. ed.), 100–1; and cf. Fisch, "*Zivilisation, Kultur,*" 708–12.

[46] Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Mankind,* 110–11.

[47] Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Mankind,* 84, my emphasis.

[48] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 35–38.

[49] Fisch, "*Zivilisation, Kultur,*" 746–48.

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served, despite Kroeber and Kluckhohn's nomination of E. B. Tylor as the Zeus to anthropological culture's Athena, "the history of the culture idea in English and American anthropology suggests that it did not leap full-blown from Tylor's brow in 1871." On the contrary, "close consideration of Tylor's definition in the context of his work and time does in fact suggest that his idea of culture was perhaps closer to that of his humanist near-contemporary Matthew Arnold than it was to the modern anthropological meaning."[50] For Tylor, "culture" named the progressive evolution of human moral, intellectual, and technical capacities in society, *in contrast to* "custom," which could include regressive holdovers of the past. It is quite clear that, as a concept that named the gradual emancipation of human life from the despotism of nature, Tylor's "culture" remained firmly within the humanistic tradition, even as that tradition was being stretched to incorporate a relatively new object of investigation. In other words, "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (all categories long-established in the study of human societies) were now being re-conceptualized, re-articulated, and re-defined as a "complex whole" that, in so far as it represented a progressive agent of the emancipation of human subjectivity, could be called "culture."

Whether we are talking about "culture" as such, or the various "cultures" that differ from one another, the category has emerged as a term of social analysis in constitutive contradistinction to objective determinations. Freud, for instance, would define both functions of *Kultur*—"to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations"—in terms of the imposition of the restriction and sublimation of the primordial instinctual drives of the individual.[51] If his interpretations of the actual symbolic fabric of consciousness were in terms of its over- rather than under-determination, this was *in spite of* culture's effectivity, the result of the irremediable incompleteness of a cultural process that could never truly eliminate the element of nature from man's determination of purposes. Of course, "culture" can be defined to include *all* elements of a social organization, but it names the elements of such an organization specifically as forms distinct from direct biological determinants, at least in the very minimal sense that, even if "culture" were understood as a form of animal behavior, it must remain a form of *learned* behavior whose most obvious index would be variability within a biologically homogeneous species. The Boasian adoption of the culture-concept served precisely to assert the autonomy of even "primitive" systems of social action and meaning (what Kroeber and Kluckhohn called the "superorganic") from racial and biological determinations.

[50] George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 72–73.
[51] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1961), 36–50.

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Alternatively, "culture" has been analytically juxtaposed to other dimensions of the social that are organized by what are understood to be objectively necessary abstract laws, such as the "economy" or "society." Adam Kuper has persuasively argued that Talcott Parsons' tripartite anatomy of the structure of social action was not only central to laying the foundations for anthropology's claims to disciplinary autonomy, but that in so doing it further underwrote the autonomy of "culture" itself as a distinct determination of social action.[52] Even that notorious arch-determinist Claude Lévi-Strauss used the concept of "culture" to mark out an autonomous function for the intellectual process of transforming percepts into signs, radically distinguishing the logic of classificatory systems from the "social" determinations of infrastructural "praxis" and demographic change.[53] From this perspective, the critique of structuralist "culture" as a reification that effaces individual human agency (following the terms of the structure/agency debate) assumes secondary importance to a more fundamental (and thoroughly Kantian) move to establish the intellectual process of meaning-making as a self-positing agency constitutive of, rather than constituted by, structures of practice; for as a relatively autonomous sign-system, "culture" is a form of subjectivity whose only determinations (inflexible as these may be) are "cultural."

Following from such substantive contrasts between collectively constituted subjectivity and objective structures of social organization, anthropological "culture" can also by extension be opposed as a theoretical or methodological category of analysis to the "brute and disinterested objectivism" of sociological abstractions, providing a richer subjectivistic emphasis on the "rich description" of "human thought, achievement, consciousness, pain, stupidity and evil" that, precisely because of its irreducibility to objective structures of determination, "cannot be anticipated on the basis of some theoretical premise."[54] This is, of course, nothing other than a restatement of the anti-reductionist tradition stretching from Dilthey into American cultural anthropology.[55] This methodological dimension of the culture-concept emerged in late nineteenth-century German thought as a direct reaction against the rise of positivistic science, and after something of a lull in the concept's centrality during the period

[52] Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), ch. 2. In the developmentalist discourse of the 1950s and 1960s, the construction of "culture" as the residual determinant after social and ideological factors were subtracted often led to a negative characterization of cultural subjectivity as an obstacle to the "natural" process of economic growth. Cf. Carl Pletsch, "The Three Worlds Concept and the Division of Social Scientific Labor, Circa 1950–1975," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (1981), 565–90.

[53] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 66–70, 130–31.

[54] Roy Boyne, "Culture and the World System," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, 2&3 (1990), 57–62.

[55] Cf. Elman R. Service, *A Century of Controversy: Ethnological Issues from 1860 to 1960* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1985), ch. 16.

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of Hegelianism's intellectual ascendancy.[56] It needs to be positioned, then, in the context of the resurgence of a neo-idealist defense of subjectivity from reductionist determinism in later nineteenth-century philosophy and social inquiry—alongside, in other words, the neo-Kantian turn in epistemology that culminated in Heinrich Rickert's re-definition of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (a term which could include the deterministic knowledge of law-like regularities characteristic of psychology, for example) as the *historichen Kulturwissenschaften* (a term that specifically designated a form of knowledge that applied to unique phenomena the significance of whose singularity was grounded simultaneously in the value-orientations of historical actors, and in the historian's own subject-centered judgments of value).[57]

The issue is not then, as Stocking sometimes seems to imply, one of shifting the moment of the transition from humanistic to anthropological conceptions of "culture" from Tylor in the later nineteenth century to Boas in the early twentieth. For Kroeber and Kluckhohn, the key issue on which the difference between anthropological and humanistic "cultures" turned was value-neutrality. But while the shift from viewing "culture" as a condition achieved through a history of human improvement to viewing it as a universal condition of human social existence is certainly of great significance for the history of the social sciences, the two "cultures" are still defined by a single problematic. Anthropological "culture" still indexes the relative autonomy of human subjectivity from "natural" or "objective" determinations. This is not to deny, of course, that there can be a theory of "culture" that attempts to identify forms of social or biological determination. On the contrary, Malinowski's analysis of "basic needs" is just one eminent attempt within the modern anthropological tradition to identify such forms of determination. But for the object of such an analysis to be initially identifiable as "culture" is what first requires historical explanation. While culturalism—that is, a discourse that assumes the *standpoint* of culture as a category of human underdetermination—was required for the identification of certain kinds of objects or practices (e.g., custom, symbolic representation) as "culture," once the identification of such objects as forms of "culture" was disciplinarily conventionalized, "culture" itself became immediately susceptible to analysis in terms of external determinations, whether in terms of needs, interests, or practices. Yet the deeper history of the constitution of the "cultural" object of knowledge remains evident symptomatically even in the writings of an ethnologist with such distinctly reductionist leanings as Malinowski. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* for instance, he used "culture" as a standpoint from which to attack the stereotype of the "Primitive Economic

[56] Geuss, "*Kultur, Bildung, Geist,*" 36–37; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 47; Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins.*

[57] Heinrich Rickert, *Science and History: A Critique of Positivist Epistemology* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1962). See also Andrew Arato, "The Neo-Idealist Defense of Subjectivity," *Telos* 21 (1974), 108–61.

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Man," the fabricated projection of classical political economy who was "prompted in all his actions by a rationalistic conception of self-interest." Even "man on a low level of culture," Malinowski sought to demonstrate, was driven to "work and effort"—far beyond the merely necessary, and, indeed, even as "an end in themselves"—"by motives of a highly complex, social and traditional nature, and towards aims which are certainly not directed towards the satisfaction of present wants, or to the direct achievement of utilitarian purposes."[58] The Trobriand Islander was, as a "cultural" subject, necessarily underdetermined by the despotism of desires—that is, by his immediate wants, needs, or self-interest. The collective "culture" of the Islanders thus became for Malinowski the medium through which basic needs were fulfilled while at the same time releasing human beings from their immediate subjection to the demands of merely organic existence.

The anthropological conception of "culture," stripped of its implication of evolutionary improvement so as to accord underdetermined subjectivity to all social collectivities, replicates the Kantian understanding of human subjectivity at a collective level—and in all the more Kantian a spirit for its radically universal attribution of "culture" to all human societies. In other words, "culture" still names the emancipation of human reason (now grasped as variable systems of meaning-making, but still constituted subjectivistically in keeping with Kant's "Copernican revolution") from the natural determinations of utility maximization or biological necessity ("the despotism of desires"). The community thus comes to stand in as the arena for the realization of human worldly agency ("skill") that this fundamental freedom is supposed to ground.[59]

IV.

None of this is to say that these different forms of cultural discourse, anthropological and humanistic, are simply "the same." After all, the specific modalities in which subjective autonomy has been conceived—as a characteristic of the individual or the social, the community or the state—must surely be significant when we turn our attention to particular historical contexts. My point is rather to suggest that, from a historical standpoint, the proliferation of meanings should be considered within a single, internally differentiated conceptual history structured by a single, more-or-less internally consistent, modern understanding of human subjectivity as underdetermined and thus self-positing. "Culture," humanistic and anthropological, has with remarkable regularity operated within a repertoire of homologous antinomies: inside-outside, au-

[58] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1922), 60–62.

[59] Of course, this transformation of the subjectivistic standpoint from the individual to the collective level may not be admissible in the strictly *philosophical* terms of Kant's argument, but this should not blind us to the deeper homology in the structure of argumentation.

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thenticity-appearance, content-form, organism-mechanism, mind-body, meaning-thing, subject-object, freedom-necessity, autonomy-heteronomy, and spirit-nature. As a method of investigation, it will be indisputably important to *specify* the historical transformations the concept has undergone at *particular* points in time and space. It is in fact only because this concept has been assimilated into diverse discursive fields to diverse ends that the recognition of an underlying regularity becomes historically and theoretically meaningful. Such contextualization is, in the end, the only way to proceed to an understanding of this conceptual regularity as in any sense historically determinate. This in turn is what might make it possible to analyze in a historically determinate manner the changing ways in which free subjectivity has been construed in different temporal and spatial locations. Yet it will simply not do to *dissolve* this remarkable regularity into the pluralized discursive formations connected to particular institutional practices—to deny that "culture" is a concept that has exceeded its articulation as a specific form of discourse within particular institutional contexts. Such a strategy will get us no closer to understanding the central antinomic logic—the "deep structure," if you will—that has with such remarkable consistency marked the concept across its different major forms of usage. The Foucauldian emphasis on the embeddedness of discourse within regimes of practice should instead serve to impel us to recognize that "intellectual history," narrowly conceived either in terms of a chain of influence or in terms of the intertextual context of intellectual production, is far too narrow a framework within which to make sense of these deeper regularities across time and space.

A concept that is historically *modern* cannot be derived from metaphysical Truth; not, at least, without explicitly addressing the question of why an eternal verity had to wait so long for a systematic elaboration. Recognizing this has driven many intellectual historians to critique the more traditional "history of ideas" from the standpoint of a "genealogical" approach to the history of discourse formations. Yet it remains unclear whether the explanatory power and compelling plausibility of any concept to which can be ascribed the kind of universality that "culture" has enjoyed within the modern European tradition (in the dual sense of the regularity of its reproduction across centuries and its disregard for geographical and linguistic boundaries) can be plausibly derived from the specific institutional contingencies of discursive practice. The Foucauldian argument has certainly been made. Ian Hunter has argued that British cultural discourse in the second half of the nineteenth century took its significance from the pedagogical arrangement of the classroom: the presentation of the teacher as a model for ethical emulation shifted cultural discourse from its earlier valence of reflexive self-formation to a form of power-knowledge whose normalizing function was strategically directed to the production of a manageable population. For Hunter, then, the history of cultural discourse is not a "tradition" of thought, but rather a discourse-formation generated "piecemeal" out of an "ensemble of historical surfaces and forces" that was a "purely contingent

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and provisional configuration or 'programme,' whose emergence is not governed by any overarching historical purpose or theoretical goal" such as might be figured by the concept of "man."[60] Yet the only way to sustain this kind of argument is to radically disaggregate discourses of culture into their particular institutional contexts. Such a turn to concrete repertoires of practice seeks to unveil the process of the hypostatization of historically determinate concepts; but in the process, it leaves the larger regularities and the eminently transmissible nature of the culture-concept ultimately unmotivated.

David Lloyd and Paul Thomas share Hunter's suspicion of the figure of "man" at the heart of cultural discourse, but they balk at this crypto-positivist reduction of discourse to institutional contingency.[61] They instead argue that cultural discourse is an ideology whose "regulative idea" is that of the "modern state," which is as much as to say, the state not "as a contingently linked assemblage of institutions which have emerged over time in *ad hoc* response to political and social pressures" on the Foucauldian model, but rather "as the fully developed and unifying representative of a national people." Culture, in the terms of this discourse, serves to "mediate between a disenfranchised populace" who represent fractious interests, and "a state to which they must in time be assimilated" because it represents a truly universal interest that must sublate the competing fractious interests within the nation.[62] In the hands of ideologues like Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill, "culture" was constituted as an "extrapolitical, extraeconomic space" beyond the limits of civil society and thus homologous with the state.[63] This is an ideological project, Lloyd and Thomas have suggested, that far exceeds the limitations of discipline-formation with which Hunter was concerned, for literary education might be an "instrument" of cultural ideology, but it was certainly not coterminous with the "concept" itself.[64]

Yet surely the devastating critique that Lloyd and Thomas direct at Hunter could just as easily be laid at their own feet. Does the fact that the ideological project of Victorian state-consolidation appropriated a discourse of "culture" (as they convincingly demonstrate it did) necessarily mean that the concept itself can be derived from or reduced to such functionality? In this sense, Hunter as well as Lloyd and Thomas fundamentally fail to come to terms with one of the core insights of the classic text against which they have commonly positioned their own arguments. In *Culture and Society,* Raymond Williams had sought to show, in a thoroughly non-functionalistic manner, how the concept of "culture" had emerged in modern British thought "as an abstraction and an ab-

[60] Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 262.

[61] David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 16–20.

[62] Ibid., *Culture and the State,* 3–5. [63] Ibid., *Culture and the State,* 15.

[64] Ibid., *Culture and the State,* 118.

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solute." The delineative axis of the concept's significance was grounded in "the recognition of the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities [and ultimately, these conceived in turn as "a whole way of life"] from the driven impetus of a new kind of society"—which is as much as to say, the positing of a peculiarly modern subject-object dichotomy, and its subsequent alignment with a culture-society dichotomy. The second, evaluative axis then involved "the emphasis of these activities, as a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical judgment and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative"—which is as much as to say, the assumption of cultural subjectivism (individual or collective) as the standpoint for a critique of the abstract, coercive, and destructive forces of modern industrial society.[65] Lloyd and Thomas' critique of Williams' fundamental inability to recognize the historical complicity of the cultural trope of "man" with Victorian statist ideologies seems fair. But they fall short of the deeper insight of Williams' text. For Williams located the emergence of the culture-concept in a specifically modern experiential bifurcation (admittedly only posited rather than really analyzed or explained) of two zones of social existence: one constituted by subjects inhabiting meaningful life-worlds, the other constituted by an abstract field of heteronomous forces. He thereby generated a framework that, by eschewing functionalistic explanations for the culture-concept's importance, remains the most promising starting-point for developing a truly *historical* account of the constitution of the concept itself, as distinct from its deployment within any particular discursive apparatus.

Yet Williams was, of course, writing about modern Britain, which leaves wide open the larger question of what such a non-functionalistic historical account would look like when considered at the level of the global dissemination and circulation of the culture-concept as a category variously of colonial cosmopolitanism, anti-colonial nationalism, pan-Asianism, and anti-Western anticapitalism. Whatever else may be said, if we wish to follow the travels of the culture-concept beyond the borders of industrial Britain—even so far as to the eighteenth-century German-speaking world where the concept first rose to prominence—we will necessarily have to begin by displacing the problematic of "industrial society" from the conceptual primacy accorded to it in Williams' own account. There are, I would suggest, good reasons for doing this even on the basis of the British materials that Williams himself analyzed. Carlyle's critique of "'Laissez-faire,' 'Supply-and-demand,' and 'Cash-payment as the sole nexus'" aspired not to the dissolution of industrial society, but to the liberation of the "rational soul" of labor from its subjection to the "Brute-god Mammon."[66] Arnold's culturalism, on the other hand, explicitly targeted not

[65] Williams, *Culture and Society,* xviii.

[66] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1965), 38, 191, 207; Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), vol. 2, 56–82.

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the growth of industry itself, but rather the threatening new tendency of the proletariat to join a free-for-all pursuit of "doing as one likes."[67] In the light of such cases, the critique of "industrial society," so explicitly central in Ruskin and Morris, is better understood as the logical extension of a broader (and older) critique of "civil" or "commercial" society—a social order characterized in terms of the generalized pursuit of individual self-interest, the one-sided development of individuals through over-specialization, the instrumentalization of human beings and human relationships, individual social isolation, and anarchic and anomic socio-economic energies.

The emergence of an assertive culturalist politics in colonial Bengal followed the broad contours of the British juxtaposition of subjective agency to the heteronomy implicit in objective structures. While direct critiques of Western industrial production were in circulation in the late nineteenth century, Bengali critics like Bankimchandra Chatterjee more generally focused on the deleterious characterological, ethical, and political consequences of the absorption of Indian bureaucratic and clerical functionaries into the structures of civil society: the reduction of society to a "giant marketplace" where effeminate, hypocritical, verbose, and ineffective "babus," reciting "mantras from Adam Smith's puranas and Mill's tantras," lived a travesty of "independence" in the practical reality of a mere "habit of heartless isolation."[68] Conceiving a stark dichotomy between either debasing oneself through the bestializing pursuit of material self-interest, or debilitating oneself through an otherworldly pursuit of spiritual detachment, Bankim would draw from British cultural criticism to elaborate a third way: a "doctrine of culture" according to which the cultivation of innate capacities through non-desirous practice (*nishkam karma*) would give birth to a new model of humanity capable of disavowing slavery to material attachments at the same time as enhancing the (this-worldly) rational agency of both the individual and collective-national subject.[69] In Bengal, Bankim's intervention marked the beginning of a vibrant culturalism that would flourish throughout the twentieth century in a variety of forms: a nationalist political discourse that pitted a developmentalist national state grounded in the ethical and spiritual practices of Indian culture against the shallow materialism of Western civilization; a communalist political discourse that pitted cultured Hindus against a Muslim tenantry who were slaves to the baser instincts of selfishness, lust,

[67] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy,* 80–81; and cf. Stefan Collini, *Arnold* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 78–81.

[68] Andrew Sartori, "Emancipation as Heteronomy: The Crisis of Liberalism in Later Nineteenth-Century Bengal, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 17, 1 (Mar. 2004), 56–86.

[69] Bankim first broached this argument in an 1877 essay, "*Manushyatva ki?*" (What is humanity?), in Dr. Vishnu Basu, ed., *Bankim racanabali: Sahitya samagra* (in Bangla, Calcutta: Tuli-Kalam, Bengali year 1393 [c. 1986]), 374–76. His most detailed statement followed in his 1880s dialogical treatise, *Dharmmatattva: Anushilan* (*The essence of religion: Culture*)—see the new translation by Apratim Ray: *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's Dharmatattva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

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and atavistic fanaticism; and an aesthetico-literary discourse (associated most famously with the Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore) that pitted self-realization through free creativity as an end in itself against everyday utilitarian activity driven by practical necessity or material self-interest.[70]

This pattern was not confined to Britain's colonial territories. Starting in the later nineteenth century, the concept of culture was widely adopted to challenge Western civilizational domination through an identification of authentic indigenous tradition as the practical and intellectual foundation for the recuperation of an autonomous subjectivity from slavish imitation. In the 1850s, Ivan Kireevsky was clearly in search of a concept with which to articulate a distinction between Europe's alleged propensity for rationalist formalism and Russia's Christian commitment to the "higher and living unity" of "inner wholeness." His contrast turned on the difference between Western and Russian *prosveshchenie* (enlightenment), a term that evokes quite powerfully the notion of a subjectivity liberated from heteronomous constraint, but whose usage in this context to express the notion of discrete value-orientations stretched its conventional meaning to the limits of intelligibility.[71] By the 1860s, Nicolai Danilevsky had found a better term with which to articulate the autonomy of Russian values and institutions from the superficial universalistic judgments of Western civilization: *kulʾtura.*[72] Just as Bankim was identifying "the principle of culture" as the foundational doctrine of a revived Hinduism, so too would Konstantin Leontʾev identify the "love of culture" as the "central idea" of "true Slavophilism."[73] Meanwhile, "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmeikaika*[74]) were the watchwords of the Meiji project to overthrow the burden of the

[70] See Andrew Sartori, "The Categorial Logic of a Colonial Nationalism: Swadeshi Bengal, 1904–1908," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, 1&2 (2003), 271–85; Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 4; and Niharranjan Ray, *Krishti, kalcara, samskriti* (in Bangla, Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1979). I am currently working on a book manuscript that will present a more detailed substantive and theoretical consideration of the culture concept's history in Bengal.

[71] Boris Jakim and Robert Bird, trans. and eds., *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader: Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky* (Hudson, N.Y.: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 187–88, 213.

[72] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture,* 53–54; Frank Fadner, *Seventy Years of Pan-Slavism in Russia: Karazin to Danilevskii, 1800–1870* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1961), 314–38; Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), chs. 12 and 13.

[73] In Walicki, *Slavophile Controversy,* 529, where the author himself cites Williams to draw a direct parallel between Slavophilism and the British tradition of cultural criticism.

[74] *Bunka* was widely understood in the Meiji period to be an abbreviation of *bunmeikaika.* By the 1920s, however, it had been clearly established as the translative equivalent of *Kultur,* and (on the model of *Kultur/Zivilisation*) it could be opposed to *bunmei,* or the material civilization with which the Meiji era was associated. In China, the character (*kanji*) used in Japan for *bunka* was then "translated back" into its classical Chinese equivalent, *wen-hua,* to allow the classical term to do the new work of translating the concept of "culture." See Douglas Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization: Geography and History at Empire's End* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 294 (n. 37); Liu, *Translingual Practice,* 32–34, 239.

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past and establish Japan as a viable and independent national subject in the modern world order.[75] But some Japanese and Chinese intellectuals were already in the 1870s juxtaposing the formalism and materialism of Meiji reformist thought to the authentic cultivation of subjective autonomy. To this end, they adapted the concept of *wen* (writing)—the classical antithesis of *wu* (military force) and the basis for what would become the Chinese and Japanese translative equivalents of civilization (*wen-ming, bunmei*) and culture (*wen-hua, bunka*)—as a key platform from which to "organize an opposition to the present," that is, to the "tide of Westernization [that] promised to flood Japanese society with immoral and inhuman practices like 'economy.'"[76] In both Japan and China, "national culture," a concept that condensed both humanistic and ethnographic discursive functions, would become a fundamental element of state-building and empire-building ideologies; while the idea of the global redemptive mission of "eastern" or "Asian civilization" would sweep through East and South Asia well before the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere appropriated its rhetoric.[77] It is of course true that these ideological projects would as often ride under the banner of "civilization" as "culture," but this was explicitly understood to be a specifically "eastern" or "Asian" form of "civilization"—a "cultural" or "spiritual" civilization antithetical to the materialism of "Western civilization," formally recapitulating the twentieth-century German understanding of the relationship between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation.*[78]

I am not of course trying to conflate the mere *identification* of such formal regularities across cultural discourses with an *explanation* for the global dissemination of the culture-concept. This paper undertakes a more modest task: to emphasize the unity of "culture" as a global conceptual field in order to frame a starting-point from which a more substantial historical investigation of the significance of this modern thought-form might proceed. The distinction I have been trying to draw between the conceptual content of the culture-concept and its specific discursive and ideological deployments challenges any straightforward reduction of the globalizing movement of the concept to the heterogeneous contingencies of the concrete institutional or intellectual vehicles of its dissemination. After all, the remarkably consistent tendency of the concept to global dissemination over the past two and one-half centuries in itself seems to militate against an account that depends solely on the specificity of contingent historical conjunctures. An emphasis on structural continuity over contingency

[75] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Invention and Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture,'" *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, 3 (1995), 762–63.

[76] Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization,* 65.

[77] Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History* 12, 1 (2001), 99–130; Stephen N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China and India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Liu, *Translingual Practice;* Morris-Suzuki, "Invention and Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture.'"

[78] Cf. Duara, "Discourse of Civilization"; Morris-Suzuki, "Invention and Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture,'" 762.

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and heterogeneity, and conceptual content over discursive effectivity, flies in the face of the conventional disaggregative wisdom of contemporary intellectual history, whether of the Foucauldian or Skinnerian varieties. Yet the approach I am suggesting here does not necessarily have to abandon the considerable insights of this literature in the dubious cause of flattening the historical process of the globalization of the concept into a homogeneous monocausality; for it allows for the possibility that "culture" arrived in specific locations embedded in specific discursive frameworks, serving potentially quite different concrete functions in the hands of quite different historical agents intervening in quite different historical contexts and conceptualizing the appropriate agent of subjective autonomy in quite different ways. Nonetheless, I submit that there seems to be a deep coherence to the history of the culture-concept, and recognizing this could form the working hypothesis from which further historical investigation into its global dissemination and circulation might begin. Such an investigation could do worse than to broadly follow Williams in proceeding from a question quite different from the kind normally asked in the history of ideas: *Under what circumstances has the problematic of subjective autonomy come to assume such global resonance in the modern age?* If the culture-concept has indeed consistently articulated a claim about the underdetermination of human subjectivity, its movement might well track the dissemination of a more fundamental problematic: the definitively "modern" problematic of subjective autonomy itself. It is the historical conditions for the global emergence of this problematic, rather than the history of ideas or of the transfer of discursive-institutional apparatus from metropole to periphery, which should form the basic material for a truly global history of the culture-concept.

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