Seeking Order in Chaos: A Definition of Culture

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Abstract - **Since its identification as a unique field of research, the modern study of culture has become very popular. Its analytical-interpretive power has earned it a place of honor among the natural and social sciences, and the humanities. Despite its central status, however, the term "culture" itself has not yet found an accepted, customary definition. The absence of such a definition compels scholars of culture to search for ways to explore the discipline they are engaged in. This situation literally blocks knowledge of who we are as human beings and how we live, and muddles research goals and methodologies. This article aims to deal with this drawback. Taking as its starting point Freud's basic definition of culture as the "total achievements and institutions, which moved us away from our animal-like ancestors," and organizing this "total" under three analytical categories of taste, value, and control — it suggests a coherent definition of culture that encompasses most of the existing ones, while embracing them under the "rule" of "radical simplification," conceived by Robert Darnton in hard-to-define cases. This may offer a better understanding of culture as an all-encompassing human phenomenon, and a a more effective means for selecting the appropriate methodologies needed for the analysis of relevant questions.**

Key Words—**Culture; Definition of Culture; "Radical simplification"; Relative approach to culture; Normative and Descriptive approaches to culture; Essence, Value and Control as basic components of Culture; Power and Culture.**

THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUE

As William Sewell, historian and cultural researcher, maintains, the great paradox of contemporary cultural discourse is reflected in anthropology, the queen of the field, which invented the term culture, "or at least shaped it into something like its present form," but because of a "severe identity crisis" viewed the question as to the nature of culture as being irrelevant (Sewell, 1999, p. 37). It seems, furthermore, that even sociology, the birth mother of anthropology, neglected this question in favor of other topics, such as how people make choices in their daily lives, and what they draw for this purpose from the "cultural toolkit" (Swidler, 1986), or from the cultural "repertoire" (Tilly, 1992);[1] how individuals build their identity, purifying and refining their personal and collective memory; or how people conceptualize cultural phenomena relevant to their lives. These scholars maintain that scientists should define culture to the best of their understanding.

For example, sociologist Ann Swidler (Swidler, 2001) defined culture as a "repertoire of capabilities," which included symbols of meaning and practices selectively exploited by group members in order "to develop 'strategies of action'" (Swidler, 2001, p. 284). Sociologist Paul DiMaggio, who distinguished between culture in the private sense and culture in the collective sense, related to culture in one dimension as an "indiscriminately assembled and relatively unorganized" collection of "shared cognitive structures and supra-individual cultural phenomena" stored in the memory; and then, in another dimension**,** as "supra-individual" phenomena that hold two possible meanings: "as an aggregate of individuals' beliefs or representations, or as shared representations of individuals' beliefs (DiMaggio, 1997, pp. 268, 272).

Stephen Vaisey defined "culture" at times as "conceptions of the desirable," and at times as "cosmologies," "worldviews," or "values" (Vaisey, 2009, p. 1676, note 3). Sewell himself stated that culture should be understood as a "dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and in its spatial configuration," and also as "a system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation" (Sewell, 1999, pp. 88-89).[2]

Looking at the variety of definitions and the various underlying analytical starting points, Motti Regev, a sociologist and researcher of Israeli culture, doubts the ability to bridge all these and other classical settings, such as those of Sir Edward Tylor, Gottfried Herder, Marvin Harris, Clifford Geertz or Stuart Hall. Even if a definition is found, Regev stated, it does not necessarily become canonical, as is the case with Tylor's approach, where "most of us somehow run around it all the time" (Regev, 2009, p. 50). Regev's proposal is therefore in the spirit of Sewell and other scholars mentioned above, namely that every researcher ought to look for the most appropriate, ad hoc definition, applying it in his research methodology and analysis. According to Regev, this approach will be more productive than seeking a definition that would be acceptable to all and would successfully stand the test of time and become canonical.

If we take Regev's, Sewel's and others' advice seriously, what then is the true advantage of trying to be precise when answering such a difficult question — a question that even some of the finest theorists of culture have struggled with? Wouldn't it be better to follow Geertz, who thought that the essential task

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[1] Repertoire is defined by Stephen Vaisey, who follows Swidler (Swidler, 1986) and Boltanski and Thévenot (1999), as "justifications that rationalize or make sense of the choices that individuals make in their lives" (Vaisey, 2009, pp. 1676).

[2] Sewel's definition, which is extremely difficult to work with is as follows:
". . . culture . . . should be understood as a dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and in its spatial configuration, and as a system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation. (Sewel, 1999, pp. 52).

of theory building in this context was not "to codify abstract regularities," but to make "thick description" possible, i.e. not to generalize across cases but within cases (Geertz, 1973, p. 26)?

Even if we suppose that there is a point to this discussion — especially since, according to the American anthropologist David M. Schneider, culture is the only option left for humanity to understand nature and the facts of life, since they have no independent existence apart from how they are defined in the context of culture (Kuper, 1999, p. 72) — is there a way to clarify this "conceptual morass" (Geertz, 1973, p. 4)? Could we not do better than the two prominent anthropologists Clyde Kluckhohn and Alfred L. Kroeber, who gathered a total of 164 definitions, formulated during the years 1871–1950 by 110 cultural researchers, without being able to bond them into a coherent definition (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, pp. 77-154)? Can we cope with the variety of definitions added since Kroeber and Kluckhohn's attempt in 1952? Or, in other words, could we crack the riddle of "the most central problem of all of social science," as the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowsky defined culture as early as 1939 (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 3, note 2)?[3]

For Kluckhohn, perhaps unfairly slandered by Geertz, there was no doubt that culture needed an agreed-upon definition. In his book *Culture and Behavior* (Kluckhohn, 1962), Kluckhohn described an imaginary discussion between several people regarding the need for a clearly stated definition of culture. They included a businessman, a lawyer, an economist, a philosopher, a biologist, a physiologist, a psychologist and an historian; the discussion centered on various questions relating to the logic and value of dealing with a matter so abstract and so distant from the issues of everyday life.

At this point, a series of interesting responses emerged. One of the anthropologists claimed that defining culture is an imperative for man's endless search for a better understanding of the self and of human patterns of behavior in general. Social life, the spokesman added, cannot exist without a system of conventional understandings transmitted from generation to generation and through which a person can evaluate and judge himself. Moreover, argues Kluckhohn, understanding culture allows predicting human behavior and understanding its motives in depth (Kluckhohn, 1962, p. 68).

Predicting behavior also creates a better understanding and respect for the customs of other peoples with whom we would like to come into contact and communicate with, the businessman above claimed — thus reflecting Kluckhohn's own views. In this respect, culture is not just "a reticulum of patterned means for satisfying needs," but equally "a network of stylized goals for individual and group achievement." So, if we want to predict human behavior, we cannot expect that such incentives, even the most primary of them, such as hunger or sex, will exhibit similar reaction patterns. A good definition of culture can help us predict different responses and clarify their characteristics. The issue will be even more significant during encounters between people of various orientations and altogether different cultures, Kluckhohn summarizes (Kluckhohn, 1962, pp. 67-69).

Other speakers in the dialogue initiated by Kluckhohn offered their own explanations as to what a clearer definition of culture

could contribute: the ability of mankind to understand itself as part of a cultural continuum, but also the ability to look at this cultural variety critically and know what one is or is not part of; a better understanding of why certain cultural changes, especially the more drastic and rapid ones (for example the Weimar Constitution and the democratic political culture which it sought to consolidate in a monarchical and conservative society) are rejected by society and may even raise tensions and disagreements; acceptance of the moral obligation of stronger cultures not to damage weaker cultures they come into contact with; cognizance that cultural changes may occur without defined and implicit logic because no culture is a "self-sealing system" or immune to change; a greater awareness that cultural changes constantly occur through contact with other cultures and through the attributes and pressures inherent in every culture (Kluckhohn, 1962, pp. 69-71).[4] As evidenced by the aggressive support of Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition of culture, it seems that, despite the difficulties involved, the two favorite approaches follow the logic of the well-known American psychologist and philosopher Lawrence Joseph Henderson, who determined that in science classification is preferable to lack of classification, provided "you don't take it too seriously" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 77).

Now that we are convinced that a definition of culture is essential, is it not too late? Has culture not lost its validity in light of a more comprehensive and convincing concept, namely that of *power*, as Roy D'Andrade postulated in 1999?[5] We are facing a serious dilemma, especially in view of the harsh criticism of cultural studies in recent decades, in light of the fact that they are suspected of disclosing a political agenda and of the difficulties in consolidating them into a discipline.[6] Quite a significant group of researchers concerned itself with this question.

Raymond Williams, author, literary critic, and founding father of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, declared that culture is an autonomous domain that stands on its own right, independent of power, and opposes the latter's current, upward trend (Bruce Robbins, Forward to Williams, 1995, p. xiii). Stuart Hall saw in Foucault's template nothing more than "vulgar reductionism" and systematically refuted Foucault's own sophisticated positions (Hall, 1996, pp. 47-48). Eric Wolf argued that if power acquires the status of an "all-embracing unitary entelechy," it "would merely reproduce the reified view of society and culture as apriori totalities." This, Wolf explained, is not acceptable, because society does not respond mathematically to projections imposed on it and is not perpetuated in a set of rigid social patterns, as seen throughout history (Wolf, 1999, pp. 66-67). In the course of his study, Wolf investigated the role of power in three cultures — the Canadian Kwakiutl Indians, the Aztec, and the Nazis — and came to the conclusion that, although its presence in society is substantial and important, power as the social all-controller, is inadequate

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[3] Bronislaw Malinowsky (1939), "Review of Six Essays on Culture by Albert Blumenthal," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 4, pp. 588. (Appears in Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture*: *A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, pp. 3, note 2).

[4] This ethical contention had strong resonance with anthropologist Adam Kuper, who explains that "the reason that we still need the notion of culture is a moral one, or a political one. The concept of culture provides us with the only way we know to speak about the differences between the peoples of the world, differences that persist in defiance of the processes of homogenization. And cultural difference has a moral and political value." (Kuper 1999, pp. 212).

[5] Roy D'Andrade (1999), "Culture Is Not Everything," *Anthropological Theory in North America*, E.L. Cerroni-Long (ed.), Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, pp. 96.

[6] See Stuart Hall's critical review of the failure of the cultural studies in Stuart Hall, "Cultural studies: two paradigms," in *What is Cultural Studies. A Reader*, John Storey (ed.), (1996), London and New York, Arnold and Oxford University Press, pp. 32-34.

and cannot render the complexity of relations between culture and intricate human endeavors (Wolf, 1999, pp. 286-291).

If we have thus reached the conclusion that it is necessary to define culture, and that the process of evaluating culture has not diminished over time, perhaps even intensified, it would be beneficial to strive for a definition — preferably, a simple, understandable, and inclusive definition, readily available for effective retrieval. A definition that would allow us to penetrate with greater sharpness and clarity this broad domain, which has forced itself upon us as a specific academic domain since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century and the rise of nationalism in the early nineteenth century, has since then increasingly engaged the attention it generated. The model that we try to follow is the process of "radical simplification" of Robert Darnton, who tried to define what was "revolutionary" in the French Revolution. Numerous books have been written on this question, leaving it unresolved, however. Darnton proposed the famous formula — and what could be more simple than that? - "liberty, equality, fraternity" (liberté, égalité, fraternité) (Darnton, 1990, p. 19). Just as Hillel the Elder [b. 110 BCE], Jewish religious leader and founding father of the House of Hillel, taught the essence of the religious Judaic tradition to a stranger who wanted to be converted to Judaism, explaining it to him in a nutshell, — "What is hateful to you do not do to your fellow: this is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn" — so did Darnton manage to instill in the academic community a definition of a concept that provided the motivation and inspiration for further research and study of the French Revolution (Darnton & Tamm, 2004).

THE WORK PLAN

First of all, my own definition of culture will be introduced and explained. Then the sources and reasons for the diversity of cultures will be discussed. This article will then deal with additional cultural definitions, some normative (or "ideal") and some descriptive (or "social"), which our definition seeks to include.[7] We will also point out a number theoretical and methodological insights which the definition yields, and discuss how they are consistent with the ways culture appears in our academic and everyday life. We will conclude with fundamental questions, some old, others new, which now require a more detailed investigation. Even though it is somewhat formal, the template I present further implies the formation of a humanistic approach, both liberal and relativistic (and therefore contextual), whose foundations lie in the Berlin School, founded by Rudolf Virchow and Adolf Bastian in the late nineteenth century.[8]

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture, as I understand it, is the entire range of activities, traits, experiences of a person (thoughts, imagination, actions, deeds, and behavior) arising preternaturally from his spirit or his consciousness. Whatever heats our body to 36.8°C in such a precise, meticulous way is beyond our control. The same goes for our rhythmic heartbeats, which are astonishingly adapted to so many levels of physical exertion. The various physical sensations and instinctual reactions to events we experience are usually not under our control.[9] Everything beyond this is culture.

These complex elements that make up the individual can be classified into three categories: the first includes applications that provide the essence of human life, or, if we want, the flavor of life as experienced by us. It is classified as *taste*. The second contains all that gives life its worth and meaning, and is classified as *value*. The third includes all that gives a person the knowledge and skills enabling him to handle his life properly and meet its burdens successfully; this is the *control* category.

We charge these categories with content: complex things we do for pleasure; that arouse or thrill us and make us feel conciliatory; that give us a sense of physical delight and a feeling that we can control our minds — we can go on vacation, observe wonderful natural sights, enjoy a morning walk on a promenade along a seafront, be involved in sports, watch an artistic performance, generate creative work, read a book, have positive, albeit imaginary, experiences, meet with friends, have intimate contact with a much loved person, and raise children. I am leaving out any kind of perverse activity, which for some can constitute greatness, leaving this to the imagination of the reader. All of the above are aimed to give some taste or flavor to our lives.

Granting value to things through which we seek to guide our lives, to give them direction, focus, and justification — such as serving God, or a specific principle or ideology, or acts of normative (or sacred) value, like helping a neighbor or giving charity secretly — is included in the second category. All that helps us organize our lives — like work, housekeeping, healthcare, schooling, communication and information systems, laws, management and research — and enables our private and collective existence and necessary, mandatory, social and political coordination is identified with the third category.[10]

In many cases these categories overlap (in fact it would be unusual if they did not). A musician in a philharmonic orchestra will serve as our example: simply playing for his own pleasure (even when he does so for his livelihood) would refer to it as what gives *taste* to his life. His way of life as a professional and everything connected to his training — from finding an appropriate orchestra, to his becoming part of it, from the care he gives to his instrument to the way he plans his rehearsals —

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[7] Williams distinguished between three categories of definitions of culture that derive from three modes of cultural research: "the ideal," which sees culture as a process of human perfection; "the documentary," which sees the history of knowledge embodied in imagination and social creative enterprises; and the "social," which refers to culture as the day-to-day human acts as they are expressed in and defined by people's way of life. Our definition will proceed according to the three categories proposed by Williams. See Williams, 1961, pp. 57-59.

[8] At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the arrival of Franz Boas in the United States, his school of thought became widely known in the U.S. and was studied by a long line of students, giving rise to a serious confrontation with both the positivist approach, the cultural hierarchical approach expounded by the sociologist Leslie White, and the evolutionary approach of Tylor et al. (Moore, 1997, pp.42-52; Kuper, 1999; White, 1975).

[9] According to sociologist Norbert Elias, some emotions, such as nausea or feelings of revulsion, derive from deviations to developing rules of acceptable behavior, such as spitting in public, bad eating habits, contempt and disdain for accepted mores, physical distance that is tolerated between people during a conversation (Elias, 2000, pp. 72-108, 129-135). Anger, frustration, depression, feelings of revenge are increasingly perceived as acceptable behavior, as Stefan Zweig shows in his biography *Marie Antoinette*. Marie Antoinette knew how to use such deviations in her favor when she was forced to host members from the nobility for whom she had only contempt at Versailles. We know this to be true because of the terrifying letters the Empress of Austria wrote to her daughter, after she received very accurate information about Marie Antoinette's behavior from the spies planted in Versailles (Zweig, 2002).

[10] Special attention should be paid to language. Some perceive language as one of the components for maintaining control (and an expression of effective communication between individuals as a condition for the existence of society). Culture is based entirely on this. Roland Barthes, for example, claimed that "man does not exist prior to language, either as a species or as an individual" (cited in Pinker, 2002, p 208).

all these are part of the *control* he has over the activities of his professional life (and aspects of his physical existence). The dedication of his life to music as part of his religious, pedagogic, moral, or aesthetic mission relates to the concept of *value*. The main category, to which we can assign the entirety of activities that our artist has engaged in throughout his life, will be determined by the relative weight assigned to them. If music is a mission, then the musician is dealing with the category of *value*. If it is work or an occupation, it falls into the category of *control*. If the music is, in his understanding, for his pleasure, then the focus is on the category of *taste*.

Similar features will concern the listeners. The majority, we assume, will view it as an existential experience (we can recall the brave citizens of Leningrad who, on the 9th of August 1942, left their homes and shelters, weak and on the brink of starvation after prolonged German bombing, and went to the Grand Philharmonic Hall to listen to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7). Relatively few people will view listening to music as a value. Fewer still will view it as an issue of control (for example, for developing a greater knowledge of musical language, comparison of musical versions, or exposing young members of the family to music as an act of musical education). Ministries of culture (that is, the state) may view it as a value (e.g. for enhancing musical education, encouraging musical composition, enriching society, or preserving musical traditions), or as control (e.g. employing musicians, enhancing the enlightened cultural image of the state, supporting musical initiatives of local municipalities in exchange for political support, or justifying the very existence of a ministry of culture).

Culture is a unique experience of the human race. In the animal world, even at the bacterial level, behavioral patterns may somewhat parallel human behavior. Animals quite effectively use encoded communication, they develop a technology of sorts (chimpanzees use tools, even tools that involve various stages of preparation), have the ability to learn, use and understand visual symbols or sounds, design tools and understand their uses, exhibit behavior that indicates compassion, and hint at values such as helping others without expecting any rewards (Pruet and Bertolani, 2007, pp. 412-417; Rumbaugh et al, 2009, pp. 341-345; Bekoff and Pierce, 2009; Hornaday 1922; Hughes and Sperandio, 2008, pp. 111-120; Lampert, 2012, pp. 101-112). However, even if we agree that some animal behavioral patterns resemble or mimic human cultural behavior, it is clear that animals are not dependent on it for their existence. This was not true for the human race at the dawn of its development. Mankind was forced (or perhaps enabled) to disengage from nature and develop survival skills that do not originate in nature as such. (Ardery 1976, pp. 134-139; Lewis 1974, pp. 51-55; Geertz 1973, pp. 49-50). In order to prepare mankind for the taxing burden of thought, learning, creation, sensual yearning and regulatory behavior, evolution tripled the size of the human brain and led to multiple adaptations of parts of the body (the face and skull, genitals, muscles, fingers) to meet this challenge (Ardery 1976, pp. 95-101, 138-139; Morris, 1967, pp. 31-49, 50-102; Diamond, pp. 1992, 32-58, 67-84; Lewis, 1974, pp. 55-59, 65-79, 103-108, 114-125)

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Human cultural diversity is astounding. Its origin lies, on the one hand, in the creative power of mankind, of every man according to his genetic makeup, to events that affect his life and his physical environment, and to the demands placed on him by ever-changing social and political institutions, on the other (Kluckhohm, 1962; Pinker, 2002, pp. 23, 142-145, 165-169, 207-211, 245-251, 306-336, 400-434). All of these, as well as the ongoing contacts or confrontations with other cultures and within one's own culture contribute to cultural diversity. We are referring to a continuous flow of private and collective creativity, voluntary or institutional, which produces at every given moment new and diversified cultural contents aimed at each of the three areas defined above. To some extent, it will remain absolutely private, but it will also evolve over time to become a segment of our local, national, or global cultures. Most contributions will change or be forgotten, while others that are more suitable, more efficient, more aesthetic, more encompassing, more familiar, or more easily soaked up through propaganda, advertisement or marketing will take their place and will become "property" of the human race.

The jeans, an invention of Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis, became a universal commercial product. Its beginnings lay in the creative initiative of a small group of private individuals, but it is reflected in each of the categories that we proposed. What was involved initially was the need for a durable cloth to cover the wagons and tents of the settlers of the American West, the need for durable overalls and trousers and a preference for the color indigo. Over time, these basic needs evolved into technologies of textile production and material engineering; business and marketing initiatives; the registering and protection of patents; the aesthetics of apparel and masculine and feminine appearance; the cultivation of a national heritage and educational policy; the symbolism of belonging and status; the economics of clothing; marketing and advertising techniques; consumer availability; protest and infrapolitical opposition to repressive domination; issues of changing identity or revolt against traditional identity or "ordinary" identity or, as phrased by the anthropologist Daniel Miller, a "post-semiotic garment, an antithesis to identity" (Miller, 2010, p. 415).[11] Similarly, even though the production of jeans began as an individual initiative, it mutated into a number of public manifestations, some of them institutional (fashion, production, marketing, advertising, identity, protest, America). In any case, over the years it remained a very strong expression of individuality, designed according to the tastes, symbolic expression of individuality, needs, and even the values of the wearer. It was individually fashioned, either autonomously or by way of images and promotional pressure, and reflected in each of the three categories proposed.

All developments of materials, tools, instruments, principles, methods, ideas, visions, institutions, patterns, regulations, agreements, codes, symbols, works of art, performances, and forms of organization started just as did the jeans. Each one of these evolved as a result of pressures emanating from factors that control our existence (thoughts, imagination, passions), with the multiple activities they generate, each related to the conscious, emotional, behavioral, and material processes that constantly affect us as creators of culture. It is man himself, as a cultural entity and representative of a specific culture, who stands behind this enormous creative enterprise. This fact poses a serious methodological and interpretive challenge, eloquently

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[11] Benjamin S. Parker, "Pioneer Life," *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (December, 1907), pp. 182-188; Michael A. Korovkin, "An Account of Social Usages of Americanized Argot in Modern Russia," *Language in Society*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Dec., 1987), pp. 509-525; Ayaz Mahmud, "Prairie Schooner," *Prairie Schooner*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Winter 1998), pp. 72-85.

described by the Israeli poet Aharon Amir in his poem "To Be a Man." The poem asks "How is it to be another/ Not me/ How is it to be you, he/ How is it to be in your skin/ his skin, her skin, our skin, their skin/ How is it to be a citizen of another country/ To be raised under a different sky/a different climate/ To be part of another nation/ to think, to dream/ to write in a different language?" (Amir, 1970, pp. 46-49).

In the divided global society of our time it is difficult to talk about a monolithic human society and "pure," cultural reality. The picture is much more complex. I will demonstrate it by the use of a national state model, or what can be considered as "the collective jeans." If in the past the national state emphasized and praised the homogeneity of its culture, it lost its appeal after the 1960s — first in Europe and a generation later in most places outside of it — announcing a ceasefire between the ethnic, religious, racial, and even national minorities, which had previously paid the price of unity by the negation of their identity, and thus enabling them a new freedom of cultural self-definition. This freedom allowed newly identified groups to initiate a search for self-determination within the national state, in most cases without threatening their existence (Smith, 1981, pp. 12-17, 66-63, Smith, 1991, pp. 124-125). Several countries, such as Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador, where there is a large, active Indian population (10% of the general population in Mexico, 15% in Ecuador, and 55% in Bolivia), have been transformed through this process into multicultural and multiethnic republics, a process endorsed by their constitutions.[12] A more radical process occurred in countries that were already multinational, like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, and in most colonial countries, due to world political and judiciary circumstances rather than for ethnic reasons.

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[12] The constitution of the United Mexican States ruled in its second clause the following:
"The Mexican nation is unique and indivisible. The nation is pluricultural based originally on its indigenous tribes which are those that are descendants of the people that lived in the current territory of the country at the beginning of the colonization and that preserve their own social, economic, cultural, political institutions. The awareness of their indigenous identity should be fundamental criteria to determine to whom the dispositions over indigenous tribes are applied. They are integral communities of an indigenous tribe that form a social, economic and cultural organization."
The Political Constituion of the Mexican United States. Translated by Carlos Pérez Vázquez. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005. http://www.juridicas.unam.mx/infjur/leg/constmex/pdf/consting.pdf
The first clause in Ecuador's constitution states::
"Ecuador is a constitutional State of rights and justice, a social, democratic, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, multinational and secular State. It is organized as a republic and is governed using a decentralized approach."
Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html
The first and second clause in the Bolivian constitution rules the following:
"Article 1: Bolivia is constituted as a Unitary Social State of Pluri-National Communitarian Law (Estado Unitario Social de Derecho Plurinacional Comunitario) that is free, independent, sovereign, democratic, inter-cultural, decentralized and with autonomies. Bolivia is founded on plurality and on political, economic, juridical, cultural and linguistic pluralism in the integration process of the country.
Article 2: Given the pre-colonial existence of nations and rural native indigenous peoples and their ancestral control of their territories, their free determination, consisting of the right to autonomy, self-government, their culture, recognition of their institutions, and the consolidation of their territorial entities, is guaranteed within the framework of the unity of the State, in accordance with this Constitution and the law."
In *Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009,* https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009.pdf

OTHER CULTURAL DEFINITIONS

Our definition is one of many, and seeks, like others, a concise way to comprise everything that culture contains and represents. Can it accommodate all of these and serve as a suitable replacement? To answer this question, and perhaps the entire question of the essay, I will at first present some of the most prominent definitions found in literature. Some, as we shall soon see, are normative. They refer to the ultimate of human acts and endeavors, and consider them as altogether representing culture. Some are more descriptive and omit the customary, but ultimately problematic, distinction between a so-called "high" culture and a "low" or popular culture. Others tend to underscore what seems to be more specifically behavioral, semiotic, sociological, epistemological, or psychological aspects of human endeavor. After presenting these definitions I shall return to our basic definition and discuss its ability to offer a comprehensive alternative, which over the years may become a leading integrative definition.

Culture, according to the famous English literary critic Matthew Arnold, is "the pursuit of our total perfection." Arnold considered perfection as "getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world" (Arnold, 2006 [1869], p. 5). The pursuit of perfection reaches its climax in harmonious perfection, conveyed as "sweetness and light" (Arnold, 2006, p. 9), which epitomizes knowledge, cogitation, wisdom, and sensitivity to beauty (Arnold, 2006, p. 52). The pursuit of perfection also reflects a "noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it" (Arnold, 2006, p. 34). There are several conditions for the actualization of this pursuit, Arnold added: it should be a permanent, not a random act; it should be done within the framework of the official state and its official religion, and not outside of them; it should not differentiate between man and man, between classes, between sexes, or any other human categories; its leaders should be methodical, disciplined, and open up access to knowledge in all its complexity; and should make culture practicable and available to all, even to those who live "outside of the clique of the cultivated and learned" (Arnold, 2006, pp. 51-53).[13] There is an additional condition in the pursuit of perfection: it must be peaceful. Any attempt to bring about progress by force, by Jacobinic methods — that is messianic, political, ideological, bureaucratic or philistine — will immediately be rejected. The process must be honest, voluntary, practical, and respect wisdom and free judgement (Arnold, 2006, pp.49-50).

"The concept of culture," according to philosopher Roger Scruton "leapt fully armed from Johann Gottfried Herder's mind in the mid-eighteenth century, and has been embroiled in battles ever since" (Scruton, 2000, p. 1). According to Herder, culture or *Kultur* was the "life-blood of a people, the flow of moral energy that holds society intact," as differentiated from civilization, which "is the veneer of manners, law and technical know-how" (ibid.). The German Romantics who followed (Schelling, Fichte, Hegel) defined culture in the same way "as the defining essence of a nation, a shared spiritual force which is manifest in all the customs, beliefs and practices of a people . . . an island of 'we' in the ocean of 'they'" (Scruton, 2000, pp. 1, 3). Culture, they said, shapes and affects language, beliefs,

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[13] Arnold attached great impotance to education, which he saw as a humanizing process whose aim coincides with that of culture. Se: Lesley Johnson (1979), *The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams*, London, Routledge and Kagan Paul, pp. 34-38.

religion, and history, and influences even the least significant events.

Modern anthropologists, Scruton observed, accepted the romantic interpretations of Herder, seeing culture as the personification of the "self-identity of a tribe." Those who followed Humboldt, on the other hand, saw it as a characteristic of the intellectual elite that strives for what is thought to be the best, in Arnold's terminology. From the conflict between these two approaches the concept of "popular culture" arose. The phrase was first presented by the literary critic Raymond Williams as a critique of the "elitist tradition in literary scholarship." Popular culture, according to Williams, is folk culture, a dimension by which the nation expresses its solidarity, its identity, its sense of belonging and its opposition to elitist oppression. William's approach, Scruton wrote, paved the way for identifying elements of folk culture in all things.

As far as Scruton is concerned, prominent and common culture are inextricably intertwined. Both arise from the same spiritual need: "the need for an ethical community into which the self can be absorbed, its transgressions overcome and forgiven, and its emotions re-made in uncorrupted form" (Scruton, p.18). Within its framework, man can morph into what Aristotle calls a "man of virtue."[14] In the past, religion provided an umbrella for such spiritual needs. Today, Scruton stated, art does. Art, or more specifically aesthetics, provides us with the sense of salvation that in the past was provided by religion, especially through what Scruton called "dynamic communities." The power of aesthetics is its ability to be an "inconsumable object" (Scruton, 2000, p. 38), and a value in itself. When this value is adopted by man, it motivates him to produce "objects replete with meaning," which allows him to put his interests aside and evaluate the state of the world as it is — at least temporarily (Scruton, 2000, p. 39).

The most valuable effect of high culture is to preserve the common culture from which it arose as an art form, that is, as an expression of ethnic life from an aesthetic point of view, thereby perpetuating it. High culture is the culture of enlightenment, a culture based on universal values and on imagination and emotions. It presupposes the perpetuation of the rite of passage from emotional isolation to complete membership in society, with full responsibility for the community. It is hence incumbent on us to act, as Confucius said, "as if it matters eternally what we do: to obey the rites, the ceremonies and the customs that lend dignity to our actions and which lift them above the natural sphere;" to be in the state of "natural piety" described by the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and be aware of the enormity of creation and the mystery of time (Scruton, 2000, p. 158).

From a similar point of view, albeit a different perspective, philosopher of education Nimrod Aloni (Aloni, 2012) sought to renounce all "clean" definitions of culture, which overlook normative deviations and insistently try to persuade us to create an exemplary human society — a humanistic society, ethical and individualistic, that stands behind a definition according to which culture is "a combination of excellence of a high emotional order and thought in human acts and creation:" A combination that is perfectionistic and strives for the sublime,

for the excellence of perfection in human endeavors. A phenomenon that has a cosmopolitan outlook and therefore strives to be based "on the combination of the spiritual nature of man to reach for accomplishments for all humanity;" and that is humanistic, as it sets out ways to ensure "the freedom and equality of all men," for developing skills and qualities, hence "leading towards a complete and full humane life that is deserved and respected" (Aloni, pp. 67-68).

According to Aloni, this type of culture was inherent in the hundreds of years of Gothic culture. Jewish tradition, which gave rise to the revolts and wars that preceded the destruction of the First Temple, emphasized the need to pursue justice and political moderation.[15] The Greek tradition emphasized the central foundational concepts of *arete*, and of *humanitas* or *paideia*. The former encompasses human good will, excellence and a striving to achieve one's full potential; the latter combine devotion to the educational process, which prepares man for a life of public service and an honorable private life. The Stoic tradition, on the other hand, combined enlightenment and broad knowledge with a moral principles and strong character, and was always willing to defend these values, independently of a man's origin or standing. This tradition stood out, says Aloni, during the Renaissance period as well, giving birth to Renaissance masterpieces (and to a culture of "great books"); later on, during the Enlightenment, the emphasis shifted to the elements of inquisitiveness, rationality, the individual, and advancement based on initiatives emanating from the human mind, and free of the pressure of religion and church. These approaches, Aloni stated, project deeply into modern thought and contribute to fervid demands for freedom, to creativity, criticism, and lofty idealism or, as phrased by Matthew Arnold, to the demand for free intellectualism, and normative and restrained emotions.

Such a normative definition of culture, it seems to me, summarized the position of the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1963-1965), which dealt with the question of Modernism and the Church's relation to it. In December 1965, the fourth and final Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (joy and hope), concluded with the statement that "Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture . . . The word 'culture' in its general sense indicates everything through which man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labor, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions . . . Different styles of life and multiple scales of values arise from the diverse manner of using things, of laboring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridic institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty." (Vatican Council II, 1965, para. 53).

For Freud, who combined the descriptive with the normative, the concept of culture is the "sum of all the achievements and institutions that have differentiated our lives from those of our animal forebears." These, he said, had two purposes: "that of protecting humanity against nature and [that] of regulating the relations of human beings among themselves" (Freud, 1963, pp. 49-50). All of this is based on several

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[14] "A man of virtue" according to Aristotle is a man of good judgment, a man of feeling and intuition adapted to the needs of the times, personal and social; a moral person with a sense of mission and duty, a self-confident man with vision and who adheres to it.

[15] "On three things the world stands: on justice, on truth, and on peace," (Zechariah 8:16). "Truth and justice of peace reigned at your gates". (Mishnah Avot 1:18)

components. The first is the combination of all the activities and values that "we know," that are beneficial to mankind because they prepare the ground for growth and are harnessed for men's use, protecting them from the forces of nature, teaching them how to use tools, to harness fire, to build houses, and so forth. The very development of such basic tools enhanced man's freedom of motion and honed his bodily sensations. All this made achievements in science and technology possible and, unfortunately, as a consequence of mankind's legendary and unending quests, also the ability to destroy the world. At the same time, with man's control over nature, his misuse of it for his own needs, his lack of vision in the cultural realm could have made it possible for man to exploit space and time efficiently and for his own pleasure and mental stability "to save unnecessary use of mental energy" (Freud, 1963, pp. 34-58).

The second component, according to Freud, is the cherishing and nurturing of spiritual endeavors, intellectual, scientific, and artistic achievements, and of an ideal world (religious, philosophical, and ideological). The third facet of culture, albeit certainly not the least according to Freud's vision, is the determination of the relationship between man and man and between man and society. This is a cultural activity because it initially demands a united body, that is, a majority, which is stronger than any individual. To exchange one's power with the power of many, said Freud, is crucial since it relies principally on a situation when the many adopt the yearnings and urges of the few (Freud, 1963, pp.57-59).

The next demand is for justice, that is, the assurance that a law once passed will not be broken in favor of any individual (Freud, 1963, p. 59). From here it is a short distance to the demand for the expansion of a majority, so that it will incorporate all individuals in such a way that all will be safe from uncontrolled aggression. Needless to say, that freedom is not part of culture because it preceded culture, and therefore forces it to maintain a permanent and prolonged dialogue, in the hope of reaching some sort of equilibrium. Deeper reflection will reveal that culture is actually the story of the restraint and encouragement of human desires and their instincts. These on their part make an additional cultural demand (besides creating commonality and order that are just and lawful). It is sublimation that allows for spiritual, scientific, artistic, and theoretical activities to play a significant role in cultural life (Freud, 1963, p. 61-63).

According to Freud, cultural process is "the struggle of the human species for existence," a 'battle of Titans" (Freud, 1963, p. 125) and, in a more concrete way, a process expanding from the family (whose pattern is still determined biologically) to humanity (Freud, 1963, pp. 103, 121). It is the same compulsion humans feel in the service of Eros and Ananke — that is, "the inevitability of [the] unavoidable restrictions" — namely, abandoning the individualistic for the general human condition, in the framework of which people are connected with each other into one unit (Freud, 1963, p. 133). This process demands, as Freud explicated, great sacrifices from the individual, who also equips himself with the appropriate mechanisms for dealing with such restrictions, the most outstanding of which is conscience (the superego) and the closely connected sense of guilt (Freud, 1963, p. 137).

The classical definition of Edward Burnett Tylor represents a turn to a descriptive, less argumentative, approach in cultural research. As far as Tylor is concerned "Culture and Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society," (Tylor, 1871, p. 1). This definition, simple as it is, had a profound impact and fostered dozens of similar definitions. Franz Boas, the founder of the humanistic school of American cultural research, found that "culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activities as determined by these habits" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 82). It was along this line of thought that anthropologist Harry Holbert Turney-High argued that culture in its broadest sense "is coterminous with everything that is artificial, useful and social employed by man, in order to maintain his equilibrium as a bio-psychological organism" (Turney-High, 1949, p. 5). To this muddle Kluckhohn added his own, explaining that culture is a conglomerate of overt or implicit patterns of behavior, acquired and transferred from generation to generation through symbols historically evolved in thought and action (Kluckhohn, 1962).

The core of culture comprises conventional (i.e. verifiably inferred and particular) thoughts and their attributed values. Cultural frameworks may, according to some, be considered as a result of activity, or, alternatively as a moulding of components of further activity (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181).

Geertz, discouraged by the multitude of definitions and their eclectic nature, sought to find a comprehensive definition of his own that would challenge the existent eclecticism. To achieve this, he initially closely endorsed the findings of Max Weber that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" and then declared that "from here I take culture to those webs" (Geertz, 1973, p.5). Culture, as the combination of all these webs, explained Geertz, actually exists publically and in the open in everyday life everywhere, and not in books, museums, or in the theories regarding "psychological structures by means of which individuals or groups of individuals guide their behaviour" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). This approach, he stated, would never be able to explain what is involved in the act of playing a violin or what the meaning was of a trade agreement in the highlands of central Morocco in 1912. Culture is not a psychological structure or a power, "something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly — that is, thickly — described." (Geertz, 1972, p. 13). If we continue with this line of thought, Geertz explained, we will arrive at the conclusion that culture is a set of "extra-genetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms," most desperately needed by man for the purpose of "ordering his behaviour" (Geertz, 1973, p. 8). As such, said Geertz, "culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns — customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters — as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms — plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs") for the governing of behaviour" (Geertz, 1973, p. 8). In the absence of these, "man's behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions" (Geertz, 1971, p. 9) that would not enable the accumulation of human experience in any way. In their absence human beings would move in the world as "mental basket cases" to become "unworkable monstrosities with very useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect" (Geertz, 1973, p. 11). Culture is not a mere ornament of human existence, Geertz concluded, but its

existential condition, as witnessed by the fact that man is an unfinished or incomplete creature in imperative need of culture, enabling him to establish his ideas, values, activities and emotions, and to carry them out or implement them in an orderly and intelligent manner.

The Israeli jurist and cultural researcher Manny Mautner adopted the analytical position of Geertz and stated that culture is a system of meanings through which human beings evaluate their identity, their status in society, the content of their lives and their purposes. Through these contents human beings define their spiritual experiences and their relations with other human beings and with the natural world, and define their place in it. The contents of culture equip them with a collection of patterns that make it possible for them to find their place in the world, to organize their behavior and to determine "the limits of the intellectual, emotional and ethical world" in which they live (Mautner, 2012, p. 42). Culture, according to Mautner, is a series of categories of knowledge that give meaning to things and determine his relationship with them. In a competitive environment, culture is also an asset that offers advantages to whoever holds it, or holds enough of it to maintain a political hegemony. Finally, culture is a collection of behavioral practices from which derives the power to attain their own approval on the one hand, while at the same time constituting restrictions on their freedom of expression — lest they go too far and slip out of control (Mautner, 2012, pp. 57-58).

The historian Arnold Toynbee viewed culture as a collection of "regularities in the internal and external behavior of the members of a society, excluding those regularities which are clearly hereditary in origin" (Toynbee, 1961, vol. 12, p. 272). Within these permanent general patterns of behavior, Toynbee included "modes of thinking and feeling and modes of behavior," such as ideas, values, and beliefs (Toynbee, 1961, p. 273).

The position that culture is an array of elements that direct human behavior was put forward by the Israeli historian Yigal Elam. As far as he is concerned, culture is "the artificial surroundings that was created by man and contains all things created by humans in all aspects, physical and spiritual, technological and scientific, ideological and artistic, organizational and institutional, that are customary and ethical. Its purpose is to allow the existence of human society in opposite to nature and in front to rival human societies, and to grant control, identity and meaning to this existence" (Elam, 2012, p. 19). This definition draws its inspiration from a series of similar definitions proposed by a number of well-known cultural researchers, such as Edward Byron Reuter, who declared in 1939 that "the term culture is used to signify the sum total of human creations, the organized result of human experience up to the present time." Or, in other words, "everything material and immaterial, created by man, in the process of living" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, pp. 126-127). Culture, according to Reuter, is everything that man, as separate from the animal world, has done when shaping tools, attitudes and beliefs; developing ideas and judgements, codes and institutions, arts and sciences, philosophy and social organization, including the web of internal relationships that link these acts of creation and other aspects of human life. In this respect, Reuter went further to explain, all material and abstract items that man has created in the course of his existence is culture and is thus included in it.

Israeli cultural and literary researcher, Itamar Even Zohar argued that in a commonplace sense culture is "all the manifestations of the independent consciousness of society, as it has come to be expressed by canonical ideologies," willing to personalize its "truth" (Evan Zohar, 1980, p, 167). Therefore culture reflects self-awareness, and hence serves the function of evoking a wide range of positions and interests that seek to advance these "canonical" ideologies, representative behaviors, and full repertoire of values, beliefs, and attitudes, leading them towards a hegemonic position. Consequently, it is clear that culture is in a constant state of change, tension and power struggle that is caused by the clash of opposing interests seeking to acquire for themselves a hegemonic status and perpetuate their own preferences. In a fundamental way, an outside observer, i.e. outside social consciousness, "is not willing to acknowledge them or even admit to their existence." Zohar also argued that culture is "all the semiotic possibilities that are available to the society (and the individuals within it), that make it possible to create the communitive situations that occur within it" (Evan Zohar, 1980, pp. 166-167). This definition allows us to look at culture not only in a synchronic, horizontal way, which only deals with what is happening within a culture at a given time, but also in a diachronic, vertical way, which seeks to examine the development of culture and the changes that are occurring within it from era to era in the course of time.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Until now we have been able to distinguish between *normative* definitions of culture (Arnold, Scruton, Aloni, the Catholic Church and in some respects Freud) that see it as the height of creativity, morality, spirituality and ethics, placed in the hands of a few builders of culture, and *descriptive* definitions of culture, with a much smaller normative content but greater practicality (Tylor, Boas, Tuerny-High, Kluckhohn, Geertz, Toynbee, Mautner, Elam, Reuter, Even Zohar), and which are inclined to give equal importance to the plain and the sublime in the works of man, and grant to all of them equal status as builders of culture. We have clarified definitions that integrate culture with behaviors or contexts where behavioral characteristics become permanent habits (Freud, Geertz, Kluckhohn). This is in contrast to the definitions that seem to view culture as a collection of signs and symbols that include within them all the possible meanings that allow an organized and regulated human (i.e. cultured) existence (Kluckhohn, Even Zohar and even in some degree Geertz).

Most definitions postulate that there is a close connection between culture and society — the arena that limits and justifies culture in its varied and infinite appearances. For some culture is a natural phenomenon that is essential for our existence and part of our everyday lives, even if we give no second thought to it. Others suggest that culture is a creative effort, both ethical and spiritual, that through a selective, historical process chooses what is to become part and parcel of the human experience. If we return to the distinction between the normative and the practical approach to culture, we perceive that the former is more suspicious of human nature, while the position of the latter is more forgiving.

BACK TO OUR OPENING DEFINITIONS

In setting forth the various definitions of culture we have taken a descriptive approach that combines both its functional and structural characteristics. Culture, we have determined, is entirely a work of man and his cogitations, and necessary for all aspects of his existence, including elements that are pleasurable

and worthwhile, and that challenge his existence as such. It is subordinated to a person's individual decisions and choices, and completely subjected to his own supervision. On the basis of these characteristics, which are apparent in almost all of the definitions, we have distinguished three categories that have sorted out the myriad contents of culture and bestowed upon them a quality status that has determined that all three are necessary for our very existence, as the loss of or mortal blow to one of them would without doubt imperil our lives.

An additional fundamental and existential danger is the radical violation of the balance between these three categories; Life without both internal-personal and external-social challenges would be worthless and unbearable. A life in which everything is subjugated to an idea or mission, even when of the highest value (from silent monasticism to total recruitment to an idea, belief, or institution) — as Ibsen's character Brand (in a verse tragedy of the same name) tried to live, or as the sons of *The Mother* of Karl Čapek lived — is dangerous. Dedicating one's life to something, if the aim is solely to ensure one's physical existence — as Walter Faber, Max Frisch's hero tried to do in his *Homo Faber: A Report* — is an empty deed that will result in much damage to oneself and to one's loved ones. This happened to Walter Faber, who mistakingly slept with the daughter he had ignored in the past and didn't know at all; discovery of these events prompted her to take her own life.

We have advocated a descriptive approach for several reasons. The first was metaphorically stated by that "monstrous woman, solid as a Norman pillar" of the "prole" race in George Orwell's *1984*. While hanging out laundry in the inner courtyard of her house, she sang in a contralto voice, strong and pleasant to the ear, one of the songs composed by the song machine, the *versificator*, for all the unfortunate souls of Oceania (Orwell, p. 173):

It was only an 'opeless fancy.

It passed like an Ipril dye [day],

But a look an' a word an' the dreams they stirred!

They 'ave stolen my 'eart awye!

Winston Smith, Orwell's protagonist, was touched by the poem, "but the woman sang so tunefully as to turn the dreadful rubbish into an almost pleasant sound." In other words, even a woman considered to be human waste in Big Brother's totalitarian state Oceania can be a free spirit, despite her miserable life. This illustrates the fact that high culture and superb creative effort can be found even among those who "don't really count." This was very clear to artists like Peter Bruegel the Elder, the Brothers Grimm, Bedřich Smetana, Johannes Brahms, Frédéric Chopin and also to many creators like them, who found their inspiration in folk tales, peasant weddings, folk dances, games, and music. It was also obvious to a number of distinguished anthropologists of the twentieth century, such as Franz Boaz, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Reed, Claude Levi-Strauss, Raymond Williams, Clifford Geertz, David Schneider and Marshall Sahlins. All of them found that cultures that were considered primitive in the eyes of the West, often surpassed the West in morality and in not a few technological areas (like growing plants hydroponically, for example, that was customary in Polynesia, the art of navigation, and forms of social and ethical organization). One can therefore say that the loftiest of cultures, according to the normative approach, may actually be based on

simplicity, the ordinary, as it is according to the functional and descriptive definition of culture.[16]

The second explanation evolves from the previous one, founded in the relative attitude to culture, that is evident in our definition. In *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* Freud has shown how cultures solve even their most serious or intimate problems in an intelligent manner, without having heard of the Ten Commandments or a strict Christian morality (Freud, 1940 [1913]). A similar view was adopted by Geertz in the case of the Jewish merchant Cohen and his relationship with the Barbary Marmusha tribe in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. In the shadow of World War II and the unrests in the British colony of India, the poet and literary critic T.S. Eliot, a relativistic pioneer, stressed the need to respect all cultures "however inferior to our own it may appear, or however justly we may disapprove of some features of it" (Elliot, 1949, p, 65). "The deliberate destruction of another culture as a whole," Elliot added, "is an irreparable wrong, almost as evil as to treat human beings like animals" (ibid.).

Kluckhohn and Kroeber, who investigated cultures through their symbols and values a decade later, found that there are no cultures that do not seek lofty values of their own. They concluded that in order to meet the scope, variation, durability, and mutual relations of these cultural values, a relative perspective is needed. This reasoning receives verification from the discussion that is currently taking place with regard to contemporary culture; it points out the great complexity in the judgement of "ordinary" people, when they come to choose values, ways of thought, attitudes, and ways of behavior from a cultural tool kit in order to solidify their positions on issues, based on their personal or collective agendas.

Another possible explanation is based on the uncovering of conceptual primes or primitives (D'Andrade, 2001, p. 246), or cultural scripts (Wierzbicka, 2002, pp. 401-402).[17] These are crosscultural approaches that center on human cognition and assimilation every step of the way in the building process of cultural concepts, values, customary or otherwise. These scripts are in fact a series of preliminary value assumptions in relation to what is the right thing to do and what is bad and should not be done. The origin thereof, as Roy D'Andrade stated, is man's intrinsic wish to be "natural." This can be seen through the semantic forms of metalinguistics, which enable a better understanding between languages (Wierzbicka, 2002; D'Andrade, 2001).

An expression of cosmopolitan culture is strong in those who enter into fundamental binational humanistic agreements (a union of over 50,000 such international agreements exist throughout the world) (Hathaway, 2007) — e.g. the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or ICCPR (first adopted in 1976), which is the United Nations' treaty for civil rights; or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

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[16] This is also the lesson Geertz adopted from the incident of a Moroccan Jew named Cohen, whom he introduced at the beginning of his book *Interpretation of Cultures*. Geertz also took example from Marshall Sahlins' interpretation of Captain James Cook and his relationship with the residents of Hawaii and its leaders. When he first arrived, Cook was crowned as a god; but he was killed a year later, during his second visit to the island (Sahlins, 1996, chapter 4, pp.148-189).

[17] It seems that these new concepts, whether we call them "perceptions" or "scripts," or according to James Scott "transcripts" (Scott, 1990, pp. XII; Ginzberg, 2014), are only the equivalent of an old term " cultural patterns " or elements leading to the consolidation of cultural patterns (Ellwood, 1927).

of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1981 (first adopted in 1976).[18] Cooperation in this global endeavor (undertaken in a sociocultural framework organized within a political entity) illustrates that almost all nations recognize a hierarchy of outstanding values, as already hinted at by Ernst Cassirer (an adherent of the Roman Stoic philosopher and emperor Marcus Aurelius) and are obligated to act accordingly (Cassirer, 1954, pp. 23, 93, 279-286).

It is possible to summarize this point and say that a combination of universal human characteristics, "natural" cultural scripts, universal value hierarchy, and a willingness to strive for political cooperation in a system of international alliances and treaties — all of which touch upon different aspects of universal human cooperation and principles of freedom — propound a civilization with ethical and organizational layers that support cultural relativism on the one hand, and culture as the fundamental, outstanding center of man's personal and collective enterprise, on the other .[19]

Has our definition solved the problem of the multiple existing definitions? As far as relative definitions are concerned — especially those that emanated from the relativistic school of thought, as it initially developed in Berlin and later on in the USA, France, and England — it seems possible, at this preliminary stage at least, to say that the definition we have suggested combines a significant part of the existing definitions in the field — in particular those that built their expositions on a variegated list of values essential to the existence of mankind, or that emphasized categories from the three we suggested — mostly the ethical and control categories. Our definition adds an analytical dimension to all of these and allows for a more accurate identification of the cultural content that is included in each category, connecting them in a dynamic manner to cases that are defined as (always convoluted and multifaceted) human activities. At the same time this categorization indicates what we describe as the "equal temperament" of all categories of the definition — taste, value, and control — as none is of more, or of less, value or importance than any other.

This position can explain why mankind creates culture, even in the most extreme human circumstances. In all human life, we will always find fragments of taste, value, and content that glimmer, however miniscule they may be, as they are absolutely essential to human performance.

Can our definition deal with the normative definitions of culture? Up until now I have alluded to this through the words of the stocky prole, or "monstrous," woman as Orwell put it, who transformed cultural waste into a soulful tune that squeezes the heart. Orwell's prole woman is the twin of all people

humanized by culture and consuming culture in spite of their harsh living conditions: the besieged inhabitants of Leningrad listening to Shostakovich's Symphony No.7 while suffering from cold and starvation; or a group of Czech women, huddled, frozen and hungry, on a dark winter morning, in front of the women's barracks in Auschwitz-Birkenau and quietly singing the Czechoslovakian national anthem.

These examples remind me of the behavior of musicians, storytellers, artists, and ethnographers who went to the people in search of content and inspiration for their work. They illustrate the reflective, creative urge of a mankind that constructs, designs, innovates, improves, mends, and aspires, creates and continuously improves in all areas.

Does all of this not suffice to convince us that the distance between sublime culture and the simple and the seemingly inconsequential in man's works is not that great? Was the distance really so great between the blacksmith who arose early, in the middle of the night, to go to his workshop and the Gaon (genius) of Vilna (Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman), who lived opposite him and punctiliously arose early to avoid being shamed, as the folk tale tells us? "Somebody has worked on this," Che Guevara once said to a man who asked why he smoked the splendid Cuban cigar until it singed his lips. The creations of Beethoven were heard, the moment the public learned to digest them, in every Viennese salon that respected itself, but the great composer was just a "nobody" with no social standing.

THE METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

How can we interpret and apply the definition we have set forth? Actually we set out from a starting point similar to that of Freud and not so distant from that of Tylor. Then we spread out a categorical matrix that required the organization of all the characteristics of culture in a rational and realistic form, open to simple empiric observation. The main methodological contribution of our definition is that it clarifies the boundaries of discussion and its framework. In this way it allows us to cope with other cultural definitions. It provides us with a basis for the development of a theory of culture that reflects our position on human nature, man's consciousness and emotions, as well as the essence of society and its position vis-à-vis culture. This theory emphasizes the entire cultural content, the patterns of cultural development and the quality of its architects, the ramifications of social activities, their connection to the surroundings, and their raison d'être. Methodologically, this definition obligates researchers to mention not only the origin of their research (be it concept, procedure, process, appearance, relationship, or pattern), but also the categories where the object of their research is situated. This points to the framework within which the concept will be discussed and tested, and which will allow for the formulation of appropriate hypothesizes.

To this, we will now add an additional dimension that sees culture as a place of contradictions, and not necessarily as a whole. The Aztecs viewed their anthropophagical, cannibalistic ceremonies as acts of dual meaning: recognition of the honor and prestige granted to the warrior who caught the prisoner who was to be sacrificed, and had "developed a taste" for human flesh. When the Spanish conquerors reached America, they were horrified by this custom, but had no compunctions about setting their Mastiff and Greyhound dogs on terrified children, or on women with children (Varner & Varner, 1983). During World War II twelve policemen and one low-ranking officer from Reserve Police Batallion 101 came forward to protest

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[18] A very small number of countries are currently not signatories to these documents. Israel is one of the many signatories (Hathaway, 2007).

[19] We cannot expand on the question of civilization and the multifaceted distinctions between culture and civilization. We note here the explanation given by the sociologist Norbert Elias, according to whom civilization generally characterizes human achievement where nations came to fruition in terms of identity and boundaries and which can no longer be appealed or disputed. Culture, says Elias, can be attributed to nations and companies whose identities have not yet been settled and are still in the design process (Elias, 2000, pp. 7). Elias's approach has been referred to by many, for example, the historian Irad Malkin, who stated that precisely the great distance between the cities of Greece, from the West in the Black Sea to Spain in the East, and the widespread commercial connections, and connections through sports, arts, worship, statecraft and war, created what is called "Greek civilization" (Malkin, 2014). The urban infrastructure of civilization gives some validity to Toynbee's claim that civilization can be viewed as the urban phase of civilization (Toynbee, 1961).

when they were confronted with what was the mission of their infamous unit in the Lublin area in Poland, as Christopher Browning discovered in his research on this brigade (Browning, 1992, pp. 56-57). They did so because of their humanistic values and the opportunity the commander of the brigade gave those who opposed their mission. Facing them was a group of policemen, from within the ranks of the remaining five hundred, who repeatedly insisted that their special mission of pursuing and slaughtering Jews be carried out to the letter. All of them — the devout human-hunting Christian Spaniards, the Aztecs who sacrificed and ate their victims while building a beautiful floating city (Tenochtitlán); both the humane and the inhumane Germans — were cultured people and culture builders. All were free to choose their raison d'être, their values and ways of dealing with the challenges they had to face throughout their lives. Similarly, the approach we propose to culture is capable of dealing with these profound contradictions, because it takes into consideration opposing interests, values, and methods of control.

Another contribution of our definition is the accurate analysis it allows us of all categories of cultural structuring. The assumption is that all cultures are built, consolidated, mature and continuously develop in the course of time. This makes it possible for us to acknowledge the connection between all activities of institutional structuring and the private ones, as we shall see in the following example. After the Aztecs declared their independence from the domination of strong Toltec cities of the Mexican valley, in the year 1427, they made a dramatic, concerted effort to become truly independent and erase all memory and sign of the original Chichimeca (i.e. savage) culture. This was accomplished by burning all books and destroying all monuments that commemorated their humble origins, before the valley of Mexico was infiltrated in 1215 and the following 200 years of total subordination to the cultured and strong Toltec cities of the valley. After they had gained their freedom, a new cosmology was created and new myths invented. A lengthy series of beliefs, customs, institutions, contents, ceremonies, functions and boundaries of orientation in both time and space was consolidated. This created, simply and effectively, a brand new culture, pretentiously hegemonic and imperial, both on the "national" and the heavenly scale (the Aztecs took upon themselves the protectorate of the fifth sun). Needless to add that this culture was very successful

A similar process occurred in all societies and civilizations known to us. Nationalism, for example, the most ambitious modern ideology, involved building anew all existing human societies around the concept of an at times vague nationality, at times quite implausible, yet essential for its actualization. In terms of the process of construction, the works of men are purposeful, well thought out, loaded with the multilevelled participation of both institutions and independent elements; it is immediately evident that all parts of this construction are easily identifiable within the framework of the three categories we have suggested.

The building of the Zionist Israeli culture, for example, required a series of historical justifications and a policy formulated and composed by a few individuals, institutions and conventions. At the same time, active policy-making institutions and both economic and infrastructural organizations were founded (the Jewish trade unions, Jewish Agency, Jewish National Fund, national bank, Zionist Agency, the Chief Rabbinate, defense forces, workers' cooperatives, means of transportation, production and marketing, hospitals and clinics,

frameworks for the purchase and settlement of real estate, and others). Institutions of culture and entertainment were established (e.g. the Hebrew University, the Technion [an Israeli institute of technology], Hebrew educational system, teacher's unions, theaters and music conservatories, coffee houses, resorts, beaches, publishing houses, sport organizations and facilities, a writers guild). Standards had to be established (e.g. for housing — using only Jerusalem stone for building in Jerusalem, for example — in forestation, nature and wildlife preservation, observance of holidays, political activities, work hours, what is holy and what is secular). Composers used melodies from their countries of origin or composed original Hebrew songs and tunes. Novelists, playwrights and choreographers created works of art. People of vision and initiative founded cities, villages, and communal settlements. Others journeyed to Africa in search of the descendants of the ten lost tribes (and found them); still others travelled as emissaries and set up preparatory farms for future settlers, or left Israel to study important and necessary professions for building a country and to train themselves as professionals. In this way the gradual building and development of the Hebrew culture and Israeli society led to the creation of the Jewish State. With similar variations other societies and states were born.[20]

In my essay I have recapped the interesting directions followed by contemporary social and cultural researchers. We found that many of them (including Swidler, DiMaggio, and Vaisey) dealt with the choices man makes in different situations and asked what people draw from their cultural toolkit to make these decisions. The categories at the center of our definition allow a more accurate examination of this process and its cognitive and emotional dimensions, because every choice certainly relates to one of the categories. When we understand relationships between categories, we can accurately identify the process of making that choice and predict where it will lead. By requiring a system of checks and balances in the entirety of the cultural parts organized analytically within the categories we have suggested, we have opened an opportunity for examining the cultural repercussions on human behavior — normal or perverted, public or private, individual or national, civil or political.

CONCLUSION

The process that we have examined in this essay and the methods used show that deciphering the term culture is still incomplete. We still have many as we are still facing numerous questions. I presented some of the most important and profound/complex ones . Firstly, culture and the concept that defines it are capable of including the entire complexity of human life — historical and contemporary — and at the same time supply the "scripts" for all future human endeavors? Isn't our project pretentiously philosophic, literal or generally academic (that which gave birth to as well, as we have seen, the concept of culture), but actually have no real expectation?[21] An

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[20] A fascinating example is the enormously complex and decisive creation of Singapore as a state after its independence in 1965 and even earlier, since being received self government in 1959 — as narrated in detail by Lee Kuan Yew, the first Singaporean Prime Minister (1959-1992), in his political autobiography *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000.

[21] This is indeed the opinion of Kuper, who states that culture does not provide scripts for everything, but that not all ideas are post factum thoughts (Kuper, 1999, pp. 199).

additional question is, after we have stated our relative position: How can we explain the great differences between cultures? Is it even possible to discuss cultures without comparative judgement? After we have determined that mankind is a plethora of creativity, how have we managed to reach such levels of evil and malevolence in the world? The final question, are we nevertheless capable, despite all the known hardships dividing us, to unite all of humanity to "The Great Conversation which is trying to conquer loneliness, ignorance and disorder" (Postman, 1993, pp. 186-187)? To a large extent, can this undertaking stand firm within the framework of a monumental undertaking of education and integrated multidisciplinary in-depth knowledge, in a wealth of values and respect for knowledge. An enterprise stable against any short cuts, substitutes, scientific or statistical facilitations, any concepts, ideas, theological or other that modern technology has lured us to lower our stature, and raise humanity to a higher, if not the hights possible level of being an ideal society?

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