

## 8. Conclusion

We could introduce the theory from almost any situation of conflict, but we have chosen to focus on selection of information, because, after all, it is about argument and disagreement on values. It can explain why information does not always travel, and how it sometimes gets blocked. Some cultures preserve information about a long historical past, some have a store of techniques for projecting the future, others live in the present and are not interested in the past or the future. The variation is due to the way that organizations act as filters and pointers (Douglas 1987). These examples illustrate how this type of analysis can trace different sources of failure to mobilize support for a given set of principles. It has been widely applied to disagreements about risk. In the late 1990s the scope has widened to include environmental politics of the great waterways, the Ganges and the Rhine (Gyawali 1998, Verweij 2000), traffic control in city planning (Hendriks 1999), conflict in recent British Labour party history (Bale 1999), kinds of control used in public administration (Hood 1998), and even to conflicting ideas about personal privacy (Perri 1998), and market research (Karmasin and Karmasin 1997).

Culture sets up the terms on which individual calculations of interest are based. Organization entails coordination, which entails classification and logic. As they responsibly calculate and negotiate, the rational beings are creating, changing, or sustaining their culture. The method is sometimes criticized for focusing on organizations and paying too little attention to the role of individuals in shaping culture, but far from neglecting the individual, the theory sets the individual person in a normal framework of interaction. At center stage, each rational person, assumed to be interested in the costs or benefits of subscribing to other people's opinions, is partaking in a process of collective choice.

*See also:* Cultural Critique: Anthropological; Cultural Evolution: Overview; Culture: Contemporary Views; Culture in Development; Culture, Production of; Culture, Sociology of; Gender Ideology: Cross-cultural Aspects; Sexual Orientation: Biological Influences

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## Culture: Contemporary Views

### 1. Introduction: Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's Prediction

'... few intellectuals will challenge the statement that the idea of culture, in the technical anthropological sense, is one of the key notions in contemporary American thought.' That prediction was made in 1952 by the American anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in the introduction to their monumental book *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1952). In the years immediately following World War 2 many scholars and intellectuals in the United States were quite confident and pleased that the concept of 'culture' was deeply entrenched in the human sciences. Kroeber and Kluckhohn even began their famous treatise proclaiming the idea of culture comparable in explanatory importance to the idea of gravity in physics, disease in medicine, and evolution in biology. They ended by adducing a unified (albeit ponderous) definition that became the mantra for cultural anthropologists who

came of scholarly age in mid-century. 'Culture' they wrote, 'consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action' (1952 p. 357).

Kroeber and Kluckhohn were students of intellectual history and brilliant culture theorists but they were not prophets. Little did they know that during the 50 years following the publication of their book, the idea of 'culture,' in its mid-century anthropological sense, would be frequently debated, doubted, distrusted, and scorned, that the discipline of cultural anthropology itself would be 'rethought,' 'remade,' 'recaptured,' and 'reinvented' time and time again. They did not foretell the many types of humanists and social scientists (cognitive revolutionaries, structuralists, poststructuralists, sociobiologists, feminists, skeptical postmodernists, postcolonialists, subalterns, globalization theorists) who would associate the concept of 'culture' with a variety of supposed sins. Sins such as 'essentialism,' 'primordialism,' 'representationalism,' 'monumentalism,' 'reification,' 'idealism,' 'positivism,' 'functionalism,' 'relativism,' 'sexism,' 'racism,' 'colonialism,' 'Orientalism,' and just plain old-fashioned 'stereotyping' (see for example, Abu-Lughod 1991, Asad 1973, Clifford and Markus 1986, Denzin 1996, Fox 1991, Freeman 1983, Hymes 1972, Kuper 1999, Markus and Fisher 1986, Rabinow 1983, Reyna 1994, Rosaldo 1989, Said 1978, Sangren 1988, Schepher-Hughes 1995, Spiro 1986, Wikan 1996).

Nor did Kroeber and Kluckhohn anticipate the ironic fate of the concept of 'culture' at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The irony is that today the idea of culture is once again a key concept in many of the social science disciplines, yet is viewed with great suspicion in some quarters of cultural anthropology. The irony is that after being reviled, pummeled, and rejected by one new wave intellectual movement after another an idea of 'culture' very much like the one recommended by Kroeber and Kluckhohn in 1952 remains useful and defensible in social science research and public policy debates. The concept not only survives it thrives (see for example, Harrison and Huntington 2000, Huntington 1996, Landes 1998, Prentiss and Miller 1999, Kitayama and Markus 1994, Wierzbicka 1997). The contemporary discipline of anthropology continues to be a scene for various kinds of 'anticultural' or 'postcultural' critiques. Nevertheless, many anthropologists rehearse and recite some definition of culture, and make good use of it in their scholarship (see for example, D'Andrade 1995a, Dumont 1970, Geertz 1973, LeVine et al. 1994, Sahlins 1995, 1999, Shore 1996, Shweder 1991, Shweder and

LeVine 1984). It remains to be seen whether and just how soon the concept regains its former popularity in anthropology. That discipline was historically identified with 'studies of culture.' Tripling the irony, in recent years some anthropologists have abandoned the idea of 'culture' and subjected it to intense critique under the banner of an intellectual movement known as 'cultural studies' (Denzin 1996).

## 2. *The 'Standard View' of Culture in North American Anthropology*

Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's seminal definition of culture—which I shall refer to as the standard view from the perspective of North American cultural anthropology—was cumbersome, in part because it was so inclusive. It called on anthropologists to study not just other people's beliefs (their ideas of what the world is like) but also other people's normative standards (their ideas of what is good and what is right). It called on anthropologists to study not just the explicit 'ethnoscience' and doctrinal moral and religious codes of the members of a community but their tacit, implicit, or intuitive understandings as well. It sought a middle course between the *Scylla* of a purely behavioral definition of culture and the *Charybdis* of a purely ideational one. According to the standard view, 'culture' should be defined in such a way as to avoid the hazards of both behaviorism and idealism. On the one hand, Kroeber and Kluckhohn suggest that culture is more than just social habits or 'patterns of behavior that are learned and passed on from generation to generation.' On the other hand, it is not just a system of categories, doctrines, propositions, or symbols *per se*. Thus in the 1952 definition, culture is defined as the ideational side of social action or social practice, and anthropologists are called upon to view cultural analysis as the interpretative study of behavior, although rather little is said about what particular theory of interpretation should guide the analysis.

Useful definitions deserve to be expressed in elegant terms, and Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's definition of culture is cumbersome, to say the least. But it is not the only expression of the standard view. The most exquisite and straightforward formulation is Robert Redfield's definition: 'shared understandings made manifest in act and artifact.' Another variation, perhaps the most famous definition of culture since the 1950s, is the one proposed by Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 89). He puts it this way: '... the culture concept ... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.' In 1984 D'Andrade, writing very much within the North American anthropological tradition, defined 'culture' as 'learned systems of meanings, communicated by

means of natural language and other symbol systems, having representational, directive and affective functions, and capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality' (D'Andrade 1984, p. 116).

The definitions proposed by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Redfield, Geertz, and D'Andrade call out for specification and clarification. Nevertheless, those definitions are a good reference point for understanding current debates about the values and dangers associated with the very idea of 'culture.' One can summarize the standard view by saying that 'culture' refers to community-specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient. To be 'cultural' those ideas about truth, goodness, beauty, and efficiency must be socially inherited and customary. To be 'cultural' those socially inherited and customary ideas must be embodied and/or enacted meanings; they must actually be constitutive of (and thereby revealed in) a way of life. Alternatively stated, the standard North American anthropological view of 'culture' refers to what the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1976) called 'goals, values and pictures of the world' that are made manifest in the speech, laws, and routine practices of some self-monitoring and self-perpetuating group. A cultural account spells out those 'goals, values, and pictures of the world.' A cultural account thus assists us in explaining why, the members of a particular cultural community say the things they say and do the things they do to each other with their words and other actions. These 'goals, values, and pictures of the world' or 'ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient' are sometimes referred to as 'cultural models' (D'Andrade 1995, Holland and Quinn 1987, Shore 1996).

### 3. *Fault Lines in Contemporary Anthropology*

The standard North American anthropological view of culture was synthesized and defined by Kroeber and Kluckhohn before the discipline went through a series of revolutions and movements that fractured the field and divided it on the basis of somewhat different visions of its mission. Although it may be hazardous to propose a map of the current intellectual camps within cultural anthropology, such a map may also be helpful in understanding the various types of anticultural, postcultural, and procultural positions that have emerged within anthropology over the past 50 years.

I think it is fair to say that contemporary cultural anthropology is divided into at least these four conceptions of the field.

#### 3.1 *Identity Politics*

The first is a conception of anthropology as a platform for moral activism in the battles against racism, sexism, homophobia, and neocolonialism and as a forum for

identity politics in the fight against exploitation, discrimination, and oppression. Advocates of this conception of anthropology have several concerns about the idea of 'culture.' They argue that the idea of 'culture' is an excuse for the maintenance of authoritarian power structures and permits despots and patriarchs around the world to deflect criticism of their practices by saying 'that is our custom' or 'that is the way we do things in our culture' (see Abu-Lughod 1991, Said 1978, Scheper-Hughes 1995, Wikan 1996). The claim by liberal 'first world' feminists that 'multiculturalism is bad for women' (Okin 1999) is an expression of this view, which tends to associate 'culture' with the idea of patriarchal domination (Haynes and Prakash 1991, Reheja and Gold 1994). This conception of the mission of anthropology is closely allied with a global human rights movement that has a firm sense of what is objectively and universally right and wrong.

However, not all moral activists in anthropology want to dump the idea of 'culture' and some have found ways to put the idea of 'culture' to work in the service of their own political aims. Anthropologists who are active in the identity politics movement find the idea of 'culture' politically and strategically convenient in their egalitarian battles on behalf of 'oppressed peoples.' They find the idea useful as one of several ways to mitigate various types of invidious comparisons between groups (for example, comparisons in terms of wealth, occupational success, or school performance). There are generally three ways to mitigate invidious comparisons between groups: (a) deny that any real differences exist, (b) attribute all differences to a history of oppression or discrimination, or (c) celebrate the differences as 'cultural.' In the identity politics movement 'culture' is becoming a code word for 'race' and it may not be too long before the expression 'people of color' is replaced by a new shibboleth, 'people of culture.'

#### 3.2 *Skeptical Postmodernism*

The second conception of the mission of anthropology is a conception of the field as a deconstructive discipline and as an arena for skeptical postmodern critiques of all ethnographic representations and so-called 'objective' knowledge (see, for example, Clifford and Markus 1986, Latour and Woolgar 1979, Rabinow 1983, also Culler 1982, Foucault 1973, Rosenau 1992). Advocates of this conception of anthropology call for a deeply skeptical reading of all anthropological representations of 'others,' especially of those accounts that make claims about some 'primordial' or essential or core cultural identity which members of some group are supposed to share. The skeptical postmodernists raise doubts about the reality and existence of groups. They are critical of all attempts to draw a portrait of 'others' that represents

them with any characteristic face. They are suspicious of the very idea of boundaries and borders and loyalties to ones 'tribe.' They view the idea of a 'culture' as a fiction, the goal of objective representation as misguided, and the products of ethnography as largely 'made up' or constructed in the service of domination.

One of the many ironies of contemporary anthropology is that for a while members of the first two camps of anthropology (the identity politics/moral activists and the skeptical postmodern/deconstructivists) thought they were allies. Indeed they had an imagined common enemy. In particular the hegemonic heterosexual 'first world' white males, such as Kroeber, Kluckhohn, Redfield, and Geertz, who historically had defined the mission of cultural anthropology.

The alliance, however, was short-lived. Identity politics requires a robust notion of 'identity' and group membership. Moral activism requires a good deal of conviction that some things are 'objectively wrong.' Skeptical postmodernism is intellectually incapable of lending support to either of those meta-physical notions and is readily put to use deconstructing the 'woman' of 'Women's Studies,' the imagined common identity of the ethnic group, and all supposed objective moral foundations for any political cause. If 'groups' and collective identities are so easily dissolved so too are claims about group rights and affirmative action.

### *3.3 Neopositivism*

A third conception of the mission of anthropology is a conception of the field as a pure 'positive' science (see for example, D'Andrade 1995a and 1995b, Sperber 1985, Romney et al. 1986). The positive scientists view anthropology as a value-neutral and nonmoralizing discipline. Their preferred aims for the discipline are to reliably and validly represent the law-like patterns in the world and to develop universal explanatory theories and test specific hypotheses about objectively observable regularities in social and mental life. Advocates of this conception want to protect anthropology from identity politics and skeptical postmodern critique by accurately recording rather than judging and condemning other peoples practices, and by developing objective or scientific standards for evaluating the truth of ethnographic evidence. This is a laudable aim, although one that has been contested by skeptical postmodernists, and there has been much useful work in neopositivist fields such as 'cognitive anthropology' representing the content, structure, and degree of sharing of 'cultural models' (see for example, D'Andrade 1995a, Holland and Quinn 1987, Romney et al. 1986). Nevertheless, the positive scientists in anthropology thereby tend to beg a critical question close to the heart of all great social theorists. Is this or

that social order really a moral order? Is this or that social order a way of living that might appeal to a rational and morally decent person, and if not how can we make it become so? When it comes to evaluating what is truly desirable or really 'good' in social life the neopositivists are very much like the skeptical postmodernists—both turn radically subjective or relativistic and believe there is no scientific or objective foundation for value judgments.

### *3.4 Romantic Pluralism*

A fourth conception of the mission of anthropology is a conception of the field as a romantic discipline designed to test the limits of pluralism. Pluralism is the idea that things can be different but equal, and that diversity can be good. It is a measure of some of the tensions within contemporary anthropology that while the 'ethnography of difference' is viewed with suspicion by some of the anticulturalists, it is universally embraced by romantic pluralists. Anticulturalists worry that any description of cultural difference merely sows the seeds of invidious comparison and ethnic conflict, and thus should be disavowed. For the romantic pluralists, however, the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences is one of the major aims of ethnography in particular and cultural anthropology in general.

The intellectual inheritance of the 'romantic' tradition most relevant to this camp of anthropology is a conception of culture as an extension of the creative imagination, which is said to be a distinctive intellectual capacity of human beings (see Geertz 1973, Sapir 1963, Sahlins 1995, Shweder and LeVine 1984, Shweder 1991). According to romantic pluralists, a 'genuine' culture is a reality-binding product of the human mind that is not dictated by either logic or direct (meaning-free) experience. There is thus plenty of room within the limits of logic and experience for cultural variety, and for the historical creation of different lived conceptions of what it means to be a rational and morally decent human being. According to this view social and cultural realities are neither logically deduced nor simply found in direct experience but are rather constructed by, and for, more or less rational agents. The human creative imagination has the capacity to fill in, and give definition to, a vast discretionary space that stretches in between the necessary truths of formal logic and the uninterpreted evidence of the senses. Advocates of this conception of anthropology are dedicated not only to the project of accurate ethnographic representation, but also to the cognitive and moral defense of different ways of life, frames of reference, and points of view. They write books or articles about Azande Witchcraft (Evans-Prichard 1937) or Balinese conceptions of the 'person' (Geertz 1973) or Oriya Hindu family life and gender relations (Menon and Shweder 1998) which portray

the ideas and practices of others as different but equal to our own, in the sense that such ideas and practices are represented as meaningful and imaginative yet supportable within the broad limits of scientific, practical, and moral reason.

#### 4. *A Fifth Camp Within Anthropology? The Return of Cultural Developmentalism and the 'First World's' Burden*

Increasingly these days, as the world 'globalizes,' the concept of 'culture' gets used to explain differences in the economic, social, political, educational, and moral accomplishments of nations, groups, or peoples. An 'evolutionary' or 'developmental' view of culture has returned to the intellectual scene. Along with it comes the claim that some groups have the wrong models, the wrong values, the wrong patterns of behavior, and that is the reason that their economies are poor, their governments corrupt, and their people unhealthy, unhappy, and oppressed. The cultural developmental view of cultural differences was quite popular at the very beginning of the twentieth century, and is associated with the 'civilizing project' or the 'white man's burden' to uplift those who are ignorant, superstitious, primitive, savage, and poor. Quite remarkably the cultural developmental view is increasingly popular at the beginning of the twenty-first century as well, especially outside of anthropology, for example, in economics and political science (Harrison and Huntington 2000, Landes 1998). In development economics (for example, at the World Bank), the view that 'culture counts' or that 'culture matters' is now popular in part because it is a discrete way of telling 'underdeveloped' nations (either rightly or wrongly) that the 'Westernization' of their cultures is a necessary condition for economic growth. Cultural developmentalists want to convert others to some preferred superior way of living. Their aim is to eliminate or at least minimize the differences between peoples rather than tolerate or appreciate them as products of the creative imagination. This viewpoint has returned, at least implicitly, in anthropology as well, especially among moral activists.

Relatively few anthropologists would actually describe themselves as cultural developmentalists. Nevertheless, that stance is far more common in anthropology than many admit, especially when the topic concerns gender relations and family life practices, for example, polygamy, purdah, arranged marriage, bride-price, female circumcision, and the association of femininity with domesticity and the production of children. So along with the international human rights movement and other agents and agencies promoting Western-style globalization, there are anthropologists these days who now take an interest in other cultures mainly as objects of moral scorn. The up-from-barbarism theme of (certain versions of)

Western liberalism has once again become fashionable on the anthropological scene, at least among those anthropologists who are the most 'politically correct.'

#### 5. *Culture Theory: Some Classic Problems*

A detailed description of the core assumptions of each of the 'camps' within cultural anthropology is not possible here. Nevertheless, any review of this topic should include at least brief reference to some classic questions that are always addressed (although answered somewhat differently) by the scholars in each of the camps.

##### 5.1 *The Problem of 'Difference': A.K.A, the Problem of the 'Other'*

One tension inherent in all anthropological interpretation is the problem of 'difference,' what to make of it and what to do about it. This is also called the problem of the 'other,' although the term 'other' is used variously in the anthropological literature. It is sometimes used to connote difference *per se* without any initial judgment of relative worth. It is sometimes used to connote unbridgeable differences. It is sometimes used to connote a solipsistic gap between self-knowledge and a mysterious or 'spectral other' whose identity can never be truly inscribed. It is sometimes used to connote the representation of 'others' as so different as to be less than or other than human, or as different in ways that condemn them to inferior status and/or justify their domination. Here I use the term to connote difference *per se*.

The problem of 'difference' inherent in anthropological interpretation is not just a problem for anthropology. It arises whenever members of different groups (for example, Jesuit missionaries and Native North American Indians; British traders and Hindu Brahmins; Western feminist human rights activists and Islamic fundamentalist women) or members of different social categories (for example, gay men and heterosexual men) encounter each other. Someone finds the encounter disturbing, puzzling, strange, or astonishing because of some apparent difference between self and 'other,' and wants to know what to make of it and (if they have the power) what (if anything) to do about it.

In the history of anthropology the apparent differences mostly concerned differences in the ideas and practices of members of different groups. What should one make of and what should one do (if anything) about such ideas as 'witchcraft,' 'ancestral spirit attack,' 'reincarnation,' or 'menstrual pollution' and practices such as 'polygamy,' 'animal sacrifice,' 'infanticide,' 'purdah,' 'child betrothal,' 'suttee,' or 'adolescent circumcision'? Such encounters are obviously hazardous and fraught with dangers of many kinds, intellectual, ethical, and political. Who is that 'some-

one' who finds 'difference' problematic and wants to know what to make of it and what if anything to do about it? Who is doing the representing of the 'other' and to which audience and to what end? Who has 'voice' and authority in such encounters? Who ought to have 'voice'?

Confronted with apparent differences between other people's ideas and practices and one's own, anthropologists have historically reacted in one or the other of three ways, which are instructive to keep in mind when surveying the fault lines in cultural anthropology today. Some, the universalists, have sought ways to minimize or erase the appearance of difference or to deny that any significant differences exist, and to treat 'otherness' as an illusion. Some, the developmentalists, have perceived in the encounter between cultures a story about a 'civilizing process.' They have argued that the more evolved and progressive cultures (those that are enlightened, scientific, ethical, educated, and rational) bear the ('white man's) burden of lifting 'others' up out of ignorance and superstition. They have argued that 'developed' cultures have an obligation to intervene if necessary to bring a halt to the monstrous or barbaric practices of other lands. Still other anthropologists, the pluralists, have argued that cultures can be different but equal, and have cautioned against cultural imperialism, suggesting that one must beware of (ethnocentrically) confusing one's own local cultural evaluations with universal scientific, practical, or moral reason.

## 5.2 Globalization

The narrowest definition of 'globalization' refers to the linking of the world's economies (e.g., free trade across borders) with the aim of promoting aggregate wealth and economic growth. Yet it readily expands to also include the free flow of capital and labor. A new cosmopolitan economic order gets imagined, which consists entirely of global economic organizations (the IMF, the World Bank), multinational corporations, and multicultural states with open borders. According to this rather utopian vision of a 'borderless capitalism,' goods, capital, and labor ought to be freely marketed on a worldwide scale for the sake of global prosperity. For those who adopt such a perspective any desire for an ancestral homeland or for a national identity based on religion, ethnicity, 'race,' or 'tribe' with associated restrictions on residence, affiliation, and trade is viewed as 'illiberal' and disparaged as a form of retrograde or irrational 'apartheid' or 'ethnonationalism.'

Fully expanded, however, the idea of 'globalization' actually becomes a hypothesis about human nature and an imperial call for 'enlightened' moral interventions into other ways of life in order to free them of their supposed 'barbarisms,' 'superstitions,' and 'irrationalities.' This expansive 'globalization hypothesis' makes three related claims: (a) that Western-like

aspirations, tastes, and ideas are objectively the best aspirations, tastes, and ideas in the world; (b) that Western-like aspirations, tastes, and ideas will be fired up or freed up by economic globalization; and (c) that the world will/already has and/or ought to become 'Westernized.' Western-like aspirations include the desire for liberal democracy, free enterprise, private property, autonomy, individualism, equality, and the protection of 'natural' or universal 'rights' (the contemporary human rights movement is in many ways an extension of an expansive 'globalization' movement). They include the modernist notion that all social distinctions based on collective identities (ethnicity, religion, gender) are invidious. They include as well the notion that 'individuals' should transcend their 'tradition-bound' commitments and experience the quality of their lives solely in secular and ecumenical terms, for example, as measured by wealth, health, or years of life.

The true connection between 'globalization' narrowly conceived ('free trade') and 'globalization' expansively conceived (Western values, culture, and institutions taking over the world) has yet to be firmly established. Nevertheless, the picture of a cosmopolitan world of individuals without groups, in which meanings are detached or abstracted from communities and traded on a free market of ideas, has influenced the thinking of some postcultural theorists. Whether that picture is realistic remains to be seen. It is quite possible that other cultures and civilizations do not need to become just like the United States to materially benefit from participation in an emergent global economy. Modern technologies (e.g., television, cell phones, computers, weapons) and economic institutions (e.g., private property) seem to have effectively served many interests, including the interests of communitarians and religious fundamentalists all over the world. It is quite possible that a genuinely successful global political economy will not emerge, or will fail to sustain itself, or that efforts to globalize values and culture will be effectively resisted (in some cases for very good reasons), or that the world will go to war. That is how the last big push to globalize the world came to an end, with World War I. Nevertheless, the idea that the rich nations of North America and Northern Europe have an obligation to use their economic and military power to civilize and develop the world is no less popular today than it was 100 years ago when the empire was British rather than American.

## 6. 'Culture': Popular Objections and Common Misattributions

Within anthropology there have been many critiques of the idea of culture. Some are associated with a fear of 'the ethnography of difference.' Some with doubts about the grounds and authority of 'ethnographic

representation.' Some with a renewed interest in, or fear of, a universal civilizing project. Some with claims about the emergence of a cosmopolitan capitalist economy. Many reasons have been advanced for doubting the usefulness of the culture concept. But are they persuasive or decisive reasons? Those who continue to embrace some variety of the Kroeber and Kluckhohn definition of 'culture' tend to believe that their idea of culture does not carry most of the implications that are the supposed grounds for various anticultural critiques.

For example, the Kroeber and Kluckhohn definition of 'culture' does not really imply that 'whatever is, is okay.' It is important to recognize that valid social criticism and questions of moral justification are not ruled out by the 'standard view' of 'culture.' Nothing in the Kroeber and Kluckhohn formulation suggests that the things that other peoples desire are in fact truly desirable or that the things that other peoples think are of value are actually of value. Consensus does not add up to moral truth. In other words, a definition of culture *per se* is not a theory of the 'good.' From a moral point of view, one need not throw out the idea of culture just because some tyrant puts the word 'culture' to some misuse, or because at times some ethnic groups enter into geopolitical conflict.

The idea of culture also does not imply passive acceptance of received practice or that human beings lack 'agency,' a common claim among anticulture theorists. Indeed, many proculture theorists find it astonishing to see the idea of 'agency' or 'intentionality' used as synonyms for 'resistance to culture' in the discourse of 'anticulture' theorists. Even fully rational, fully empowered, fully 'agentic' human beings discover that membership in some particular tradition of meanings and values is an essential condition for personal identity and individual happiness. Human beings who are 'liberationists' are no more agentic than 'fundamentalists,' and neither stands outside some tradition of meaning and value.

The idea of culture also does not imply the absence of debate, contestation, or dispute among members of a group. Nor does it necessarily imply the existence of within group homogeneity in knowledge, belief, or practice. Every cultural system has experts and novices; one does not stop being a member of a common culture just because cultural knowledge is distributed and someone knows much more than you do about (e.g.) how to conduct a funeral or apply for a mortgage. One does not stop being a member of a common culture just because there are factions in the community. The claim that there are between group cultural differences has never implied the absence of within group differentiation or that there is no variation around the mean. The idea of 'culture' does not imply that every item of culture is in the possession or consciousness of every member of that culture. The idea of culture merely directs our attention to those ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient

that are acquired by virtue of membership in some group. Not everything has to be shared for a 'culture' to exist. Members of a cultural community do not always agree about this or that, but they do take an interest in each other's ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient because those ideas (and related practices) have a bearing on the perpetuation of their way of life, and what they share is that collective inheritance. Since the standard view does not assume that a culture is a well-bounded, fixed, and homogeneous block, the critique of the concept of 'culture' that starts with the observation of internal variation and ends 'therefore there is no cultural system' should have been a nonstarter.

The idea of culture also does not imply that other kinds of peoples are 'other,' in the sense of being less than human or possessing qualities that entitle us to intervene in their way of life. We live in a multicultural world consisting (as Joseph Raz has put it) 'of groups and communities with diverse practices and beliefs, including groups whose beliefs are inconsistent with one another.' The aspirations (a) not to lose your cultural identity, (b) not to assimilate to mainstream pressures, (c) not to be scattered throughout the city, country or world, (d) not to glorify the Diaspora, and (e) not to join the highly individualistic and migratory multinational, multiracial but (in many ways) monocultural cosmopolitan elite are real and legitimate aspirations, and those aspirations cannot be properly understood by treating them as illusions. They are certainly not the only legitimate aspirations in a multicultural world; there is much that can be said in favor of a liberal cosmopolitan life. But they are legitimate aspirations. Even in a 'global' world, cultural communities and ethnic groups are not going to disappear. We cannot avoid the question, what form does and should multiculturalism take in our emerging postmodern society (see Daedalus 2000)? Perhaps that is one reason that so many social scientists and public policy analysts look to anthropology for a useful concept of 'culture,' not for no concept of culture at all.

*See also:* Cultural Psychology; Cultural Relativism, Anthropology of; Culture and the Self (Implications for Psychological Theory); Cultural Concerns; Culture as Explanation: Cultural Concerns; Deconstruction: Cultural Concerns; Ethnography; Globalization and World Culture; Identity in Anthropology; Identity Movements; Pluralism; Positivism: Sociological; Post-modernism: Philosophical Aspects

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