UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

The Historical Development of 'Culture' in IR:
Word and Concepts

Julie Dawn Reeves

Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Politics
Faculty of Social Science

January 2001

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

POLITICS

Doctor of Philosophy

**THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF 'CULTURE' IN IR:
WORD AND CONCEPTS**

by Julie Dawn Reeves

'Culture' is often considered to have been a neglected subject in the discipline of International Relations (IR). This thesis, however, tells a very different disciplinary story; one that reveals the idea of culture to be deeply embedded in the discipline's history. From the League of Nations era, through the Cold War, to the post-Cold War period, the word 'culture' is easily located in the work the discipline's scholars have produced. A contextual methodology is employed to recover the conceptual meaning that a number of authors have attached to the word 'culture' in their work. These authors include Norman Angell, Alfred Zimmern, Hans Morgenthau, Martin Wight, Hedley Bull and Samuel Huntington. What is clear is that these scholars have not understood the term 'culture' in the same way. In short, they have operated with alternative culture concepts; to demonstrate this point a number of distinctions are drawn.

Two concepts of culture are identified; the *Arnoldian* and *Boasian* concepts, following the humanism of Matthew Arnold and the scientific and anthropological approach of Franz Boas, respectively. It is noted that IR scholars have been uniquely placed to choose between two levels of application for their idea of culture – the *international* and the *parochial*. Depending on the type of concept a scholar has employed and the level at which that concept has been thought appropriately articulated, has served to generate a rich and varied place for the word 'culture' in IR. Within this framework, an epistemic transformation is plainly discernible in the discipline. The texts reveal a theoretical shift from the Arnoldian concept to the Boasian and from the international to the parochial level of analysis. A further distinction is drawn within the Boasian idea of culture between the essentialist and anti-essentialist configurations of the concept; this indicates that, currently, an essentialist version of the anthropological concept obscures other forms of cultural thinking.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 details the historiography of the idea of culture and critically discusses the nature of the current concept and its inherent difficulties. This forms the general context against which a selection of IR texts drawn from the above mentioned authors are examined in Part 2. A common interest in issues surrounding the subject matter of 'communities, differences between people and social interaction,' is found in the texts, but these issues are not always expressed in terms of 'culture.' The presence of the word 'culture' and the diversity of culture theory identified in the texts, confirms the occurrence of the conceptual transformation, which serves to remind us that our concepts are constructed within particular contexts and to meet specific intellectual requirements.

Dedicated to
Diane Reeves

Contents

Figures

Acknowledgements

My greatest debt of gratitude is owed to
Professor Chris Brown of the London School of Economics,
Professor Adam Kuper of Brunel University, and
Professor Andrew Mason of the University of Southampton
for their academic and personal encouragement, suggestions, criticisms and comments.

Additional thanks are acknowledged to
Anita Catney, Dr. Peter Clegg, Rhoda Coates, Madeleine Demetriou, Dr. David Francis,
Sarah Hamiduddin, Mr Roy Henning, Mrs Monica Jacobs, Dr. Peter Mandaville,
Dr. David Owen, Dr. Stuart Poore, Professor Stephen C. Ropp, Dr. Liza Schuster,
Dr. Thomas R. Seitz, Jacquie Smith, & Sandy Wilkins
- Armand De Filippo at The Imperial War Museum
- Ray Gamble and the International Whaling Commission
- Caroline Haste at the University of Wales Aberystwyth
- Compassion in World Farming
- The staff at The University of Southampton and Wyoming State University Libraries

Special recognition goes to
Judith King and Dr. Christine Weston
&
above all,
David William Reeves

The Historical Development of 'Culture' in IR:

Word and Concepts.

INTRODUCTION

The Historical Development of 'Culture' in IR:
Word and Concepts.

Introduction

The story told in this thesis is a relatively simple one: it charts the fortunes of the meaning of the word 'culture' as it has appeared in the discipline of International Relations (hereafter IR). The historical development of 'culture,' and its attending conceptualisation, is traced across the lifespan of the discipline through the work of a small number of scholars and, what is viewed here as, their key 'culture' texts. Far from being a neglected subject, 'culture' is revealed as a persistent and often prominent concept in many IR theorists' work and this will be demonstrated to have been the case throughout the discipline's lifetime. However, it is not the same idea of culture that has appeared in the literature, indeed the meaning attached to the term has altered profoundly as the history of the discipline has unfolded. Therefore, although we find plenty of examples of the actual word 'culture' in IR literature, the same word has not been employed or understood in the same way, nor has it been used for similar purposes and this is an important theme in the story of culture told here.

It may surprise the reader to learn that there are, in fact, two concepts of culture; what is more, IR has progressively moved from one concept to the other. Briefly, these concepts can be characterised as being identified with, on the one hand, 'the best of everything' people are capable of producing and, on the other, with the 'whole way of life' of a particular community. The transformation from one concept of culture to the other is a striking feature in both the history of the discipline itself and the actual developments surrounding the idea of 'culture;' these twin observations are a major point of concern in what follows. Interestingly, the embryonic discipline of IR began life with the concept of civilisation, not the concept of culture. Indeed, culture acquired its significance and place in early IR theory as a complement to the idea of civilisation as 'the best of everything'

1

before standing in opposition to the concept of civilisation as the source of different 'ways of life' from the mid 20th century onwards. Detecting and understanding this conceptual transformation provides the main thread in this historical narrative, but it is also thought to generate larger questions as to how the discipline's scholars conceived of community, differences, and relations between diverse peoples.

I will first conduct an overview of the thesis and review some of the problems that inform this work before discussing methodological issues and detailing the structure of the thesis with a brief preview of chapters.

0.1- Overview

Culture is often described as a difficult concept, or, in the terms of Raymond Williams, as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language."[1] Exasperated and frustrated viewpoints, however, are not tolerated here. On the contrary, it is argued that culture is no more a difficult or complicated subject than many others that we encounter in IR, say for example, the concepts of power or sovereignty. It is true that culture has enjoyed an "intricate historical development," as Williams pointed out, but it is only through understanding culture's historical development that some measure of clarity can be obtained.[2] The thesis is divided into 2 parts: Part 1 details the history of culture and introduces the reader to some of the major theoretical problems associated with this concept, while Part 2 focuses on IR theorists and their texts. Part 1 sets the scene and provides the context within which the work, discussed in Part 2, is situated. Part 1 draws upon criticisms and debates beyond IR and is, in all probability, likely to be unfamiliar territory for a student of IR, but it is considered here that the critical debates over culture, especially in anthropology where 'culture' has played a considerable intellectual role, proffer highly relevant 'advice' to a discipline where interest in *others* and difference has become increasingly expressed in 'cultural' terms.

Charting the historiography of culture reveals two distinct families of scholarship based upon two very different conceptual meanings attached to the same term. These contrasting concepts and their genealogies are identified and discussed in Chapter 1 as the

---

[1]   Raymond Williams (1976/1988), p.87
[2]   Raymond Williams, *ibid*, p.87

Arnoldian and *Boasian* concepts of culture, following Matthew Arnold and Franz Boas respectively. The Arnoldian concept of culture is based on humanist thinking and is identified with 'the best of everything that has been thought and said in the world.' This is a problematic and somewhat controversial concept, inevitably giving rise to debate over what should be counted as 'the best of everything.' However, in principle, it is arguably obvious that 'the best' British society has to offer does not include football hooligans for example, although what it does include proves to be a much contested issue. At first sight, the Boasian concept appears straight forward enough and is easily recognisable as the cultural anthropologists' notion of culture. The hallmark of the cultural anthropologists' concept, or Boasian concept as it is referred to here, is its association with a specific community of people, their habits, traits, values and so on. This concept is perhaps best identified with the 'whole way of life' of a people and is the notion of culture most familiar to us today.

As the same word, 'culture,' can be read in two distinct ways, difficulties inevitably occur when attempting to make sense of the presence of 'culture' in past IR literature. This is especially so if one attempts to read the word 'culture' from within the parameters of one's own contemporary assumptions as to what this idea conveys. Imposing a contemporary understanding of culture onto a wide range of scholarly activity, as well as trying to interpret the past by way of the present, is only likely to result in confusion as far as the idea of culture is concerned. This is a point with especial pertinence in IR, since the manifestation of culture has been both long-standing and plentiful. A reader is unlikely to make sense of Alfred Zimmern's use of the term 'culture,' for example, if it is assumed that his idea of culture invokes, among other things, the idea of community based values, as Zimmern does not employ the term in this way. Understanding a scholar's use of 'culture' in a particular text demands some knowledge of the ideas at his/her disposal at the time of writing and accepting that the meaning attached to the word 'culture' might be very different from our own. Only in this way can a reader begin to make sense of the role of 'culture' in a text, which necessitates the employment of a contextual methodology, discussed in more detail below.

From the outset, it is essential that the reader understand the extent of variation embedded within the discipline that is associated with the idea of culture. Not only have IR

theorists held alternative concepts of culture, they have also applied these concepts to competing levels of analysis, which, on the face of it, would seem to produce numerous differing roles for culture in IR theory. However, broadly speaking, four categories of thought, or clusters of assumptions, can be identified that enable us to remove some of the confusion and to deal with the seemingly endless array of variations more easily. First, there are the two concepts of culture themselves, which are described here as the humanist's or *Arnoldian* concept and the cultural anthropologist's or *Boasian* concept of culture. Second, there is the level of application, or the level at which a theorist considers their particular conceptualisation of culture might be most fruitfully and appropriately applied. These are distinguished here as the *parochial* and *international* levels of analysis. It should be noted at this stage that although what is counted as the international level of analysis has not altered much since the discipline's founding, what is counted in parochial terms has changed considerably, especially in the post-Cold War era. Loosely speaking, 'international' means simply that which is taken at the global level. Whether 'the international' is defined as a system, society or community, is not of concern now; the point is 'the international' is taken to be above 'the parochial.' On the other hand, 'the parochial' is locally focused and covers a variety of specific localities. These range from the obvious, namely the nation and/or state, as well as sub-state groupings and ethnic communities, to less obvious manifestations such as race and larger aggregates, for example religions. During the Cold War, parochial perspectives invariably referred to national culture or the nation-state. Nowadays, parochial outlooks have fragmented enormously into a multiplicity of sub-national units, such as those found in 'identity' issues, and into regional aggregates, such as those expressed by Samuel Huntington's notion of 'civilisation,' or references to 'Asian values,' for example. Nonetheless, the principal criteria for identifying parochialism, as it is understood here, are: the recognition of significant culture units below that of the international level; theorising that is primarily conducted in terms of these smaller units; and plurality. A key feature of a parochial level of analysis is that there is always more than one manifestation or entity to deal with. Parochialism invokes plurality in a particular way, while the actual content of the approach varies from theorist to theorist.

It is believed here, that the choice available to theorists between different levels of analysis is a key disciplinary advantage when it comes to thinking about culture in IR.

Cultural anthropologists, for example, have been interested in the culture of specific societies and have conducted their research and thinking, largely, in individuated and parochial terms. They have tended to produce studies of particular societies, for example studies of the culture of the Balinese, the Zuni, and the Mashpee Indians, rather than beginning with the recognition of something called 'global culture.' IR scholars, however, have the advantage of an additional and international layer of analysis, which raises some questions of its own and brings with it certain difficulties unique to the discipline. Most obviously, the idea of an international culture or international level of application raises the question as to how this might differ from local or domestic culture, which, in turn, generates questions about saliency. Inter-disciplinary problems of this order become readily apparent when a theorist incorporates theoretical understandings that were constructed under parochial conditions into an international perspective. Relying on the cultural anthropologist's understanding of culture, for example, tests the limits of the utility of ideas under other conditions. In his *Hagey Lecture* papers Hedley Bull questioned the normative saliency of international culture in view of the heterogeneous nature of international society and in comparison with his presumption of local 'cultural' homogeneity, but, as we shall see in Chapter 6, Bull's 'problems' in these papers were generated, to large extent, by his specific conception of culture. However, a perceived lack of international 'culture' is not a self-evident issue; it is wholly a matter for theoretical debate. Moreover, some scholars now argue that a lack of cohesion or homogeneity exists at every 'cultural' level so the distinction between local and international 'culture' might prove a spurious one in IR. Clearly, ideas that appear to work well enough in one setting may be less than satisfactory when placed in alternative circumstances. Problems of this nature will be discussed as the story of culture in IR unfolds, but it is particularly relevant to what follows to remind the reader that the kinds of problems a theorist envisages are wholly determined by the way in which s/he conceptualises 'culture' in the first instance. Put more formally, an authors' epistemic outlook, the theory that epistemology creates and the problems the theory seeks to address (not to mention any difficulties the theory may itself generate), are wholly determined by the author's initial ontological assumptions as to the nature of culture, namely, how it exists, works, what it does, etc. A scholar's initial conception of the nature of culture has considerable implication for any theorising that

follows. With this observation in mind, the distinction between the two concepts of culture, the Arnoldian and the Boasian, acquires greater utility enabling us to make better sense of the appearance of the word 'culture' in a given text and its role in any given theory. The distinction between the two concepts of culture, particularly from an IR perspective, is not merely semantic; in the extreme and in terms of ontology, these two conceptualisations of culture differ profoundly, which has important epistemic implications. So for example, an ability to raise doubts over the idea of an international or global culture depends entirely on how one defines 'culture,' which in turn rests upon the conception of culture informing the definition and theorising.

It may be too obvious to indicate that 'culture' is a constructed concept (as in some way or other all concepts are), however, the current difficulty with the idea of culture is that it seems to enjoy a level of certainty that renders fundamental critical analysis inappropriate. There would appear to be nothing more obvious today than the 'fact' that people have 'culture.' The British anthropologist Joel Kahn has complained that this concept only exists because of its state of 'taken-for-grantedness.'[3] Speaking in terms of specific groups of people, 'their culture' and, in turn, of 'cultural differences,' is a daily occurrence that few people fail to understand these days. An 'instinctive' understanding of 'culture' appears to grip scholars and general public alike, irrespective of the widespread admission that culture is a notoriously vague and seemingly impossible subject to pin-down. As Chris Brown recently put it,

> 'Culture' is a highly contested term, and it would be easy to spend the rest of this article attempting a definition. For this reason it will be left here undefined, on the principle that readers will have a rough intuitive sense of what is involved in the notion...[4]

Brown is quite typical here in thinking that his readers 'will have a rough intuitive sense of what' culture means, but it is precisely this widely held 'intuitive sense' of culture, which itself rests upon certain assumptions about the nature of 'culture,' that is problematic and deserves rigorous interrogation. Therefore, a note of caution is required at this point to orientate the reader. The existence of 'culture' is not a 'fact' accepted lightly in this thesis; it is an idea to be critically scrutinised and theoretically entered into. This is to say that the

---

[3]   Joel Kahn (1989)
[4]   Chris Brown, (2000), footnote 2, p.200

6

'existence' of culture is not seen here as a matter beyond dispute or refute, in spite of its widespread popular appeal. How past IR theorists have entertained the idea of culture especially illuminates this basic proposition, as we shall see.

Figure 1. Possibilities for culture theory in IR

Concept	Arnoldian		Boasian	
Level of Application	Parochial (AP)	International (AI)	Parochial (BP)	International (BI)

Within the four categories of the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts, the international and parochial levels of analysis, (see Figure 1 above), a theorist has a number of possible theoretical arrangements at his/her disposal. There is a greater capacity for culture thinking in IR than, arguably, has been recognised. It is possible to operate with an Arnoldian or Boasian concept of culture, and to apply each of these concepts in a parochial or international way. What is more, a distinct transformative pattern can be detected over the course of the discipline's history and it is this transformation that attracts my interest here. The discipline began its life with an international application of the Arnoldian concept, (AI), and gradually moved towards embracing parochial expressions of the Boasian concept, (BP), which is, more or less, where we find ourselves today. Some periods of scholarship are more closely associated with the dominance of one concept and one level of application than others. This enables definite clusters of thought to be isolated in the literature (see figure 2 below). In many respects, the progress of culture within the discipline merely reflects the development of the idea elsewhere. Developments in other disciplines, especially those among cultural anthropologists, have not only exerted influence on society in general, but have also affected IR theorists and their work; the significance of these extra-disciplinary influences is implicit throughout the thesis. The existence of distinct clusters of conceptual assumptions and the variety of possibilities they create is evidenced and confirmed in the literature IR scholars have produced. In addition,

7

it is this evidence, as well as the confirmation of conceptual use and change, that will be focused on in the investigation, once the historical scene has been set. However, some general statements concerning the manifestation of culture in IR in its various forms can be made at this stage.

Figure 2. The Conceptual Transformation in IR

Publications				KEY
Alexander Wendt			BI	
Samuel Huntington			BP	AI - Arnoldian
				International
Hedley Bull		BP(BI)		AP -Arnoldian
				Parochial
Hans Morgenthau		BP		BI - Boasian
R. McMurray & M. Lee		AP		International
				BP - Boasian
A. Zimmern & E.H. Carr	AI AI			Parochial
Norman Angell				
	WW1	WW2	Post-Cold	
		Time Scale	War	

The publications referred to here are:
Norman Angell (1911/1972); Hedley Bull (1977/1995); E.H. Carr (1939/1995);
Samuel Huntington (1996/1998); R. McMurry & M. Lee (1947);
Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962); Alexander Wendt (1999);
Alfred Zimmern (1922) & (1936);

Parochial manifestations of the Arnoldian concept (AP) are most likely to be found in foreign policy circles, where 'culture' is counted as a national asset.[5] This 'combination' of concept and level of application came to the fore around the Second World War period. There is some literature in the discipline that expresses a parochial view of the Arnoldian concept, but largely it is eschewed by mainstream work and does not feature in this thesis

---

[5]   See for example Philip Coombs (1964); Charles Frankel (1966); Ruth Emily McMurry and Muna Lee (1947); J.M. Mitchell (1986); Francis Stonor Saunders (1999). These are largely empirical works, but for two volumes that involve theoretical discussions see Frank Ninkovitch (1981) on American foreign policy and Akira Iriye (1997) who attempts to synthesize Arnoldian internationalism with parochialism.

for reasons of space.[6] I only mention this work here, to draw the reader's attention to the fact that parochial versions of Arnoldian culture do exist within the discipline. Oftentimes this literature comes under the rubric of 'international cultural relations' and is dominated by foreign policy analysts and former diplomats. The question of whether Shakespeare or The Spice Girls better represent British culture, or the debate over what should count as 'Cool Britannia' are both examples of an Arnoldian discourse in parochial terms, in this case the British nation-state. More prominent within the discipline, however, has been the international application of Arnoldian culture (AI). This is especially true for the inter-war period and early British scholarship in particular. The work of scholars like Alfred Zimmern and Gilbert Murray was dominated by the Arnoldian concept and appeared as an integral part of their thinking about international relations during the League of Nations era.

The Second World War marked a sea-change in thinking about culture and witnessed the appearance of the Boasian concept (BP) in IR theory. Initially, this conceptual change only occurred in the United States, but this was a conceptual process well under way, in America, before the war as we shall see in Part 1. After the war, American scholars embraced the Boasian concept of culture and applied it at a parochial level. This is evidenced by Hans Morgenthau's work, but the Cold War might also be viewed as a testament to the parochial expression of Boasian culture when the Americans and the Soviets were seen as confronting each other with their competing 'ways of life.' British scholars did not come to rely openly on the Boasian concept until the 1970s, although there is some evidence to suggest that they were aware of the cultural anthropologists' idea of culture and employed it in conjunction with their largely Arnoldian understandings prior to this period. The late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s are a somewhat confusing time for the concept of culture in British scholarship, but some attempt is made to explain this confusion in Chapter 6 with reference to Martin Wight's work. Whereas the Arnoldian concept of culture has had a visible international existence, the Boasian concept

---

[6]   Introductory textbooks on IR do not tend to devote sections to 'international cultural relations,' although they may refer to culture in its individuated sense and as a means for differentiating between communities. See for example: John Bayliss and Steve Smith eds. (1997/1998); Chris Brown (1997); A.J.R. Groom and Margot Light (1994); K.J. Holsti (1967/1972); Richard Little and Michael Smith eds. (1991/1994); William C. Olsen and A.J.R. Groom (1991). There are two volumes on Boasian culture generally: Jongsuk Chay ed. (1990), and Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997), and a Millennium Special Issue (1993). None of these last publications offers an introduction to 'international cultural relations,' the closest to a basic introduction is Akira Iriye (1997).

has enjoyed a thoroughly parochial or localised existence within IR, although the later international society theorists and more, recently Alexander Wendt, might be counted as exceptions here.[7] Hedley Bull, R.J. Vincent and Wendt have all sought to apply a Boasian concept of culture at the international level (BI), although some theories have arguably proven more successful than others. The reasons for any lack of success are thought here to be the consequence of difficulties that are inherent in the nature of the Boasian concept itself; these conceptual problems are examined in Chapter 2.

If the Boasian concept has eclipsed the fortunes of the Arnoldian concept over the course of the 20th century and obscured its place in the history of IR, then the developments that have recently taken place within the cultural anthropologist's concept add further complication to the story. The Boasian concept has always had its critics, but recent criticisms within anthropology and beyond, require the recognition of an additional distinction in this version of culture. A classical version of Boasian culture is usually identified but has met with so much criticism that anthropologists these days fall into one of two camps over the idea of culture. They seek either to reform the concept, or to reject it entirely. Much of this debate has yet to make its appearance in IR, but the implications of the debates over culture are highly significant for the future of the concept and cannot be avoided here. Furthermore, some of the criticisms of the culture concept shed new light on the idea of culture and its development, especially in American scholarship, which enable us to read IR theorists' work in a new way. Among those anthropologists who have worked and who continue to work with the concept of culture, two distinct positions are discernable and will be referred to here; these are the essentialist and anti-essentialist positions.

A number of characteristics or assumptions have been identified and associated with essentialist conceptions of culture, notably the presumption of singularity, tradition, coherence, discretion, continuity, timelessness, and consensus. An essentialist theorist may not exhibit all of these assumptions in their work, but the key and core identifying principle that separates essentialist thinking from other forms of cultural theorising (especially within the confines of the Boasian concept) is the unproblematic acceptance/insistence that it is

---

[7] For example, see Samuel Huntington (1993/1996) & (1996/1998) and Raymond Cohen (1991/1997) for obvious parochial applications of Boasian culture. For (possible) international applications of the Boasian

possible to refer to 'the culture' of a particular community of people in some way or other and that this is a *meaningful* statement. Essentialism rests upon the assumption that reference to the 'culture' of the Mashpee Indians say, is not only a salient proposition that we all vaguely and intuitively recognise, but, also, one marked by distinctiveness, be this expressed implicitly as a distinctive 'way or ways of life' or explicitly as 'culture.' Essentialist culture subscribes to difference in a quite specific way and in a manner that invokes significant claims about 'meaning.' This idea of culture only makes sense because of its claims about the distinctiveness of communities and the role 'culture' plays in determining and/or influencing distinctiveness at source. In an essentialist version of culture, 'culture' is believed to affect everything about a community of people, from their behaviour to their ideas. However, since no-one has yet been able to locate the source of any difference in cultural terms, this has lead to the criticism that so-called distinctive ways of life can ultimately and only rest upon a mysterious, self-generating and self-contained *essence* of culture – hence the description of 'essentialism.'

   Anti-essentialists, naturally enough, reject all such notions of culture and community. Anti-essentialists make two kinds of critique, empirical and theoretical. First, they argue that communities are too diverse internally to permit the claim of a distinctive culture or 'way of life' to pass muster. In much the same way that some would cast doubt over the idea of an international culture in IR, anti-essentialists argue that local 'cultures' are similarly heterogeneous and are far from being the homogenous entities that many imagine. From this perspective, reference to 'the culture of the Mashpee' is a nothing more than a totalising statement devoid of empirical content; the idea of 'a Mashpee culture' bears little or no relationship to the reality of anything that might constitute 'Mashpee' life. Second, they dismiss the ontological assumptions that lie behind thinking about the world in (essentialist) 'cultural' terms. In view of the empirical difficulties involved in identifying the traits, habits, values, etc. peculiar to and exclusively belonging to a specific community of people, these scholars have begun to shift the theoretical focus of their investigations from 'being' to 'doing.' Since an essentialist conception of culture rests upon the assumption that 'our culture makes us what we are,' paraphrasing Margaret Mead, anti-essentialists are more concerned with 'what culture does,' rather than trying to specify

---

concept see Hedley Bull (1977/1995); R.J. Vincent (1986/1995); & Alexander Wendt (1999).

'what it is.' These theorists are preoccupied with process and practice, and diversity rather than homogeneity, and have generated some interesting ideas about 'culture,' differences between people, social interaction, and how we, as scholars, should think about communities as a result. Both the essentialist and anti-essentialist positions are examined and discussed more closely in Chapter 2, although it should be clear to the reader that despite harbouring some sympathy for the anti-essentialist position, I am uncertain as to how this particular anthropological development would manifest itself in IR.

To date, however, it has been the essentialist version of Boasian culture that has exhibited itself in IR theory, and this can be criticised from three different theoretical standpoints. First, there are the obvious objections made by the anti-essentialists mentioned above. Second, it is possible to argue against this conception of culture from an Arnoldian perspective on the grounds that whatever an individual or a group of people do or produce, its distinctiveness is less significant than the fact that their 'products' are available to the whole of humanity as the 'best of everything.' Therefore, 'creative diversity' is less relevant as something that belongs to a particular community of people, but is of greater relevance as something that human beings the world over can participate in and benefit from as a matter of 'gift' sharing. There is a subtle, yet serious, shift of conceptual emphasis here between the Arnoldian and essentialist Boasian concepts as will, hopefully, become apparent. Finally, there is the possibility, advocated by a growing number of scholars, of rejecting the idea of culture altogether; a view that is given serious consideration in this thesis. What is certain is that much of the debate and many of the criticisms levelled at culture are under-appreciated in IR. Without some knowledge of these varying positions and the reasoning behind them, no story of culture would be complete, even from an IR perspective. In anticipation of some of the work that follows, Figure 3 (below) offers the reader an idea of where IR scholars might be situated in conceptual terms, in the light of anthropological discussions.

Figure 3. IR scholars and their conceptual standpoints

Concept	Arnoldian	Boasian - Essentialist	Boasian – Anti-essentialist
Theorist	Alfred Zimmern (AI) E.H. Carr (AI)* Martin Wight (AI)*	Hedley Bull (BI/BP) Samuel Huntington (BP) Alexander Wendt (BI)	Yosef Lapid (BP)*

* Denotes that this classification of a theorist is debatable or subject to change.

0.2 - A Modest Contextual Methodology

We all read for specific purposes and with specific aims in mind, in this the motives of the reader as much as the author come under scrutiny. For the purposes of this project, however, it is believed that there is something to be gained from encountering texts with the same measure of integrity with which they were written, not least because this approach seems most likely to prevent adding to the confusion already surrounding our understanding of the word 'culture.' This modest contextual approach requires beginning at least by taking what authors have to say about the world in their own terms, rather than interpreting them in the light of our own, contemporary, assumptions. Rather than guessing at what an author may have intended the word 'culture' to mean in a text, it becomes necessary to recover, as best we can, the meaning of the word as the author understood it at the time of writing. Given the level of difficulty that the term 'culture' currently generates, it is thought that a contextual approach affords useful insight into the manner in which this concept has developed across the discipline's history. Without a careful and sensitive analysis of what a particular author had to say, the pitfalls surrounding any interpretation of the appearance of 'culture' in a text are obvious. In view of our current 'intuitive' appreciation of this term, it would be easy to misread the word 'culture' in a text or to assume that an inter-war theorist, for example, writing of national differences was referring to the same things we currently understand as 'cultural differences.'

It has to be said that culture is an extremely popular term these days. In addition to

the problems associated with reading past texts, 'culture' appears in a staggering array of forms, which, in turn, seem to make the concept of culture incredibly difficult to access. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out, "we now have 'camera culture, gun culture, service culture, museum culture, deaf culture, football culture... the culture of dependency, the culture of pain, the culture of amnesia, etc.'..." not to mention political culture, strategic culture, ethnic culture, cultural-identity and global culture.[8] All of which would more than imply the necessity for an explanatory discussion as to the nature of this particular term at any given point in time, its attending conceptualisations, and their use in a theory and/or text. The relationship between 'word' and 'concept' require systematic exploration, and this would appear a particularly pressing task where two concepts have been identified with the same word and where it is claimed that IR has shifted interest from one concept to the other. Rather than "writing history backwards" as Brian Schmidt has put it, whereby a particular meaning of culture is first established and then IR texts read in the light of that understanding, the aim here has been to employ the general history of culture to facilitate an understanding of specific IR scholars' work.[9] Indeed the actual research process demanded a contextual approach. It was from an inability to make sense of the appearance of the word 'culture' in early IR literature, including most inter-war British scholars, that the necessity for a more sensitive contextual analysis stems.

A modest form of contextualism has been adopted here rather than the more explicit version advocated by Quentin Skinner.[10] Whereas Skinner, famously, applied contextualism to individual authors and specific texts, the aim here is to merely recover the meaning of the word 'culture' and its attending conceptualisations in a general historical sense.[11] I am not excavating the meaning of a whole work, reassessing a particular

---

[8]   Cited by Terry Eagleton from Geoffrey Hartman, in Terry Eagleton (2000), p.37

[9]   Brian C. Schmidt, (1998), p.36

[10]   See James Tully ed. (1988), p.77

[11]   Quentin Skinner is the scholar with whom contextualism is most clearly associated, however his methodological approach is not without difficulty as has been recognised. Skinner has raised the question in political theory as to whether it is appropriate to examine classic texts and their authors from the perspective of late twentieth century concerns. Skinner questions, for example, the point of criticising Plato's *Republic* for its totalitarian implications when the concept of totalitarianism was unknown to Plato - see James Tully ed. (1988), p.44. This is often the aspect of Skinner's thesis that causes most difficulty, since it implies that cross-historical, not to mention cross-societal, analyses are not possible if the benefits of the contextual method are to be maintained. Martin Hollis fears that "a vicious relativism results if human nature is made to vary empirically with historical context..." James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.146. See also Chapter 9: Joseph V. Femia argued, "we must assume that he is... against all transhistorical comparisons." James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.162

scholar's entire theory, or writing their life-story. Although I appreciate the value of applying the Skinnerian approach to IR texts and enquiring more deeply into the reasons as to why a particular scholar thought they way they did, that task falls beyond the realms of this thesis. However, Skinner has made some useful observations that are pertinent to the research undertaken here. The first point borrowed from Skinner concerns the role of the context in respect of interpreting the meaning of words, while the second point highlights the changing nature of meanings and concepts.

In order to achieve as approximate an understanding of an author's original intention as is possible, Skinner argues that sensitive relocation of the text to the context in which it was written is required. According to Skinner, we need to become aware of two things: 'what a text was intended to mean by the author and how the meaning was intended to be taken by the audience.'[12] We know that different readers read differently, but in terms of this research, it became essential to first establish the extent of what it was possible to read if we were the contemporary audience.[13] This does not rule out variation within that audience, it merely determines the extent of what was most likely to occur. In short, in a classically Arnoldian period it would be erroneous to read a work in Boasian terms if we are exclusively concerned with an authors own understanding of the word 'culture.' As Skinner indicates,

> The essential question which we therefore confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance.[14]

This is a useful point for us here, since it has not always been possible to recover a precise meaning of culture in some of the literature and this was especially true of British scholarship during the 1950s and 1960s, but it has been possible to establish what culture could have meant 'in practice' by setting out the parameters of possibility.

One of the difficulties with Skinners' contextual method is that it appears to rule out the possibility of cross-contextual analysis on the grounds of recognising 'culture.' There is some irony in this recognition because in spite of his criticism of 'tenseless propositions,' as he calls them, it does appear to be the case that 'culture' stands as a tenseless proposition for Skinner himself. Adam Kuper has criticized Skinner for accepting the culture concept too easily and following Clifford Geertz uncritically. Adam Kuper (1999) see Chapter 3 pages 114 and 117 especially.

[12]   James Tully ed. (1988), see pages 61-63
[13]   See Romy J. Clark in D. Graddol, L. Thompson and M. Byram eds. (1993)

What is of concern here and in respect to IR theory is the possibility of recovering meanings and intentions that have been overlooked by the discipline and may have some bearing on how we think about certain theorists' work. My aim is to recover the meaning of the word 'culture' in a text with a high level of confidence, rather than claiming absolute certainty in terms of recovering an author's illocutionary force.[15] This brings me onto the second point borrowed from Skinner. Skinner's approach rests upon the proposition that words, such as the term 'culture,' entail (or conjure) a corresponding concept and that, crucially, we should be aware that the latter may change and vary according to time and place. The

> literal meanings of key terms sometimes change over time, so that a given writer may
> say something with a quite different sense and reference from the one which may
> occur to the reader.[16]

This is a significant point with respect to the word 'culture' particularly as it appears in IR texts. The meaning of words frequently and subtly changes, even within our own contemporary vocabulary, which will necessarily affect our reading of a text and our understanding of it, even within a discipline as young as IR. Without exploring the relationship between the word and its attending concepts, the best that can be said of the whole idea of culture is that it rests upon a collection of unspoken assumptions that appear to be placed beyond critical engagement.

It is clear that, currently, the concept of culture is employed loosely and without regard, and in the absence of clearly detailed criteria under which any application of this term can justifiably occur, the weaknesses and mistakes are obvious. Take, for example, a recent article by Beate Jahn on the encounter between the Spanish Conquistadors and the American Indians; an encounter that she describes as 'cultural.'[17] Nowhere in this paper does Jahn define culture nor does she explicate in what way or under which terms, this

---

[14]   James Tully ed., (1988), p.63

[15]   James Tully claims that with the contextual method a student can "ascertain precisely" the sense of a text. A more cautious approach is adopted here, partly because I am not interested in the meaning of a text but in the meaning of the word 'culture.' I would claim that we could only more confidently understand 'culture' in a text rather than know its precise meaning; partly, this is because I admit that this word is ambiguous in some authors' work. I have, in the case of Martin Wight for example, weighed the evidence and drawn what seems to me to be the more probable conclusion - this hardly amounts to a precise meaning. James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.10

[16]   James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.50/1

[17]   Beate Jahn (1999)

particular encounter could be described as cultural. This is a considerable oversight given that the word 'culture' did not exist in the terms she employs it at the time the event took place. How she can justify an interpretation of this event in terms of 'culture' is not at all clear, and it is the absence of explanation that generates most difficulty in my view, **not** the rejection of the initial possibility of this kind of research as would be the case in a strict Skinnerian sense where 'tenseless propositions,' such as 'culture,' would be ruled out entirely.[18] An unwillingness or inability to account for one's theoretical stance, particularly when that stance relies heavily on as notorious a slippery subject as culture, creates more problems than it purports to solve in my view. The contemporary reader may experience little or no difficulty in accepting that what Jahn implicitly refers to is a profound and perhaps even incommensurable clash between two different communities and their 'ways of life.' In eighty years time, however, people might wonder what Jahn meant by describing this event in cultural terms. Certainly, eighty years ago, her paper would have conjured an entirely different association to that of a 'clash' between whole communities and their value systems. In the 1920s most people would have imagined that the words 'cultural encounter' referred to an exchange of 'bibles and beads' between the Spanish and First Americans, with, crucially, no hint of conflict. Whereas, had she been reporting back at the time of the encounter itself, people would have assumed that both parties had dug up the beach in order to plant crops. Jahn is an extreme case, but she demonstrates very neatly the need for contextual, not to mention conceptual, sensitivity. What is more, cross-contextual work demands clearly laid out terms of elucidation and justification, especially if the idea of 'culture' is to be maintained as a 'tenseless proposition;' unfortunately these terms are all too often absent as Jahn usefully demonstrates. I would draw, therefore, a sharp distinction between recovering and understanding the historical use of a concept from applying a concept across history, which clearly serves other purposes by different means. It is under the latter conditions that the motives and intentions of the scholar and the reader are most conspicuous for determining the outcome of a study employing the concept of 'culture.' Yet, unless we establish the content and meaning of 'culture,' we are not in a

---

[18]   In my view, studies based on 'tenseless propositions' are simply another kind of research project; I would not reject the proposition entirely. However, the criteria by way of which any such study is conducted requires, of necessity, clearly detailed terms under which it could be carried out. The problem with an

17

position to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of a cross-contextual approach.

To begin to understand what a theorist intended to impart in his/her work, it is necessary to understand the intellectual and conceptual tools they were working with, not in our terms, but in theirs. Articulation of culture can be located in two spaces, the general social context and in a particular text. It is not the case that a text can be directly read off the general social context; it is that we need to maintain a sense of what Skinner calls "conceptual propriety."[19] This methodology might be better described as the 'art of the reasonably possible.' As Skinner indicates, the danger is that

> The 'context' mistakenly gets treated as the determinant of what is said. It needs rather to be treated as an ultimate framework for helping to decide what conventionally recognizable meanings, in a society of *that* kind, it might in principle have been possible for someone to have intended to communicate. (italics in original)[20]

In this sense, we are not reading texts as if they were written by the context, since that allows no space for an author's own contribution (or illocutionary force in Skinner's terms) but rather we are reading them constitutively and in conjunction with the context. The question appropriate to concerns expressed here is this: in the light of the context, what ideas about culture was it reasonably possible for an author to hold? What were the 'conventionally recognisable meanings' or 'conventional standards' for the time? This will become particularly relevant when I discuss Martin Wight's work in Chapter 6. If the context is the 'ultimate framework' and IR theories draw upon the conventional standards of their age, then how should we read the role of 'culture' in these terms? Usefully Skinner tells us that

> if we wish to grasp how someone sees the world – what distinctions he... draws, what classifications he accepts – what we need to know is not what word he uses but rather what concepts he possesses.[21]

This points the way to the application of the method in this project, which is only concerned with the appearance of one word and the concepts invoked by it. The research presented here attempts a modest appraisal of a term, and one in which the context has been

---

'intuitive' sense of 'culture' is that the basis of any such discussion is wholly absent and therefore open to criticism in my view.
[19]   James Tully ed. (1988), p.64
[20]   James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.64

identified in circumstances that lie beyond the discipline, while an explanation for the approach adopted here has been borrowed from anthropology.

Anthropologists have long recognised and acknowledged that their discipline has not existed in a world of its own making, or in an intellectual vacuum. Richard Fox has pointed out anthropology operates under what he calls 'factory conditions' - there are the specific factory rules, but these are influenced by the wider social and intellectual setting in which the discipline is located. Summarising the work of his colleague Michel-Rolph Trouillot on a sensitive subject in anthropology, the 'savage other,' Fox tells us,

> that anthropology's construction of the Other was not, in fact, anthropology's own construction. Rather, anthropologists inherited a "savage slot" from Western philosophy and utopian thinking that long preexisted professional anthropology. Anthropology is constructed, and the labor of anthropologists disciplined by, the preexisting savage slot or definition of the Other, rather than vice versa. To castigate anthropology for its flawed construction of others, as the postmodern critique does, is fundamentally to misunderstand the agency and power directing our discipline; it is a curious instance of the victims blaming themselves.[22]

Fox points out that anthropology, as a discipline, has not come to be what it is in isolation or through the independent development of its craft. Any examination of the discipline must consider, Fox argues, what he calls the "factory" conditions under which it operated.[23] Similarly, it could not be claimed that IR has existed in vacuous isolation either; it too is not entirely a product of its own construction, and its scholars have laboured under certain 'factory conditions.' It is these 'factory conditions' that to a considerable extent form the context against which the literature has to be investigated. IR theorists' as much as anyone else live in society and are influenced by it, in this way the ideas that are prevalent in society filter into the academy as much as the academy disseminates its own ideas to society. This is obviously the case when one considers IR's relationship with the word 'culture.' Trouillot has made the obvious point, as pertinent for IR as anthropology -

> That the discipline was positivist in a positivist age, structuralist in a context dominated

---

[21]   James Tully ed., *ibid*, p.120
[22]   Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.10
[23]   Richard Fox ed., *ibid*, p.9

by structuralism, is not very intriguing...[24]

The point of intrigue for Trouillot lies in discerning the predominant concepts of each age, their origins and what effect they had on work produced. Trouillot's interest is in anthropology's inheritance of the savage slot, but his approach can be applied, in different terms, to IR. Scholars in IR have not invented the term 'culture;' they have borrowed and 'inherited' it from elsewhere. Sometimes this idea has been incorporated from society in general, which was influenced, in turn, by certain academic or critical discourses and political developments. Other times, IR's scholars have directly imported the idea from other disciplines, most notably cultural anthropology and cultural studies. Therefore, it is to these outside disciplines, particularly anthropology, and the widely held social attitudes that we need to turn to establish the context into which IR literature can be placed.[25] What is more, the common complaints against realism, positivism, behaviouralism and the like, are completely side-stepped here. Primarily, because like Trouillot, I do not consider these 'very intriguing' when set against the history of 'culture' in IR. That Hedley Bull among others, held a positivist view of culture is not the issue, whereas the actual content of his concept is because it may have some implications for the nature of his theorising. As noted by Skinner above, it becomes important to know the content of the 'concepts an author possesses,' not the terms s/he uses.

The context emphasised here relies heavily on the broader historical detail concerning the life span and development of the concepts of 'culture.' Fortunately, much work has already been conducted in terms of the historiography of 'culture.' However, steering a path through these histories that was appropriate for IR has not been a straightforward task. One of the major problems has been that much of the literature inevitably tells the story of 'culture' from within its own disciplinary viewpoint. Raymond Williams, for example, tells a typically English story about 'culture,' whereas Fernand Braudel is determinedly French and recently, Terry Eagleton offered a predominantly cultural studies version.[26] From these specific surveys of 'culture,' it is very difficult to

---

[24]   Michel-Rolph Trouillot in Richard Fox ed., *ibid*, p.29
[25]   Until recently Cultural Anthropology exerted greater influence in IR than Cultural Studies, but the post-Cold War period has seen some reference to the latter discipline. See for example Jutta Weldes (1999), whom I discuss in Chapter 1.
[26]   Fernand Braudel (1963/1995) especially Chapter One; Terry Eagleton (2000); Raymond Williams (1958/1993)

know how IR literature fits in, although certain parallels can oftentimes be drawn, as for example, with the impact of postmodernist thought. Two scholars, Norbert Elias and Adam Kuper, have been especially useful for gleaning the overall development of 'culture' into which the story of IR can be more generally placed.[27] Although, I recognise that Adam Kuper would probably express reservations over the Arnoldian and Boasian distinction employed here, but I account for this disciplinary difference in Chapter 1. Rather surprisingly, the parallels between IR and anthropology have been remarkably strong, as will be demonstrated below, and this was something I had not anticipated.

There are precedents for a general contextual approach in IR and political theory, which have traced the development of specific terms and ideas in a way closely associated to the interests expressed here. Brian Schmidt's *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* analyses nearly 100 contemporary sources from the mid 1800s to World War 2.[28] In this 'critical disciplinary history,' Schmidt traced the concept of anarchy and its impact on thinking about the nature of the state and IR theory through, what he calls the "critical internal discursive history" approach.[29] Although Schmidt's interest in charting the progress of the idea of anarchy across the early history of the discipline is similar in intent to my interests, there is a key difference. Schmidt explicitly rejects the contextual method for its apparent inability to challenge the discipline critically. As he indicates,

> Contextual accounts participate in the presentist agenda of legitimation and critique and, in one way or another, reinforce the conventional image of the field's history in terms of successive idealist, realist, and behavioral phases.[30]

I consider this an erroneous assessment of contextualism by Schmidt. On the one hand, and as far as I am aware, there have not been any contextual appraisals of texts in IR in the manner of Skinner.[31] On the other hand, it does not follow that the contextual method confirms and colludes in the 'orthodox' story of IR that Schmidt finds objectionable. On the contrary, contextual accounts are just as likely to challenge prevailing assumptions as

---

[27]   Norbert Elias (1939/1978); Adam Kuper (1999)
[28]   Brian C. Schmidt (1998)
[29]   Brian C. Schmidt, *ibid*, p.1
[30]   Brian C. Schmidt, *ibid*, p.33
[31]   The evidence that Schmidt relies upon to substantiate his argument (i.e. Stanley Hoffman, Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach) is arguably context as Zeitgeist, but Skinner warns against making the mistake of using the context as a direct means of interpretation. Although Schmidt is correct to be critical of this kind of approach, he has misrepresented the contextual method to a considerable extent.

much as a disciplinary critic who approaches a subject with a certain critical agenda in mind. In this respect and contra Schmidt, I argue that the contextual method not only enables the story of 'culture' in IR to stand on its own merit, even without my criticisms and objections to the Boasian concept, but that it also serves to reinforce challenges to prevailing assumptions in so far as it recovers 'lost' histories. If there is a point for debate, it should be focused on whether the correct, or most reasonable, meaning has been discerned for a work; challenging the discipline is another matter, but the contextual method does not militate against it.[32]

In many ways, recovering the idea of 'culture' in IR has greater affinity, in spirit and method, with Ivan Hannaford's study of race.[33] In *Race: the History of an Idea*, Hannaford carefully traced and recovered the meaning of race throughout political theory using the contextual method. He employed a large volume of detail to demonstrate the changing meaning and use of the term. However, one of the obvious criticisms of this monumental work is that it is largely and overwhelmingly descriptive, while the volume of detail is itself eventually overwhelming. The lack of analysis leaves one with plenty of historical examples but not much understanding as to when, where or why one can (and cannot) speak of 'racism' as it is associated with the idea of race, or indeed when racism as an attitude towards others properly begins. Therefore, although Hannaford set a precedent for the contextual methodology by moving beyond the analysis of specific texts to tracing the development of an idea, what he produced is not without important limitations. The absence of some overarching analysis would seem to demonstrate amply the difficulties of rigorously adhering to the contextual method; at least cross-contextual perspectives have the ability to tell a coherent story.[34] There is certainly a need, here, for some form of analysis or narrative to make sense of the detail that the method uncovers, since much of the information about culture will be unfamiliar to students of IR.

Working within the contextual methodology the need to offer some form of overarching analysis was compelling. In more than a few instances this has been critical,

---

[32] I would agree with Schmidt where he criticises some of the discipline's historians for "the tendency of writing history backwards," especially when they situate the origins of the discipline, exclusively, in "the external political circumstances surrounding World War 1." Brian C. Schmidt, (1998), p.36

[33] Ivan Hannaford (1996)

[34] Keith Graham made the same criticism of Skinner, he said that the contextual method was descriptive "or more accurately redescriptive" rather than explanatory. James Tully ed., (1988), p.150

22

but principally the purpose has been to tell a story that makes better sense of the literature than it could in its own terms. In plain language, it was felt necessary to provide the reader with a number of distinctions and a framework for thinking about culture that, subsequently, enables the literature to be comfortably and comprehensibly situated; this is what I intend by a modest form of the contextual method. Recovering the meaning of the term 'culture' is made sensible only when conveyed to the current audience in terms understandable and relevant to them, which accounts for 'the four categories of thought' identified and discussed above (the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts, and the international and parochial levels of application).[35] It is true that none of the theorists considered here accounts for themselves in these terms, and in this sense, I can be accused of 'imposing' a discourse on their work in distinctly non-contextual terms. However, clarity of understanding, as well as the need to convey an explanation of what is happening in a text and at which point in time, was considered more important than allowing the reader to stumble to his/her own conclusions unaided. The question for the reader to consider is to what extent this form of imposed assistance or contemporary narrative intrudes on the recovered contextual findings. Assisting the reader was considered especially relevant in view of the fact that what IR theorists have actually said about culture has to be distilled in conjunction with the historical context, rather than found speaking loudly in the literature. One of the serious difficulties associated with this project derives from recovering the meaning of the word 'culture' itself. Very rarely does a scholar offer the reader a definition or lucid account of their conception of culture - even today. Surmounting this difficulty has been one of the main advantages of the contextual methodology, in spite of the necessity of deploying distinctions that the authors did not use themselves. It is my view, however, that all of the authors investigated here would have understood the criteria they have been described by, although, some may well object to my critical assessment of the parochial and essentialist Boasian category in particular. I would maintain that knowledge of 'conventional standards' gleaned from elsewhere, enables one to identify, confidently, the cultural ideas in a specific text in spite of any absence of detail, while three forms of

---

[35]   I agree with Skinner that we 'are treading on dangerous ground if we start replacing or inputting our own terms.' James Tully ed., (1988), p.254

methodological practice, or device, guard against any weakness of arbitrarily interpreting ideas. Two of these practices are central to a contextual approach, while the third has been deployed to meet the peculiar demands of this research project.

The first practice, relies heavily upon the historical circumstances and maintains that work is best understood against the general trends in the wider social setting in which it was constructed. Historical evidence is central, for it becomes impossible to locate an author's work without reference to the circumstances and back-ground noise of general ideas in which it was produced; this is largely the role of Part 1 in the research. Secondly, we can confirm our findings by paying close attention to the work of the authors themselves, which is located in Part 2. Taken together, these two devices demonstrate the distinction that James Tully drew attention to when discussing Skinner's work. Tully indicated that 'the points of a text relative to available conventions and an author's own ideological points in writing,' are not the same thing.[36] Available conventions in the context are one thing and need to be identified, whereas what an author is aiming to do with or against those conventions in his/her text is something else. This is an important distinction for us here (and one Schmidt missed) because knowledge of the context and then close examination of a particular text for its ideas and assumptions enable us conclude that where a text lacks any detailed statements to the contrary, a scholar must be working within the available conventions of his/her age. We can be secure in this conclusion because the absence of a clear definition or detailed description of the term leads us to suppose that this is a term that the author is almost certainly comfortable and familiar with and to such an extent that they have no need to orientate their readers. Chris Brown openly calls on the 'intuitive' understanding of his readers and in this sense 'knowingly' shares with them a certain commitment to 'conventional standards.' Whereas Alfred Zimmern relied upon a very different 'conventional' understanding of 'culture' although, unlike Brown, he does not tell us this and the meaning has to be distilled from Zimmern's work. In any case, it would have been as clear to Zimmern's audience, as it is to Brown's, what the word 'culture' meant and was intended to mean by the author at the time of writing.

However, I would claim that for the sake of clarity my 'four categories of thought' lay on top of what has been uncovered, this is quite dissimilar from reinterpreting events according to my own conceptualisations say in the manner of Beate Jahn discussed above.

[36]   James Tully ed., (1988), p.10

24

Where there is an absence of detail or definition we can accept that an author must be working with the 'unspoken' assumption that the audience to whom they are addressing the work shares the same understandings of a word, as demonstrated by Jahn above. The context, then, provides us with a clear indication as to what these unspoken assumptions might, reasonably, consist of. The absence of a definition or detailed explanation is a sure sign of the presence of a widely held understanding and popular appreciation of a term. It is only when one is challenging the common assumptions and definitions, or employing the unfamiliar, that one is compelled to explain oneself in more detail and to argue a case to the contrary. We can confirm the suspicion of 'unspoken' conventional standards by paying careful attention to the moments of precise deployment of the term 'culture.'

Although very few scholars have bothered to define the concept of culture informing their work, they do have detailed things to say about 'culture' and employ the term in settings that make sense to them. Paradoxically, although many authors will admit that 'culture' is a 'notoriously' perplexing subject and one they find difficult to define, they seem to experience very few problems in writing about 'culture' in clear and precise terms.[37] Empirically, authors are more than capable of offering examples that exemplify 'culture' for them even if they cannot detail the content of this idea theoretically. These 'moments of precision,' or 'speech-acts' are highly revealing. This is the point at which the third methodological device, developed during the course of this research, becomes useful. This third practice compares 'moments of precision' with one another to convince the reader that I have recovered the most appropriate conceptual meaning attached to the word 'culture.' By comparing and contrasting specific applications of the term, I not only gain insight into an author's understanding of culture, but can use this to highlight, and reinforce the differences between competing understandings of the term 'culture.' Consequently, some quite clear ideas surrounding the notion of culture emerge that enable me to make confident statements about the nature of the concept of culture in IR over time. In anticipation of what follows, it is clear that when Martin Wight speaks of 'culture'

---

[37] For example: R.B.J. Walker describes the idea of culture as "frustratingly vague." R.B.J. Walker in Jongsuk Chay ed. (1990), p.7. Yosef Lapid tells us that "culture and identity have been treated as if their core meaning and relationship were self-evident and nonproblematic," however Lapid's task is not to reveal or resolve this difficulty in any depth, but to "highlight the complexities of the culture-identity linkage..." and, one might add, hope for the best. Yosef Lapid in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1996), pages 6 & 9 respectively.

underpinning international society he has a very different idea of culture in mind, and a different level of operability, from that of Hans Morgenthau who speaks of 'our culture' in the local and national sense. For Alfred Zimmern 'culture' was an instrument that would create a more civilised form of world politics, whereas in Samuel Huntington's hands, 'culture' is the source of difference between communities in international relations. You can only appreciate these differences by accepting the author's illocutionary force and by contrasting what one author has to say about culture against another under the terms of their living context.

Inevitably, excavating the unspoken assumptions and the different understandings of culture places some people's work in an entirely different light, which has proven to be an exciting, if somewhat unorthodox process. What follows is the story of the historical development and transformation of the idea of culture from an IR perspective. There is an obvious lack of reference in this research to substantive international relations. There are no case studies as such, since it is the body of IR theoretical literature itself that I have taken as my case study. No real attempt has been made to situate this literature in the international setting; the focus has been limited to the idea of culture. The idea of culture has an international story to tell and although mapping the movement of the idea around the world would be an interesting project, the concern here has been with the Anglo-American story, not least because IR is acknowledged to have been an Anglo-American dominated discipline. Theorists and their texts have been selected primarily because they have something to say about culture and are key figures or key representatives in the development of the story of the term 'culture' in IR. At the extremities, we find Alfred Zimmern representing an international version of the Arnoldian concept and Samuel Huntington a parochial version of the essentialist Boasian concept. Huntington was an obvious choice as a contemporary exponent of Boasian thinking, not least because his work has had considerable contemporary impact and could not be ignored. Zimmern, on the other hand, was selected on the grounds that he was perhaps better known to contemporary students than many of his contemporaries, although Gilbert Murray would have served as an equally influential example of inter-war Arnoldian thought. Hans Morgenthau, Martin Wight and Hedley Bull were included to demonstrate the conceptual transformation taking place within the discipline and to usefully illustrate the impact the context has on each

scholars' work as well as to emphasise the key point of this thesis that an author's assumptions about the nature of 'culture' seriously affects their view of international relations more generally. Moreover, the work of Morgenthau and Wight particularly illuminates the differences that existed between American and British scholarship over the concept of culture. There were other scholars who might have been included, notably E.H. Carr, R.J. Vincent, R.B.J Walker, Stephan Chan, and more recently, Alexander Wendt, but who have been excluded for two reasons. First, there is the restriction of space and second, these authors were found to be operating within the prevailing conventional assumptions of culture for their time, albeit with a diversity of theoretical motives and varying degrees of success. In short, although some other scholars are perhaps better known for their association with culture in IR, and Chan is an obvious example in this respect, they were not considered central to the story of the development of culture in IR generally and could be cast aside. That the scholars I have focused on also turn out to be mainstream theorists further confirms my opening claim that the term 'culture' has been employed persistently and often prominently in IR.

The inclusion of Norman Angell might be thought to be somewhat of an anomaly here, since he expressed no interest in culture but was preoccupied with the idea of civilisation. However, there are historical reasons for opening the textual survey of IR with Angell's work. Viewed from within the confines of the discipline, the idea of 'culture' appears to burst on the international scene in the aftermath of the First World War with no prior history. Without some consideration of ideas and debates that existed before the war, it would be easy to think that 'culture' was either some sentimental response to the war itself, or that this was an idea that simply came out of no-where with, apparently, not much theoretical grounding behind it. This is not so; the concept of culture that came to the fore during the inter-war period was much considered and was the outcome of debates surrounding the civilisation concept, and especially biologically determinist versions of the idea of civilisation, which stretched back to the late 19th century. It is only through looking beyond the discipline to the discussions of ideas conducted elsewhere that the appearance of 'culture' in IR begins to make sense, while also giving the discipline a broader foundational explanation other than the orthodox story that this discipline was born as a response to the First World War. Without some understanding of these debates and the

27

context that made 'culture' possible in the 1920s, it is arguable that the significance of the debut of 'culture' during this period would remain under appreciated. Angell's work was very much part of an ongoing process that eventually gave the concept of culture a new and, crucially from an IR perspective, international lease of life. Angell was significantly included to provide a conceptual grounding for accounting for the origins of 'culture' in IR and to demonstrate the importance of this word's historical development overall.

It is not possible to include every theorist and their theories, so, although some deference has been made to the disciplinary canon, there are some notable omissions, some of which have been mentioned above. Literature on 'international cultural relations' has been excluded for reasons of space, which was explained earlier. Similarly, the literature on strategic culture, which, currently, probably represents the largest single area of interest in culture in IR, has not been included. Partly, this was for reasons of space, but also because strategic culture stands as a large body of literature, and one meriting its own storyteller.[38] Finally, the usual and obvious disciplinary 'ports of call' namely, realism, neo-realism, normative theory, post-structuralism, trans-nationalism, globalisation, critical theory and feminism are all absent signposts in this discussion. This is partly because it was not considered appropriate to divide the literature in this way, but also because it is thought that what these theorists do and do not have to say about culture can be accommodated under the framework and findings of the thesis overall. This is to say, we are all 'victims' of the 'conventional standards' of our age.

0.3 - Chapter Preview and Structure

The thesis is organised as simply and as accessibly as was considered possible, which is chronologically, although there were other ways of ordering this research.[39] Dividing the thesis into two parts, context and text, reflects the methodology and was thought to be the most sensible way of managing, what is in other respects, a complex story. It should be

---

[38]   For some insight into this area see, for example, Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, January 1999; & Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Strategic cultures revisited: reply to Colin Gray,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.3, July 1999.

[39]   An alternative structure might have placed theorists who share similar conceptual assumptions together; for example, Hedley Bull might have been more usefully discussed in conjunction with Samuel Huntington.

pointed out that an international, rather than a text-based, version of the history is possible, since the key contributors in the development of the culture concept are commonly recognised as French, British, German and American. However, this would have taken the research beyond the confines of IR itself, and required entrance into the realms of German political theory, not to mention French sociology. Although, I see the value of this approach, I held an IR audience specifically in view. I was mindful of the fact that a review of culture is lacking in IR, unlike anthropology where Roger Keesing and Sherry Ortner's articles are seen as indispensable.[40] Similarly, I have been conscious of the situation that few students in IR are aware of the discipline's 'cultural' heritage. There are rich pickings here for an empiricist and theorist alike, from the 'cultural' activities of the League of Nations to the impact of McDonalds; from theorists who believe 'cultural' exchange will 'foster mutual understanding,' to those who argue that we are 'culturally' incommensurable and need to respect differences.

The story of 'culture' begins with a review of the historiography of the term in Part 1. Chapter 1 details the development of the concept of culture from the late 18th century to 1935, the point at which the Boasian concept was clearly in place in the United States. The origins of the idea of culture are discussed and the distinction between the Arnoldian and the Boasian concepts is drawn. The significance of this distinction is reinforced by briefly indicating where these two concepts have ended up, so to speak. The Arnoldian concept eventually leads to the founding of the discipline of Cultural Studies in Britain, whereas the Boasian concept is inextricably bound up with the establishment of Cultural Anthropology in the United States. By recognising the differences between the two disciplines, it is hoped that the reader will be better able to appreciate the need to maintain the distinction between the two concepts from the start, since the activities of cultural studies scholars and cultural anthropologists are, on the whole, very different.[41] Chapter 2 explores the Boasian concept in more detail from its position in 1935 to the present day. In many respects, this

---

[40] Roger M. Keesing (1974) and Sherry B. Ortner (1984) are both counted as classic reviews of culture in Anthropology.

[41] A reader who was present at the Millennium 25th Anniversary Conference panel on culture will recognise the difference between the two approaches. The panellists, Fred Halliday and Stephan Chan, both represented differing views of culture; Halliday argued that 'culture' was about power, while Chan suggested that culture was more elemental in social existence. It was hardly the case that Halliday spoke against 'culture' and Chan for the concept; instead, both scholars articulated views that expressed the differences between the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Cultural Anthropology.

chapter may seem anomalous in the overall story of culture in IR, since it contains the critical dissection of the idea of culture that is dominant today and appears to 'jump the gun' theoretically. However, this critical dimension to the story rightly follows the historical survey of Chapter 1, in terms of setting the scene. The arguments surrounding essentialist and anti-essentialist positions are laid out in this chapter and will be a useful source of reference for the later chapters, especially Chapters 5 through to 7. Essentialism and anti-essentialism are defined and explored in detail. While accepting that some anti-essentialist criticisms have been useful and extremely pertinent, it becomes apparent that a genuinely anti-essentialist conception of culture would be incapable of speaking about culture in orthodox bounded or individuated terms; which is something that, I believe, ought to be celebrated. In some respects, discussing 'what is wrong with the Boasian concept' is to embark on a hypothetical discussion as far as IR is concerned, since anti-essentialist criticisms have yet to make a major impression on our discipline. Nonetheless, if the trend in anthropology is replicated in IR as it has been in the past, then we can anticipate the appearance of anti-essentialism in the not too distant future.

Having surveyed the historiography of culture, Part 2 begins the survey of IR proper, opening with Chapter 3 and an examination of Norman Angell's text, *The Great Illusion*. This chapter is closely allied to Chapter 1, in that it confirms the importance of the idea of civilisation in founding the discipline of IR, in place of the usual notion of *Idealism*. Angell's text is usually remembered for its elucidation of economic interdependence, but it is his argument against Social Darwinism that draws my attention here. *The Great Illusion* is called upon to confirm the contextual significance of the civilisation concept and the prevalence of evolutionary thought; two issues that had a major impact on the development of culture once the idea of civilisation had been refined. Chapter 4 continues to develop the civilisation thread discussed in Chapter 3, by way of the work of Alfred Zimmern. Taken together, Chapters 3 and 4 confirm the relationship between the concepts of civilisation and culture that is initially discussed in Chapter 1. With the establishment of the League of Nations, and a 'new' conception of civilisation in international relations, 'culture' is seen to acquire a unique and instrumental role in IR theory in Chapter 4. 'Culture' is firmly established in its Arnoldian sense, and is narrowly defined not as the source of difference between communities but as 'gifts' to be exchanged.

This can be seen in Alfred Zimmern's work *Europe in Convalescence* and in *The League of Nations*. Zimmern was a great enthusiast of the idea of 'culture,' both in his theoretical discussions and in his practical work. This makes him an important contributor to culture theory in IR, which may surprise the reader.

The reader may be further surprised by the disclosure in Chapter 5 that Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* is one of the key texts on 'culture' in IR. Not only was Morgenthau greatly interested in culture, so much so that it is a prominent feature of this text, but he was also influenced by American cultural anthropologists. This makes *Politics Among Nations* an important work from a cultural perspective because it marks the debut of the Boasian concept in IR. Overlooking the role of culture in this volume represents a disciplinary injustice, while acknowledging the author's interest in culture seems to add another normative dimension to his work and support A.J.H. Murray's argument for a normative reading of Morgenthau.[42] Despite recognising the significance of culture in Boasian terms in Morgenthau's work, some problems are identified in relationship to the concepts of power and interest, which raise awkward questions as to the role of culture in his theory of international relations. Despite the difficulties, it is clear that the appearance of Boasian thought in this volume marks a significant step in the development of culture in IR. The changing role and conception of culture is further explored in Chapter 6 with its focus on international society theory. This chapter discusses the work of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull, two scholars who reflect the changing British context very well. It is suggested that in order to understand Martin Wight's theory of international society better, we should consider that it is, in all probability, the Arnoldian concept of culture, or 'culture as civility,' informing his work. *Systems of States* and his paper on *Western Values* reveal a complex understanding of culture, but one that is thought could be theoretically useful in the future. In contrast, Hedley Bull is plainly working with the Boasian concept, and it will be suggested that to a considerable extent this accounts for some of the difficulties that Bull had with both Wight's work and his own understanding of international society. *The Anarchical Society* is seen as a marking another significant disciplinary moment for culture, since this text is taken here as confirmation of the end of the Arnoldian era in IR theory.

---

[42]   A.J.H. Murray (1996)

Chapters 7 focuses on Samuel Huntington's controversial 'Clash of civilizations' thesis through his volume, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Despite Huntington's reliance on the term 'civilisation,' it is clearly the concept of culture that underpins his theoretical stance. Of all the theorists under discussion here, Huntington appears as the most Boasian of theorists and his idea of culture is identified as inexcusably essentialist. Huntington's thesis has been criticised from many angles, but it is his conceptualisation of culture that is rigorously (some might say ruthlessly) examined here, with all of the pitfalls that this entails, exposed. In many ways, Chapter 7 works as an extension of Chapter 2, as far as Huntington's work is held to exhibit all of the essentialist flaws inherent in culture theory, although this is thought to be a useful position from which to begin to debate the idea of 'culture' in IR. Finally, what this survey attempts to show is that the similar concerns centred on people, difference, communities and international interaction, have not always been articulated in 'cultural' terms. The presence of both the Boasian and Arnoldian concepts and alternative levels of application raise some important disciplinary questions concerning the place of 'culture' in IR and the fruitfulness of ideas in my view; issues that remain implicit throughout.

CONTEXT

Chapter One

A Short History of the Concepts of 'Culture'

Introduction

The historical development of 'culture' is a complex story, but two things stand out instantly with respect to the overall progression of meanings attached the word. The first is, as the anthropologist Adam Kuper has pointed out, that culture "is always defined in opposition to something else."[1] While the second general observation is that the story of 'culture' contains a significant international dimension. Key to understanding the history of 'culture' is that one group of people have created their idea of culture through rejecting the work and ideas of another set of people, and that the debate over culture has been international. Therefore, it is possible to tell a variety of stories about the notion of 'culture' from a number of viewpoints, each with its own theoretical stance, and it is commonly recognised that the main contributors to this history have been French, German, British and American.[2] What began life as a term borrowed from Italian, *cultura*, by the French, first as *couture* and then *culture*, finally reached England in the early 15th century.[3] As the term spread and gained popularity, it was redefined in the 19th century in Germany, and yet again in the early 20th century in the United States.

Cultura specifically means 'to cultivate' and, in its original sense, merely referred to cultivation of the soil from which the term 'agriculture' derives.[4] However, in the late 18th century the idea of cultivation began to be applied to human beings in addition to the soil. The process that takes the meaning of 'culture' from "pig-farming to Picasso" as Terry Eagleton has put it, is a long one, and one in which the perceived inadequacies of civilisation

---

[1] Adam Kuper (1999), p.14

[2] Adam Kuper draws out the similarities in the various culture stories. See Adam Kuper, *ibid*, Introduction & Part 1.

[3] See Norbert Elias (1939/1978) generally, and Raymond Williams, (1976/1988). pp.87/93

[4] The word 'culture' stems from the Latin word *cultura*, originally derived from another Latin word, *colere* that had a variety of meanings including "inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship." See Oxford English Dictionary (1994), Raymond Williams (1976/1988) p.87

are crucial.[5] At first, the notion of culture, as a matter of human cultivation, was used in conjunction with the concept of civilisation and as a complement to it. Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed that where civilisation was "grounded in cultivation" the result was "polishing" rather than just the mere "varnishing" of a people.[6] As civilisation was seen to progress, 'darkly and satanically,' what Coleridge referred to as 'cultivation' came to be simply called 'culture,' as Raymond Williams has indicated.[7] The role of the French, in influencing linguistic trends, is highly significant here. The French had first introduced the term 'culture' to a wider European and largely aristocratic audience; their deployment of the idea of 'civilisation' was similarly emulated by the nobility before it was taken up across Europe more generally.[8] In France, the concept of civilisation came to embody generic achievement, technical and intellectual progress, first, as a description of French achievement and then as general term associated with industrialising people everywhere.[9] The word 'culture,' however, still referred to matters of individual cultivation. Yet, whereas by the time of the French Revolution there was little discernible difference in manners, habits, interests, or language, between the French aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in France, the same could not be said of German society; and this had major repercussions for the development of the idea of culture, or *kultur* in Germany.

Unlike the French aristocracy, of whom Norbert Elias says they virtually 'colonised elements from other classes,' the German nobility were a discrete and exclusive social

---

[5]   Terry Eagleton (2000), p.1

[6]   In 1830 Coleridge wrote, "But civilisation is itself but a mixed good, if not far more corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished more fitly to be called a varnished than a polished people, where this civilisation is not grounded in cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our humanity." Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'On The Constitution Of Church And State According To The Idea Of Each' (1830), Cited in Raymond Williams (1958/1993), p.61

[7]   Raymond Williams cites the work of John Stuart Mill as indicative of the change from 'cultivation' to 'culture.' Raymond Williams, *ibid*, pp.61-62

[8]   The term civilisation, like that of culture owes much to a Latin root term - *civilis*, meaning 'to make civil' in the legal sense of pertaining to citizens. Under Roman jurisdiction, an act of judgement in law turned a criminal process 'civil'. Although the 'civil' aspect of law is still very much an important aspect of contemporary jurisprudence, it is the notion of 'making civil' in the normative sense that concerns us most here. It is from civil acts, or the French term, *civilité*, for these acts, that civilisation owes its biggest debt.

[9]   Early usages of the term civilisation also implied cultivation of manners (civilisation replaces *civilité*), but the impact of the French Revolution changed this. In France, the term was appropriated as a description for the whole of French society. The advent of Empire, industrialisation, and the scientific revolution, quickly ensured that the concept of civilisation would be associated with those technical attributes and 'superior' qualities found in the Western world. See Norbert Elias (1939/1978), Chapter 1; & Raymond Williams (1958/1993).

group.[10] Indeed, with one or two rare exceptions, the German nobility, who followed French fashion like everyone else, kept its distance from wider society and the intelligentsia.[11] It is significant that as the scattered German intellectuals and middle-classes expanded, they began to develop concepts that reflected their ideas and place in society.[12] It has been said that the "Germans in the name of *Kultur*, opposed the encroachments of *Zivilization*," and this was especially true around the time of the First World War.[13] However, during the 18th and 19th centuries, it is the differences between classes **within** Germany that is having the most significant impact on the development of the concept of *kultur*.[14] Subsequently, the growing German bourgeois society, in its opposition to the nobility, came to reject all things associated with the French, including their linguistic terms. Instead of the concept of civilisation, they developed the idea of *kultur* to describe their way of life and German society's achievements.[15] Inevitably, when the middle classes came to power, they took their concepts, including *kultur*, with them.

We can chart the progression of the idea of *kultur* from its origins in German thought as something that is spiritually located in community to something that can be 'scientifically' examined and explained. However, it is important to note that the early notion of cultivation in human beings (*kultur* in Germany, 'culture' elsewhere) contained an inherent duality that is revealed by the connection to the term *volksgeist*, which combines the notion of 'spirit' (geist) with 'people' (volks). Crudely stated, people have a spirit that is/can be cultivated. The notion of *volksgeist* is, perhaps, most identified with Johann Herder who also linked it to *kultur*, but it is contextually important to note that although Herder associated *kultur* with a particular community of people, he did not conceive of this 'culture' in a fixed and

---

[10]   Norbert Elias, *ibid*, p.21
[11]   Goethe is one exception cited by Elias. Norbert Elias, *ibid*, p.20
[12]   Elias sees this process as one of "self-legitimation." Norbert Elias, *ibid*, p.10
[13]   Alfred G. Meyer, 'Appendix A: Historical notes on ideological aspects of the concept of culture in Germany and Russia', in A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, (1952) p.405
[14]   The German aristocracy, like other European elites, emulated the French. It was mark of elitism in Germany that the nobles even spoke French, all of which served to exclude wider German society. In 1780 Frederick the Great bemoaned the lack of German literature at a time Elias tells us literature was beginning to flower in Germany. Norbert Elias (1939/1978), p.17
[15]   The distinction of *kultur* and culture is maintained here to emphasise the difference between German understanding of the term and Anglo-French conceptions.

unchanging way.[16] Herder's connection between *volks* and *geist* is an important one, because it signifies that the idea of *kultur* had a spirit-like quality, or what anthropologists have come to call a humanist conception of culture.[17] Like *volksgeist*, Coleridge's reference to "the spirit that breathes through a people," similarly evidences the dualism that was associated with the original idea of 'cultivation.'[18] Depending on whether one is placing emphasis on the cultivation of 'the spirit' or 'a people' marks the beginnings of a divergence in cultural thinking. One strand, 'the spirit,' leads to stressing the ideal, humanist qualities and elements that go to make a people, and any people for that matter, while the other strand generates interest in a particular community of people. This distinction becomes pronounced as the 19th century unfolds; while the English and French still conceive of culture as a matter of 'spiritual' and individual cultivation, *kultur* becomes bound up with German nation building and a particular community of people. Whereas in the 18th century *kultur* referred to cultivation and achievement of a specific sort, and one increasingly opposed to the generic notion of 'civilisation,' by the middle of the 19th century *kultur* denoted a specific community's achievements – those of Germanic speaking people. The American anthropologists Albert Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn noted that, in the 1850s, the German scholar Gustav Klemm had dropped those elements associated with "enlightenment," "tradition" and "humanity" that could be found in Herder's work.[19] By the time the Germans have identified *kultur* as a community-based and scientific enterprise, 'culture' means something very different to most of their European neighbours.[20] Certainly

---

[16]   All cultures were linked together in Herder's view; they continued in a 'great chain' and were the local expression of universal traits. More importantly, cultures were not conceived of as fixed entities, but were prone to change. See A. Gillies, (1945), Chapters 6 & 7.

[17]   Herder is often held or "correctly regarded as the father of modern nationalism;" see A. Gilles (1945), p.2. Robert Clark, rightly, rejects this reading: "Herder's idea of "humanity" was incompatible with a "nationally awakened point of view"..." Herder condemned all forms of imperialism and had disagreed with Kant over race, so it is not easy to link him to nationalism, especially in its more virulent form. *Kultur* is not simply a nationalist idea or expression in its early form; as Adam Kuper has convincingly shown, there is more to the early idea of culture than simple nationalism. Robert Clark, (1955), p.336/7 & Chapter 10 generally; also see F.M. Barnard (1969); Adam Kuper (1999), Chapter 1

[18]   Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Essays on His own Times in* The Morning Post *and* The Courier, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), Vol.II, p.94

[19]   A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), p.46

[20]   The reader needs to be aware that *kultur* had acquired nationalist 'precision' by the time of the Second World War. The Nazis' appropriation of the idea of *kultur* not only transformed it into something viciously nationalistic but also overtly politicised it in the process. However, of greater significance, especially when comparing the idea of *kultur* at the time of the First World War to that of the Second World

by the turn of the 20th century, when the term *kultur* is popular in Germany in its community aspect, it is the term 'civilisation' that has captured most popular imaginations in France, Britain and the United States.[21] For these three national communities, at least, the use of the term *civilisation* embodies their conception of values and speaks for their ideas of progress, success and achievement. They define 'culture' narrowly however, associating it with personal qualities, education, individual cultivation and a form of spiritual enlightenment. By the time of the First World War, when the 'Germans had become "notorious" for their alleged insistence on having discovered something superior (*kultur*),' there was no strict correlation between *kultur* as it was understood in Germany and 'culture' as the British, French and Americans defined it.[22] If anything the latter's understanding bears greater similarity with the German term, *bildung*, and this much was true well beyond the First World War period.[23]

Despite its widespread popularity and position as a 'conventional standard,' the 19th century concept of civilisation had spawned many critics who considered it mechanical and lacking spiritual and soulful qualities. During the course of the 19th century, two developments occur. First, culture as a matter of human cultivation comes to stand in opposition to civilisation in a number of different forms and is plainly opposed to civilisation in a humanist way by the time Matthew Arnold put pen to paper. Second, social and political changes within Germany affect the meaning and importance attached to *kultur* by German speaking people. These developments ensured that the inherent duality (of the spirit and people) in the idea of culture was beginning to play itself out into two distinct schools of thought, exemplified here by the work of Matthew Arnold in Britain and Franz Boas in the United States.

War, is the role that the State has come to play in determining this issue. *Kultur* notoriously became a matter of state policy under the Nazis, which did much to discredit the fundamental idea.

[21]   See Norbert Elias, (1939/1978) and Adam Kuper (1999).

[22]   A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), pp.51/3

[23]   *Bildung* means education and especially the spiritual education and formation of individuals. Norbert Elias offers a good discussion of the distinction between civilisation and *kultur*. Norbert Elias (1939/1978), pp.3/5. On *kultur* and *bildung* see Adam Kuper, (1999) pp.30/1

1.1 – Matthew Arnold (1822-1888): Humanism and Cultural Studies

In 1869, the British social commentator and literary critic, Matthew Arnold published his work *Culture and Anarchy*, in which 'England was diagnosed,' in the words of Samuel Lipman, as "Philistine and commercial."[24] *Culture and Anarchy* was an important and influential text in its day. From my point of view, this text is especially significant for the humanist conception of culture that it expressed, although it is an easily exacted criticism that the actual content of culture in Arnold's conception remained largely vague and unspecified.[25] In the preface of the book, nonetheless, he laid out his whole scheme.

> The whole scope of the essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; **culture being a pursuit of our total perfection** by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, **the best which has been thought and said in the world**, and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically.[26](my emphasis)

The object being rejected was civilisation and the 'vulgar' conduct of life that Arnold thought it had created. Industrialisation may have brought technical benefits but it had undermined spiritual values and elements of 'good-quality' in British society. Naturally, arguments along the lines of 'good-quality' and 'the best of' things are susceptible to normative and ethnocentric criticism today, but in view of the contextual methodology, this does not concern me here. The key point is that it would have been obvious to Arnold and his generation that Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote 'good' poetry, that fed the mind and soul in a manner that Victorian Music Hall ditties could not and would never achieve.

---

[24]   Samuel Lipman in Matthew Arnold (1869/1994), p.xiii

[25]   It is difficult to discern the content of Arnold's idea of culture, since he was prone, as Gerald Graff has pointed out, to 'repeating certain catchphrases.' It is therefore, easier to 'identify what Arnold was against rather than what he was for.' Gerald Graff in Matthew Arnold, *ibid*, pp.186/201

[26]   Matthew Arnold, *ibid*, p.5

1.1.i – The Pursuit of Perfection

Arnold famously characterised culture as 'sweetness and light,' 'the pursuit of perfection,' and as the means by which individuals could better themselves.[27] Culture, in Arnold's terms, represents 'the best of everything that has been thought and said.' The substantive content of 'the best that had been thought and said' would inevitably cause difficulty, giving rise, even among his contemporaries, to accusations of elitism.[28] Nonetheless, Arnold did tap into a widely held belief (even today) that some things are not only better than others, but are intrinsically good in themselves and are, therefore, good for everyone. Civilisation, on the other hand, was too 'mechanical' or artificially constructed; it was destroying all that was organic, natural and good. The link between organicism and the idea of culture was an increasingly popular connection in the 19th century and clearly added to culture's conceptual appeal given its etymological heritage in 'cultivation.'[29] What is perhaps overlooked or neglected is the fact that Arnold drew upon German romantic or counter-enlightenment ideas in addition to his critical observations on the state of British civilisation. Arnold was clearly drawing on the idea of *volksgeist* through the influence by Gotthold Lessing, Johann Herder and Wilhem von Humboldt, whom he acknowledges in his work.[30] Critics of civilisation, like Arnold, believed that humanity could aspire to better things than civilisation was able to deliver. For Arnold, civilisation was only creating 'philistine' and 'vulgar' people, whereas salvation, as he saw it, lay with 'culture' in the form of 'the pursuit of perfection.' Plainly, there is a qualitative and hierarchic content to this concept. It is clear and important to note that culture is defined in very different terms from those we associate with its meaning today and specifically draws upon the humanist qualities located in German thought – definitely more *geist* than *volks*.

---

[27]   It was Arnold's view that if sufficient number of individuals pursued culture in his terms and bettered themselves, this would inevitably result in the 'spiritual' transformation of English society overall. Matthew Arnold (1869/1994), especially the 'Conclusion,' although it is a persistent theme throughout the book.

[28]   John Bright is an obvious example in this respect. Arnold even quotes John Bright's contemptuous comment, "People who talk about what they call *culture*!... by which they mean a smattering of the two dead languages of Greek and Latin." Matthew Arnold, *ibid*, p.28

[29]   As Raymond Williams points out, "The contrast between 'grows' and 'made' was to become the contrast between 'organic' and 'mechanical' which lies at the very centre of a tradition which has continued to our own day." Raymond Williams (1958/1993), p.37

[30]   Matthew Arnold (1869/1994), see pages 48 and 85.

40

What is particularly interesting about Arnold is that he not only echoed the sentiments of Coleridge and other Romantic thinkers before him, but that *Culture and Anarchy* also synthesised an approach towards culture and education that would influence many generations to come. The popular assumption persists that education is not simply about absorbing information and passing examinations, but entails enlightening students and turning out 'well rounded adults' in the humanist sense. What is more, this idea of culture requires effort, hence its association with education for Arnold. Acquiring 'culture' is a hard won accomplishment in this conceptualisation. Moreover, until very recently, when the British thought about culture, they were more likely to think in Arnoldian terms and of the Royal Ballet than the 'whole way of life' of a specific group of people.[31] Indeed, crucially, from a contextual point of view, Arnold would not have recognised the 'way of life' definition of culture. The suggestion that the 'working class,' let alone 'primitives,' had 'culture' would have been viewed, at best, as a joke by Arnold and his followers, if they understood the idea at all. 'Culture' was a restricted normative issue for Arnold and it is important for the reader to recognise that the 'qualitative' concerns Arnold expressed in *Culture and Anarchy* have been a persistent feature of British intellectual life.

In 1930, F.R. Leavis published his *Mass civilisation and minority culture*, which might be seen as an updated version of *Culture and Anarchy*, but certainly can be viewed as an early work in the Cultural Studies idiom. Where Arnold had considered culture in terms of the contributions from various classes, Leavis focused on mass society, an issue that was becoming prominent by the 1930s. Similarly concerned with the question of quality, Leavis discussed the widespread consumption of mass media, and concluded that this 'mass culture' was of lesser value than something he called 'minority culture.'[32] Leavis took his lead from Arnold in terms of normative preference; like Arnold's view of civilisation, Leavis

---

[31] It is arguable that up until the 1970s, the British thought about the differences between themselves and others more readily in class and race terms, and that culture was commonly conceived of in Arnoldian terms. In 1981 Raymond Williams distinguished three contemporary meanings of culture: 1) a developed state of mind (being cultured), 2) the processes of this development, and 3) the means of these processes. He also recognised these three co-existing "with the anthropological and extended sociological use [of culture] to indicate the 'whole way of life' of a distinct people..." However, Williams argued "[i]n our time," (the volume was first published in 1981) the third category (the means of process) was the "most common general meaning" of the word. Raymond Williams (1981/1989), p.11

[32] Leavis is writing for the people who have read, or are aware of the Lynds' famous study of Middletown and have been frightened by what they find. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd,

considered that mass culture was "levelling-down" society.[33] Indeed, the whole purpose of Leavis's study was to demonstrate that 'culture' was being destroyed as the result of mass society. 'Culture' in both Leavis and Arnold is a qualitative, enlightening and spiritual matter; it is the means by which individuals can be transformed for the better and ultimately the whole nature of society itself. The impact of mass consumption and the mechanical advance of civilisation inevitably generated new forms of intellectual activity, but these intellectual developments, focused as they were on 'the mass,' were unconcerned with the elitist conceptions of society championed by Leavis and Arnold. An intellectual backlash began in the 1950s that positively celebrated the achievements of the 'vulgar' working class and subsequently led to the foundation of a new discipline; the discipline of Cultural Studies.

1.1.ii – Giving Voice to 'Vulgarity'

Cultural Studies scholars would come to revel in the amount of 'vulgarity' Leavis unearthed, by, arguably, 'bringing the bingo players back in' and standing Arnoldian assumptions on their head. As John Storey has pointed out,

> Although cultural studies cannot (or should not) be reduced to the study of popular culture, it is certainly the case that the study of popular culture is central to the project of cultural studies. [34]

This is a proposition that Arnold, Leavis and to some extent T.S. Eliot would have found an anathema. Clearly, Cultural Studies owes its foundation as a discipline to the discernment and rejection of the alleged elitism inherent in the Arnoldian concept of culture. However, perhaps a more significant departure from Arnoldian concerns is revealed by its own underlying project, which is of a different political nature to that of Arnold's. Whereas Arnold developed his idea of culture in order to criticise civilisation generally and the 'present state' of the English condition in particular, Cultural Studies scholars make other

---

Middletown: A Study in American Culture, (London: Constable and Co. Ltd. 1929). See Adam Kuper, (1999) p.44 for comments on Leavis and the Lynds.

[33] Norman Tebbit might stand as a more familiar contemporary figure who has espoused fears concerning the destruction or 'levelling down' of British culture. On October 7, 1997, Norman Tebbit expressed his opposition to 'multi-culturalism' at a fringe meeting of the Conservative Party Conference for fear of it destroying British culture. See 'Anger as Tebbit questions loyalties of 'two-nation' immigrants', *The Independent*, 8th October 1997.

[34] John Storey ed., (1996) p.1

kinds of critique. As Alan O'Connor argues, Cultural Studies is a matter of 'political commitment' and this has led John Storey to suggest that

> [a]ll the basic assumptions of cultural studies are Marxist. This is not to say that all practitioners of cultural studies are Marxists, but that cultural studies is itself grounded in Marxism. [35]

In this respect the discipline of Cultural Studies marks a radical departure from Arnold's concept of culture, but one that nonetheless, could **only** come into being as a consequence of rejecting the work of Arnold and his successors produced. Drawing on neo-Gramscian ideas, Cultural Studies scholars are interested in culture as a site of contest between the divisions in society, whether these are class, gender, or racially based. In many respects, culture becomes a secondary issue for these scholars; it is the medium for demonstrating other concerns - notably all forms of power relationships. It is well known that Cultural Studies grew out of literary criticism, principally from the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, but T.S. Eliot arguably cleared the way for their kind of approach in 1948 with his famous *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*.[36] When discussing what the term 'culture' 'embraces,' Eliot, famously, wrote

> It includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar.[37]

In a clearly anti-Arnoldian move, Eliot argued that culture was not simply the 'best of everything that has been thought or said,' but that it simply was everything that is known and done, right down to 'boiled cabbage cut up into sections.'[38] Arnold would have been appalled, and it is no mere coincidence, I think, that Eliot begins his 'famous list' with a reference to Derby Day, since Derby Day similarly appears in *Culture and Anarchy* as the evidence of 'all the vice and hideousness' that civilisation has created.[39] What is

---

[35]   John Storey ed., *ibid*, p.3
[36]   See Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, (Harmondsworth. Penguin. 1957 reprint 1990), Raymond Williams (1958/1993) and T.S. Eliot (1948/1949)
[37]   T.S. Eliot, *ibid*, p.31
[38]   T.S. Eliot acknowledged the anthropological concept and Edward B. Tylor's suggestion that it was a 'whole way of life,' but Eliot does not consider it useful with respect to "highly developed societies." T.S. Eliot, *ibid*, p.22. I discuss E.B. Tylor in the next section.
[39]   Matthew Arnold (1869/1994), p.40

particularly significant in Eliot's work is that he continues to deploy the idea of culture as a critical tool, very much in keeping with the 'traditional' English political vein.

Eliot applies culture as a critical tool, not simply to society in general, but to Arnold's ideas in particular. Like many of his predecessors (including Arnold and Leavis), what troubles Eliot are those things that are deemed to count as indicative of the 'good life.' He shares with Arnold the belief that humanity can aspire to a better mental and spiritual condition, but he takes issue with those things that have been determined in the Arnoldian sense as qualifying as 'culture,' as would future Cultural Studies scholars. Eliot is not as quick as Arnold is to dismiss Derby Day as a vulgar event or as evidence of levelling down culture. However, Eliot's inclusion of 'boiled cabbage' and claim that culture is a 'whole way of life' did not prevent him from ranking activities and events hierarchically, obviously illustrated in his need to separate elite culture from the mass. The ideals of culture that Eliot wished to preserve are to be found, he says, amongst the upper classes; grounds for distinction that, ironically, Arnold would not have accepted since 'culture' was, in his view, available to everyone who was determined enough to acquire it. Significantly, Eliot (in spite of all of his criticisms) ends up with an arguably more elitist conception of what should be counted as a good or ideal way of cultural life than Arnold: a conception informed, ultimately, by Christian ideals and protected by the aristocracy. Arnold at least considered all classes capable of 'enculturation,' to use the more appropriate contemporary term.

Raymond Williams and other Cultural Studies scholars, conversely, took Eliot's original suggestion that 'culture' included everything more seriously than the author himself, and sought to demonstrate that even the 'mass' had 'culture' of value. In a broad anti-elitist move, scholars like Williams argue that 'everything' is culture; they make no normative distinctions, on the grounds of 'culture' itself, between activities and products in the way Arnold, Leavis and Eliot, did. The original disciplinary problem of Cultural Studies was over the place of mass/popular 'culture' in British society; its scholars rejected notions of 'culture' founded on elitism and hierarchy. Cultural Studies came into being through criticising and rejecting the normative basis of Arnold's thinking, and the discipline's scholars count playing bingo as much as reading Shakespeare as 'culture.' Obviously, given the anti-Arnoldian stance of Cultural Studies, the discipline has worked with other normative assumptions and epistemological schemes. Whereas Arnold's thinking was underpinned

44

with humanist and enlightenment ideas, the content of which was vaguely specified, Cultural Studies scholars have articulated much clearer concerns. Scholars are no longer interested in the qualitative role 'culture' plays in society in the way Arnold was, instead they are largely interested in how 'culture' comes to take the form it does and this generates an alternative set of interests in terms of its relevance, change, and influence. As Storey noted above, interest in culture has been informed by a Marxist approach, but feminist and post-modernist critiques have found voice in Cultural Studies work. In terms of theory, these authors are less interested in culture as a primary issue, but are interested in discourses and power relationships that have the capacity to generate and shape 'culture,' especially 'popular culture.'

Cultural Studies has yet to make a major impact on IR, but there is a clear instance of this type of research that may herald the beginnings of a new approach in the discipline – namely Jutta Weldes's article on *Star Trek*.[40] What is interesting about Weldes's article is that it exhorts us to 'go cultural', but it clearly does so with a particular idea of culture in mind. Weldes did not watch Star Trek for what it had to tell her about the habits, traits, ethos and world-view, or 'whole way of life' of the people who made it; neither did she watch Star Trek because she considered it an example of the 'best of everything' or an instance of 'vulgar mass culture.' Weldes watched Star Trek for what it had to tell her about the power of American foreign policy discourse to manifest itself in another medium in society and is, in this sense, a good example of work in the Cultural Studies idiom. Cultural Studies work may be the antipathy of what Arnold envisaged, but it is nonetheless a distant relative of the humanist approach. Although barely recognisable today, it is important for the reader to grasp the historiography of the Cultural Studies approach since it can easily be mistaken for the alternative conceptual approach employed by anthropologists. There may be a passing resemblance between works produced by scholars in each discipline employing the term 'culture,' but the conceptual differences are not merely subtle, they are profound. The point of conceptual difference is clearly visible when one considers the theoretical basis upon which work has been constructed and the origins, motives and aims of scholars reflecting upon culture as an idea. The concept of culture has consistently played a normative role in its general history within Britain and served as a tool for criticising certain

---

[40]   Jutta Weldes (1999)

elements or developments within British society. In this respect Stuart Hall, John Storey, F.R. Leavis, and T.S. Eliot share some basic principles in common with each other and with Matthew Arnold himself, despite any obvious differences and claims to the contrary. 'Culture' serves a certain scholarly and critical purpose, and, in this sense, being persuaded to 'go cultural' in the manner of Weldes for example, is hardly a motiveless proposition. Arnold may have been "priggish," as Raymond Williams described him, but he genuinely believed that 'culture' in the form of 'sweetness and light' would save society from the 'vulgarity' civilisation had constructed.[41] Cultural Studies scholars employ the idea of 'culture' to expose other forms of social 'problems' and to reveal the hidden power and discourse that lie behind and within a whole variety of practices, products, and events.

In spite of the many criticisms, the importance of Arnold's contribution lies in attributing to culture the notion that it was 'the best of everything that has been thought and said in the world.' It was a notion explicitly concerned with the quality of life; an issue thought to be threatened by the mechanical advance of civilisation. Arnold's idea of culture depends on the openness and accessibility of education, and, furthermore, contains the seeds of universal application. The same could not be said of T.S. Eliot's view of culture when it actually came to down it, since, in his view, good quality culture and the guardians of it were notoriously aristocratic. Although Arnold criticised each class for its weaknesses and failings, he did not consider it beyond the capabilities of any class or individual member to acquire 'culture' or become 'cultured,' as we might better understand his ideas today. Culture was not rooted in difference or a specific community for Arnold, it embodied the best of everything human beings had produced **in the world**; already, we can glimpse some of the attraction for IR in this notion with its international element. We may criticise Arnold's idea of culture for its obvious ethnocentrism and elitism readily today, but there is a potential universalism underwriting his thought. All human beings, given the right education and environment, would recognise the qualitative value and importance of 'culture.' 'Culture' speaks with a universal voice, from and to all human beings. Indeed, the very same thesis can be located in Herder's idea of *humanitat*.[42]

---

[41]   Raymond Williams (1958/1993), p.116
[42]   Herder had an international outlook, he advocated *Humanitat* or 'league of humanity,' as the means by way of which individuals could bring together and share their common humanity. "The local and the

Herder's personal experience of reading Shakespeare has precisely the same relevance to culture that Arnold's thesis advocates. Herder tells us that it was through reading Shakespeare that he felt that he not only came to understand the English to some extent, but that he also understood himself and his own community better and saw it in a new light.[43] 'Culture,' as conceived by Arnold and Herder, *is* Shakespeare and the impact reading him has; there is no hint here of any difficulty involved in exchanging Shakespeare for Goethe, quite the contrary. It is only by reading the best of everything, including both Shakespeare and Goethe, that the benefits of 'culture' as art, literature, and intellectual achievement, can be derived, not only for an individual but also for the whole of society. 'Culture' is not associated with difference in the Arnoldian conception. The inherent cosmopolitanism within this, the Arnoldian conception of culture, will play a significant role in the thinking of IR theorists, especially those scholars of the inter-war period who saw a potential in the aspirations of the humanist idea and applied it at the international level.

1.2 - Franz Boas (1858-1943): The Scientific Origins of Cultural Anthropology

In 1952, A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn suggested that the modern anthropological concept of culture originated in 1871 with Edward B. Tylor and his publication of *Primitive Culture*. [44] Tylor opened *Primitive Culture* with a much quoted and famous definitional statement,

> Culture or Civilisation, 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.[45]

Tylor specifically acknowledged the work of the German scholar Gustav Klemm in this volume, which led Kroeber and Kluckhohn to argue that Tylor deserved all the more credit

---

universal in humanity are fused together" in *humanitat*. A. Gillies (1945), p.106 and Chapter 8 for a general discussion.

[43]   See A. Gillies, *ibid*, especially Chapter 5 & Robert Clarke (1955), Chapter 5.

[44]   Edward B. Tylor (b.1832-d.1917) took the first, British, academic chair in anthropology at Oxford in 1896. *Primitive Culture* is regarded as an important anthropological text and appeared, interestingly enough, in the same year as Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man*. It is worth noting that *Primitive Culture* was published some three years after Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, and over a decade after Darwin had published his controversial *Origin of the Species*.
A.L Kroeber & Clyde Kluckhohn (1952). Stephanie Lawson has made this connection between the origins of the concept and Tylor, in IR. Stephanie Lawson (1998), p.79

[45]   Edward B. Tylor (1871/1903), p.1

for "his sharp and successful conceptualization of culture, and for beginning his greatest book with a definition of culture," since, in their view, Klemm had employed the term 'culture' ambiguously.[46] However, there are a number of problems with Kroeber and Kluckhohn's view of the origins of the modern anthropological concept, which will be discussed below. It is only through demonstrating that Tylor's understanding of 'culture' was very similar to Matthew Arnold's that the distinction between the humanist and anthropological concepts becomes transparent. It is also through discussing the problems Tylor generates that the reader can appreciate why I will be following George Stocking's suggestion that the conceptual origins are better attributed to Franz Boas than they are to Tylor.

1.2.i – One Culture or Many?

One can make too much of Tylor's definition of culture as marking the origins of the 'modern' concept as the anthropologist George Stocking has argued.[47] The most obvious problem with accepting *Primitive Culture* as marking the origins of the modern concept is that Kroeber and Kluckhohn conveniently overlooked the ambiguity in Tylor's work and the fact that he opened his definition with the words, "culture or civilisation." Although, if one ignores the term 'civilisation' in the above statement, Tylor does offer a coherent definition of culture as a 'whole way of life' and this has undoubtedly proven very attractive for anthropologists. Indeed, in Kroeber and Kluckhohn's view, the key development was Tylor's foresight to link the notion of culture to a 'whole way of life,' a point that T.S. Eliot also drew upon in his work. However, Tylor's notion of a 'whole way of life' turns out to be not much of a departure from Matthew Arnold's conception of culture, and the same can be said of Eliot's work as well.[48] Further, as we shall see in the following Chapter, the 'way

---

[46]   A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), p.46
[47]   See George Stocking Jr. (1968/1982), Chapter 4
[48]   Although, it is significant that T.S. Eliot acknowledged the anthropological concept of culture, explicitly quoting Tylor in this respect, he did make it plain that he considered Tylor's definition of culture only suitable for 'primitive' societies. In order to examine modern industrial societies, Eliot was looking to develop other, or as he saw it, more complex, conceptual arrangements. Further, it is clear that Eliot only employed Tylor's suggestion that culture was a whole way of life in order to criticise Arnold's elitist view of culture. T.S. Eliot (1948/1949), p.22

of life' definition, much beloved by Tylor, Kroeber, Kluckhohn, Eliot *et al.*, proves to be a red herring in the story of how the modern concept of culture came to be used.

Although Tylor clearly makes a connection with *kultur* in his work and specifically attributes it to Gustav Klemm, he was not exclusively accessing German ideas in this respect, as Arnold's reference to German scholars amply demonstrated. Tylor's definition was a catch-all one, and perhaps significantly so, for it is important to bear in mind that unlike subsequent scholars, say for example cultural anthropologists, Oswald Spengler, or Samuel Huntington, the idea of evolution rather than the idea of culture is Tylor's central concept. Tylor's major interest, in keeping with many scholars of the late Victorian period, was evolutionary thought and this, in itself, has significant implications for the development of the actual anthropological concept of culture.[49] Whereas Matthew Arnold's contribution in defining culture is often overlooked in Anthropology, the role of Tylor, in this respect, can be over-stated.[50] As Stocking convincingly illustrates, Tylor did not add much of substance to the idea of culture that Arnold had already established. What is particularly noticeable in Tylor is that he uses 'culture' in the singular sense, which, according to Stocking, is indicative of the Arnoldian precepts. There are few uses of the term 'culture' in the plural sense before 1900 (after Tylor), and in the sense that provides 'the cornerstone' of anthropology, so to speak.[51] In terms of a contextual analysis, this is an important point and one not to be taken lightly. Culture is still in Tylor's view very much a matter of higher pursuit, but something that he wanted to demonstrate was the outcome of progressive (evolutionary) development. Culture still relates to art, literature and intellectual achievement (the best of everything), and he does not detract too far from this essentially Arnoldian idea.[52]

---

[49] It is important to note that during the late Victorian period evolutionary thought covered a wide spectrum of ideas, from the explicit biological theory of Charles Darwin to ideas derived from Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's theory of acquired characteristics that stressed both environmental influence and biological inheritance. Adam Kuper has suggested that most late Victorian anthropologists were working with Lamarckian, rather than Darwinian evolutionary schema. As Kuper says, "There is a paradox here, for Darwin's triumph stimulated a very un-Darwinian anthropology... those untrained in biology were very likely to prefer a Lamarckian to a Darwinian view of evolution, if, indeed, they recognized the differences." Adam Kuper (1988), p.2

[50] See for example, John Beattie (1964/1993); Elvin Hatch (1973); A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952).

[51] See George Stocking Jr. (1968/1982), Chapter 4

[52] See George Stocking, *ibid*, Chapter 4

Stocking indicates that all of Tylor's usages of 'culture' are *"fundamentally normative,"* but Tylor conducts his thinking against an evolutionary backdrop.[53] Stocking also points out that 'a hierarchy of values' were "central to Tylor's ethnology," as they were in Arnold's idea of culture and the civilisation concept.[54] In addition, and further commenting on Tylor's linking of the notion of culture to a 'way of life,' it would be a mistake, Stocking says, to think that Arnold's conception of culture did not include the idea of 'a way of life,' indeed, it was designed precisely for these purposes. Arnold's idea of culture opposed one way of life created by civilisation and hoped to replace it with his own conception of a way of life ordered by 'the best of everything.' The profound differences between Arnold and Tylor are conceptual in so far as they explicitly concern each scholar's view on the current state of their society. Whereas Arnold was preoccupied with criticising the civilisation concept, Tylor embraced the new, scientific evolutionary thinking and it is here that the important conceptual differences between the two scholars can be located. These scholars do not differ so much in their understanding of 'culture.' The point made by Stocking, rightly in my view, is that, at this stage in the historiography of 'culture,' the concept owes more to Arnold's work than that of Tylor. Stocking suggests that Tylor

> simply took the contemporary humanist idea of culture and fitted it into the framework of progressive social evolutionism. One might say he made Matthew Arnold's culture evolutionary.[55]

According to Stocking, Tylor's definition "lacked certain elements crucial to the modern concept;" these 'crucial elements' include, "historicity, plurality, integration, behavioural determinism, and relativity."[56] The significant conceptual break comes, in Stocking's view, not with Tylor but with the work of Franz Boas, a German-Jewish émigré to the United States and the commonly recognised founder of the discipline of Cultural Anthropology.[57] Stocking locates the qualities 'crucial to the modern anthropological concept,' listed above, in Boas's work.[58] What is particularly special about Boas is that he

---

[53]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p.82
[54]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p.73
[55]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p87
[56]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p.200
[57]   Founding Cultural Anthropology should not to be confused with Anthropology as such, since clearly Anthropology existed before Boas, as the work of John Wesley Powell demonstrates.
[58]   See George Stocking (1968/1982), p.230

manages to connect two worlds in a third, and he marks this connection in a profound and unique way.[59] Overtly stated, Boas employs the basic German community based concept of *kultur* to argue against the influence of British evolutionary anthropology propounded by Tylor and his followers in the United States. In so doing, he paved the way for a new discipline and expanded the scientific study of 'culture.' According to Stocking, Boas's work not Tylor's has had the greater influence on the way we think about culture today. As the anthropologist Joel Kahn has remarked, it is fundamentally the Boasian concept that most people rely upon today and that even cultural revivalists have, to a considerable extent, employed in their work.[60]

Boas was raised in German *kultur*; among his own influences and teachers in Germany were Adolf Bastian, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Rudolf Virchow, and Theobald Fischer, all of whom were themselves influenced by German romantic philosophy, especially that of Herder.[61] Boas came from a liberal Jewish background, but his experience of anti-Semitism and the fact that he could not procure an academic post seem to have been influential in his decision to pursue fieldwork, as well as on his thinking. His conceptual departure from the German concept of *kultur* is not an obviously dramatic one. Indeed, Stocking discerns no sharp break in Boas, but suggests that his viewpoint developed slowly out of his "total life experience."[62] The implications of this unfolding of the culture concept in scientific terms were profound for American anthropological work, while his actual debut in American academic life could not have been more inauspicious.

Late 19th century American Anthropology, as elsewhere, was dominated by evolutionary thinking and especially Lamarckian ideas.[63] It is important to note that all kinds of differences and evolutionary theory provided a major area for debate in the late 19th and early 20th century. Much of the work generated by the many evolutionary theories bore

---

[59]   Boas embarked on fieldwork in Baffin Island in 1883, and then travelled to British Columbia in 1886 when he decided to emigrate to the United States.
[60]   Joel Kahn (1989)
[61]   Boas was drawn to the work of both Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt early in his career. He was 'influenced by Bastian the ethnologist and the anatomist Virchow while he was in Berlin,' and studied geography under Fischer at Kiel. For a more detailed survey, see George Stocking (1996) and Adam Kuper (1988) Chapter 7.
[62]   George Stocking (1968/1982), p.157
[63]   Stocking suggests that Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's conception of the processes of biological evolution were well suited to the behavioural sciences. Lamarckian thinking clearly influenced Herbert

the influence of British scholars. Charles Darwin is an obvious name here, but the work of Francis Galton and Herbert Spencer, arguably had a greater impact on social theory. Edward Tylor, however, was very much a key scholar in the field of anthropology and had strong working connections with prominent American scholars, including the head of the Bureau of American Ethnology, John Wesley Powell. Shortly after his arrival in America, Boas famously criticised Otis T. Mason for his evolutionary layout of the U.S. National Museum.[64] Boas not only considered the layout of the museum arbitrary, he also thought it 'bad science' in view of his scientific training in Germany. Boas did not simply reject the museum's display layout; he was challenging the prevailing scientific paradigm. More importantly, as Joel Kahn, in summarising Stocking's work, has stated, "in breaking with evolutionism, Boas played a part in the invention of a new concept, albeit one with an old name."[65] The break with evolutionism, or more accurately biological determinism, is a significant development and it is worth emphasising for the reader that this particular American conceptual break led to the formation of a 'new concept' with 'an old name.'[66]

1.2.ii – Establishing A New Concept

Every commentator on Boas is agreed on two things. First, that he trained an extraordinary number of students, including many native scholars and some of the most notable anthropologists the United States has known, for example, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Alfred Kroeber, Edward Sapir and Melville Herskovits. This supports the claim that Boas founded the discipline of Cultural Anthropology in the United States. Second, everyone agrees that Boas collected vast amounts of data, which has led to the misleading conclusion that he did not do much theorising or make a significant contribution to anthropology.[67]

Spencer in Britain and John Wesley Powell, Frank Ward, John Dewey and Woodrow Wilson in the United States. George Stocking, *ibid*, Chapter 10.

[64] Franz Boas, 'The Occurrence of Similar Inventions in Areas Widely Apart,' *Science*, Vol.9, 485-486, 1887, and 'Museums of Ethnology and Their Classification,' *Science*, Vol.9, 587-589, 1887. See George Stocking Jr. (1974), pp.57/8 & pp.61/7. Adam Kuper also discusses this dispute. Adam Kuper (1988), pp.130/132

[65] Joel Kahn (1989), p.6

[66] Boas did continue to employ Larmarckian ideas and race theory, which seems to cause some critics difficulty. See, for example, Kamala Visweswaran (1998).

[67] Boas' work has been much maligned over the years, for example by Marvin Harris, Elvin Hatch and Albert Kroeber. However, as Judith Berman has pointed out, much of the criticism levelled at Boas has

Whatever the view of Boas's contribution, it would have to be conceded that even at a minimum level, through the sheer number of students he trained and volume of data he collected, his legacy in both these respects was extremely rich. It is plausible to suggest, as Stocking does, that much of Boas's thinking and influence is easily and obviously observable through the work his students went onto produce. Significantly, many of his students "revered him as a "founder" of their discipline, and contextually speaking this is an important point, since it is illustrative of his influence.[68] Many of the students would be criticised for relativism, since the scientific study of local communities with its focus on their particular 'way of life' came to be a distinctive and inherent feature of the anthropological concept and the work of Ruth Benedict and Melville Herskovits in particular comes to mind here. Yet, it is important to point out that Boas himself advocated diffusionism, not relativism and in this respect, Boas could not be called a Boasian.

All of the Boasians however, students and mentor included, shared a commitment to cultural determinism and a belief in the primacy of 'culture' in human activity. Cast in different terms, this is the nature-nurture debate and, through this debate, the idea of 'culture' came to acquire a holistic influence over communities. The commitment to cultural determinism explicitly reflected Boas's ethical opposition to evolutionism, and specifically that brand of evolutionary thinking that Mason's museum layout, and Edward Tylor more obviously, represented. As George Stocking points out,

> Turn-of-the-century social scientists were evolutionists almost to a man, and their
>
> ideas on race cannot be considered apart from their evolutionism.[69]

Whereas in the 18th century the idea of civilisation had been thought to be the destiny of the whole of humanity, by the 19th century a different set of assumptions had come to prevail. As the idea of civilisation developed and Empires expanded, the co-existence of 'civilised' white Europeans with 'uncivilised savages' became, necessarily, untenable.[70] A key question for 19th century thinkers was why people were different; the answer to this question

---

misunderstood his anthropological work and its subtle theorising. Judith Berman in George Stocking ed. (1996)

[68]   George Stocking, (1968/1982), p.196

[69]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p.112

[70]   As Stocking points out, this "change from "civilization" to "race" can be seen as a development of the idea of civilization itself." George Stocking, *ibid*, p37

"was increasingly to be found," as Stocking indicates, "in "race"."[71] According to Ivan Hannaford, from 1890 onwards, evolutionary theory had become biologically (racially) determinist and was closely associated with the concept of civilisation.[72] Where Arnold had attacked civilisation from a humanist point of view at a time when most of his contemporaries were preoccupied with evolutionary thinking, Boas and his students attacked this dominant ideology from other perspectives – the 'scientific' and ethical. The cultural relativism identified in the work of some Boasians requires contextualising in this respect. When set against the dominance of racial and hierarchical thinking in the early 20th century, the relativism certain Boasians espoused can be read more sympathetically as premised on admirable intentions. Ruth Benedict, for example, expressed particularly strong views about the equal validity of all forms of local values and particular 'patterns of living,' which stood in sharp contrast to the unsympathetic ideology of 'civilised' superiority and developmental progress.[73] Significantly, Boas and his students were committed to countering racist argument and epistemology, most notably by confronting the biological determinists, evolutionary thinking and especially in 1920s America, the popular Eugenics Movement.[74] As Derek Freeman indicates

> In the mid 1920s the nature-nurture controversy, which had begun in earnest in about 1910, was still very much alive. [75]

From the moment of his arrival in the United States, Boas attacked evolutionism. He did not think that explanations based on heredity were wholly capable of accounting for the differences between human communities, some space, he considered, must be allowed for environmental influence. The nature of the role the environment performed in people's lives was an issue that attracted widespread attention, and one that drew parallel interest in IR, as we shall see in Chapter 3.[76] Boas launched his attack against biological determinism in 1916, while at Boas's instigation, his students Albert Kroeber and Robert Lowie issued

---

[71]   George Stocking, *ibid*, p.35
[72]   Ivan Hannaford (1996), see Chapter 10 especially.
[73]   Ruth Benedict, (1935)
[74]   For a clear overview see Derek Freeman (1983/1996), especially Chapters 1-4
[75]   Derek Freeman, *ibid*, p.3
[76]   Boas did not rule out some form of meta-theoretical explanation entirely. However, he made it quite plain that he was collecting data for future generations to speculate on: "before we seek what is common to all culture, we must analyze each culture," he said. Cited in George Stocking, (1968/1982), p.212

"intellectual manifestos" in more strident tones in 1917.[77] The differences of opinion over nature and nurture became more extremely expressed and the debates increasingly acrimonious; the debate between the Boasians and the Eugenics Movement was especially bitter. However, thanks in no small part to the work of the Boasians, by the 1930s the controversy had been all but resolved. The publication that is widely accepted as banging the final Boasian nail in the evolutionist's coffin, so to speak, was Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*.[78]

During the late 1920s it was clear that the cultural determinists were gaining ground against evolutionary thinking in anthropology, and this much was reinforced by the public mood in the United States itself. America took what can best be described as a culturally relativist turn during the 1920s, from a generic view of what America was towards, what Walter Benn Michaels has described as, a nativist view of who could and could not become, or be counted, as American.[79] Indeed, Michaels goes so far as to claim that the language of culture merely replaces the language of race in America during the 1920s. Even though neither Michaels in his discussion of American literature nor Ivan Hannaford in his survey of 'the idea of race' make great reference to the wider social influence of the Boasians, the cultural anthropologists did make a considerable impression on the intellectual climate and must be considered an important element in this process of change from biologically determined arguments to environmentally based ones. During the 1920s and against a background of racial and nativist views, the cultural determinists made convincing, if obviously more liberal, arguments, and perhaps the reason for the concept of culture's popular acceptance have more do with functional equivalence than they do with the demise of the race concept.[80] A major source in accounting for this intellectual change is located in the sciences and the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's work in 1900. Larmarckian ideas that

---

[77] See Franz Boas, 'Eugenics,' *Scientific Monthly*, Vol.3, 1916; A.L Kroeber, 'The Superorganic,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 19, 1917; R.H. Lowie, 'Alfred Russel Wallace,' *New Republic*, Vol.9, 1916. For an overview see Derek Freeman (1983/1996), Chapter 3

[78] Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, (New York: William Morrow. 1928)

[79] Michaels argues "that nativism in the period just after World War 1 involved not only a reassertion of the distinction between American and un-American but a crucial redefinition of the terms in which it might be made. America would mean something different in 1925 from what it had meant at, say, the turn of the century; indeed, the very idea of national identity would be altered." This new national identity depended on both nativism (establishing who the natives are) and a modernist expression of it, one that included culture theory. Walter Benn Michaels (1995), p.2

[80] I discuss this issue in more detail in the following Chapter.

stressed racial and environmental development were displaced by Mendelian ideas based on heredity. Where Mendelian thinking fuelled the Eugenics movement, the Boasian concept of culture filled the developmental void, and an intellectual schism opened up in the social sciences.[81] By the 1930s, the Eugenics Movement and biologically determinist evolutionary thinking had lost some ground in the American social sciences. The publication of Mead's work in 1928 did much to win the cultural determinists the dominant position. Although, we now know this work to be deeply flawed, its contemporary impact was enormous, arguably clearing the way for the Boasian concept's productive future.[82]

Having sketched the distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian conceptualisations of culture, it is only right to draw the reader's attention to the fact that there is some dispute in anthropology over Stocking's attribution of the origins of the 'modern' anthropological concept to Boas. Two objections are noted here. First, as was mentioned above, it is well known that Franz Boas was not a Boasian, as many of his students came to be called, which in view of his intellectual interests, casts some doubt over the relevancy of the distinction. Second, as Adam Kuper has indicated, Stocking can be criticised for overlooking the extent to which Boas merely continued in the German romantic vein.[83] Boas's connections to and continuation of German thought are arguably more significant than Stocking has indicated. This suggests that Stocking has exaggerated Boas's role here and that Boas does not represent such a radical departure from his teachers as has been supposed. This is a forceful criticism, but, largely, the debate is one for anthropologists not IR theorists, besides there are some aspects of Stocking's argument that are convincing. Most anthropologists would recognise, as Kuper points out, that by the time one is considering the work of the second generation Boasians, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir and Melville Herskovits for example, something quite distinctive is conceptually in place and distinguishable from the ideas espoused by the humanists and Matthew Arnold. This group of Boasians are clearly working with a conception of culture that is recognisable as the modern anthropological concept. 'Culture' is firmly established as a matter that relates to community in a particular sense; it is relativist;

---

[81]   Stocking suggests that it is possible to 'read culture for race, and for racial heredity read cultural heritage.' George Stocking (1968/1982), p.266
[82]   Derek Freeman (1983/1996), offers a detailed account of how the errors occurred in Mead's research and why her work assumed almost unquestionable status.

it includes the qualities that Stocking has listed; and, more importantly, it is being studied scientifically. By the late 1920s, the 'modern' anthropological concept of culture as 'a whole way of life,' that many recognise today, is clearly in place and underpins Boasian work. Stocking says of Boas that,

> He was a leader of a cultural revolution that, by changing the relation of "culture" to man's evolutionary development, to the burden of tradition, and to the processes of human reason, transformed the notion into a tool quite different from what it had been before. In the process, he helped to transform both anthropology and the anthropologist's world.[84]

Whatever misgivings we may have concerning the categorisation of the man himself, we will follow Stocking's identification of the Boasian concept here because it avoids a measure of confusion that other forms of categorisation entail and is useful for examining IR literature.[85]

Summary

When Ruth Benedict published her popular *Patterns of Culture* in 1935, the intellectual atmosphere within the United States had changed dramatically from that of the early 1920s.[86] In concluding her work, Benedict espoused one of the key tenets of Boasian thought: cultures were, she said, "equally valid patterns of life."[87] Benedict's phrase summed up a whole generation of American scholars' understanding of culture, although it would be several decades before this notion of culture would reach a wider, popular and European audience. For the Boasians however, culture was explicitly a community issue, everyone had culture and all cultures were to be taken on equal terms. Clearly, the idea of

---

[83]   For a discussion of this matter, see Adam Kuper (1999), pp59-68.

[84]   George Stocking (1968/1982), p.233

[85]   The choice of terms is always a difficult issue. Where the identification of the 'cultural anthropologists' idea of culture could be made to stand in place of the term 'Boasian,' the same could not be said for the 'cultural studies' idea of culture replacing the term 'Arnoldian.' The combination of the terms 'Arnoldian' and 'the cultural anthropologists concept of culture' were thought to be too clumsy and uneasy on the eye. The distinction between 'the humanist' and 'the (social) scientific' concepts of culture would be less than successful when applied to IR; although 'the humanist' distinction works well enough, 'the scientific' one does not. It would be difficult to persuade a student of IR that R.B.J. Walker, for example, was operating with a scientific concept of culture in view of his conceptualisation of international politics more generally. For these reasons the distinction of the 'Arnoldian' and 'Boasian' concepts have been chosen as the least confusing, but by no means wholly satisfactory designation of competing ideas.

[86]   Ruth Benedict (1935/1952)

[87]   Ruth Benedict, *ibid*, p.201

culture had come a long way since Coleridge and Herder. The dualism of 'the spirit' and 'a people' had been transformed into two conceptual families, the humanist and the social scientific, which I have associated with the two key figures of Arnold and Boas. By 1935, culture, as a 'way of life,' had become an established concept in American Social Science and confirmed the end of the theoretical duality that existed in the idea of cultivation.[88] The origins of the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Cultural Anthropology tell us much about the nature of culture and reveal two diverse conceptual developments that stem from a shared intellectual heritage that is rooted in German romantic thought. However, whereas Cultural Studies can ultimately trace its origins back to the work of the British social commentator Matthew Arnold, it does in fact, owe its existence to an avowed opposition to, and rejection of, Arnold's work. Cultural Anthropology, on the other hand, owes its foundation to Franz Boas. Although, it is important to recognise that both Arnold and Boas drew upon earlier culture thinking, the distinction between the scholars has been stressed here because it has particular significance within IR and is important with respect to the analysis that follows.

The development of the concept of culture or, more accurately, the concepts of culture can be potted in crude terms: in Germany, *kultur* opposes zivilization (from France); in France and Britain, culture (derived from the humanist elements in *kultur* and the old notion of cultivation) opposes 'mechanical' civilisation; eventually, *kultur* as a community-based notion (in Germany and America) opposes humanist 'culture' (as it is understood in France and Britain). By 1935, the contrast between the two 'cultures' is very clear, and provides us with a good point to close this stage of the story and to draw some comparisons. The scientific project of American anthropology clearly lacked the nationalistic elements that fed German politics and the state's deployment of *kultur* from the First World War period onwards. The American concept also stood in sharp conceptual contrast to the concept of *civilisation* that embodied hierarchy, progression and had been preoccupied with technical achievement; a concept that was still very popular in Europe in 1935. In Britain and France, 'culture' was a normative, humanist and universal concept, while in Germany and North America, 'culture' was identified with specific communities and

---

[88]   Adam Kuper indicates that Talcott Parsons gave the anthropological idea of culture a new lease of life and expanded role in American social science from the late 1940s onwards. Adam Kuper (1999), Chapter 2, Part 1.

had acquired a scientific status albeit one pursued by very different means. If, in 1935, for example, a student wanted to study 'culture' s/he would have been located in an English or Fine Art department in Britain and in a Cultural Anthropology department in the United States. It would be some time before the choice available in Britain opened up to include Cultural Studies; 'cultural' options did not, on the whole, extend to anthropology. British scholars engaged in *social anthropology*, not cultural anthropology; a distinction that, to some extent, remains.

Arnold and Boas both argued against the prominent notions and sentiments that the concept of civilisation had spawned, and both scholars employed the idea of culture in wholly distinct ways. Arnold poured scorn on the belief that civilisation was a beneficial process through his conception of culture as the 'pursuit of perfection.' Boas, on the other hand, rejected the argument of biological determinism, which evolutionary theory increasingly associated with the idea of civilisation, through his conviction that culture/nurture exerted considerably more influence on human beings than the evolutionists acknowledged. In simple terms, the Arnoldian concept of culture that drew upon older humanist ideas specifically embodied two distinctive qualities; one was its latent potential for universalism and the other was the conscious invocation of effort. For the Arnoldian, 'culture' is a singular issue; it makes no sense to speak of 'cultures' as anthropologists do. 'Culture' is drawn from a wide variety of national sources, although in Arnold's time these were severely limited to a white, Eurocentric world. However, the point is there was no conception of anthropological 'culture' standing between Shakespeare and Goethe say who might be acting as 'culture' in Arnoldian terms. There is a single conceptualisation of culture made up of many differing components and it is in this singular and exemplary sense that a potential for universal application can be found. On the other hand, identifying the 'best of everything' (an exercise likely to generate much debate as Cultural Studies illustrates) as well as seeking to apply this in practice either as an individual or at the level of society requires deliberate and conscious hard work. Ironically, in spite of Arnold's deployment of 'culture' as a way of criticising 'civilisation,' this concept of culture still harboured 'civilising' qualities in a qualitative and normative sense. Arnoldian 'culture' embodies a notion of 'civilising' and where it is exchanged, a notion of 'civility.' In itself, 'culture' is a mark of civilised activity, while sharing or acquiring 'culture' might be seen as

59

an act of civility. 'Culture' and to become 'cultured' represented spiritual and human advance, whereas the Boasian or anthropological concept of culture denied the progressive and elitist aspects inherent in the old notion of cultivation. Under the Boasian concept, people were born to 'culture' or came to acquire it through their membership of particular communities. Members acquired culture in a much more generic and general way, and one in which they were unlikely to be consciously aware of their involvement, although the 'professional' anthropologist was equipped with the intellectual tools that could reveal this 'culture' to the wider world in the form of ethnographic texts. The Boasian concept of culture stresses particular differences and 'culture' is plainly believed to act upon, be acquired by, and/or belong to individual communities and its members in a less than obvious way, and certainly in a less self-aware manner than the Arnoldian concept anticipates. For the Boasian 'culture' is a 'whole way of life,' while for the Arnoldian 'culture' is merely the best that 'life,' generally speaking, has to offer or has produced. Under the Boasian concept of culture, 'culture makes us what we are,' while under the Arnoldian concept 'we can become something better by virtue of the culture we make.' Stocking has usefully, if rather crudely, described the distinction between the two concepts,

> Other antitheses may convey further aspects of the distinction: anthropological "culture" is homeostatic, while humanist "culture" is progressive; it is plural, while humanist "culture" is singular. Traditional humanist usage distinguishes between degrees of "culture"; for the anthropologist, all men are equally "cultured." [89]

There may be some overlap between the two concepts in the middle as is the case, for example, when the anthropologist Clifford Geertz retreats into humanism as Adam Kuper has described, but at root, these two concepts are wholly distinct.[90] Each entails an alternative perspective of community and accounts for difference and human achievements in competing ways. Each concept evaluates community, difference and achievement in distinct terms, and generates an alternative view of the world and the range of possibilities within it. As the 20th century progressed however, one version of culture proved more attractive to scholars and the public alike, than the other concept. It is to a closer investigation of that concept – the Boasian – I now turn.

---

[89]   George Stocking (1968/1982), pp.199/200
[90]   Adam Kuper (1999), Chapter 3

Chapter Two

What is wrong with the Boasian concept?

Introduction

By the 1940s, the 'modern' anthropological concept of culture had attained a crucial and dominant academic position in the United States, so much so that it was described as "the foundation stone of the social sciences."[1] Subsequent generations of American anthropologists, particularly those associated with the concept's revival in the 1960s and 1970s, may have been critical of Cultural Anthropology's positivist tendencies but, as the British anthropologist Joel Kahn has pointed out, they did not fundamentally reject the central proposition upon which their discipline had been founded.[2] In short, they have all accepted the basic premises of the Boasian idea of culture as 'a whole way of life' despite advocating different methodologies for discerning it, which owes much to the influence of Parsonian social science according to a recent publication.[3] American anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Turner may have objected to some aspects of this concept but they did not refute the basic assumptions that the idea entails. Primarily, and most problematically, these assumptions hold that culture 'exists,' is about *otherness* and denotes *meaning* as Kahn has indicated.[4] 'Culture' belongs to community and is accepted as *the* crucial element in determining people's ethos, world-view and ways of doing things and/or being, which stems from establishing the primacy of culture (nurture) over genetics (nature). In its holistic and deterministic guise, culture is thought to be a universal phenomenon - all human beings have culture(s) in some form or other (depending

---

[1]   Stuart Chase, 1948, cited in George Stocking (1968/1982), p.302
[2]   Joel Kahn (1989)
[3]   According to Adam Kuper, Albert Kroeber and Talcott Parsons allocated a role to culture in the 1950s, which enabled the concept to thrive in spite of all of the criticisms and problems associated with it. See Adam Kuper (1999), Chapter 2.
[4]   Joel Kahn suggests that common issues are, treating cultures in their 'otherness,' an interest in tradition, an acceptance that culture is something that is shared, especially shared meaning. Joel Kahn (1989)

on how one defines the term 'culture' and which methodology one employs to demonstrate its existence).

The 'modern' or Boasian idea of culture embraced Tylor's notion of a 'whole way of life' but overtly and relativistically grounded the notion in a *particular* community's way of living, which enabled accusations of relativism to be easily placed.[5] Tylor's evolutionism as well as his interest in civilisation was pushed to one side; 'culture' was now a matter of community existence. Even the disciplinary shift from behaviour to ideas, which began in the 1950s, did not undermine the basic assumption that culture is a crucial, if not *the* most significant causal element in human social existence. Clifford Geertz even went so far as to claim that culture *is* life, although in making such a statement he really did not say very much or radically add to the basic idea.[6] Indeed, it is arguable that by advocating an interpretative approach and idealism, Geertz had only perpetrated a methodological sleight of hand that left the basic assumptions underpinning the concept essentially in tact. Undoubtedly it is the modern anthropological concept, or, what I have termed here as the Boasian concept that took hold of most academic and popular imaginations in the late twentieth century. When we speak of culture today it is this concept most people generally have in mind. In this chapter, I examine some of the key problems associated with the Boasian concept, especially those issues that have been described in terms of essentialism.

2.1 – Obvious Problems

The obvious and immediately recognisable problem with the concept of 'culture' is that it does not exist in the way it is spoken about or as is claimed. It is widely recognised that there is no such thing as 'a' or even '*the* Balinese culture' and there is also nothing new or shocking in this observation. The British social anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown

---

[5]   Elgin Williams, for example, was quick off the mark in criticising Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* for its egalitarian principles, which advocated tolerance. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Williams objected to Benedict's argument that all culture's were 'equally valid patterns of life' since that would require "granting significance to Hitler's culture…" Williams also demonstrated, Ruth Benedict did not adhere to her egalitarian principles; she clearly worked her own normative distinction between 'acceptable and asocial traits' into her theory. Elgin Williams (1947), p.85.
[6]   Clifford Geertz (1973/1993) particularly Chapter 2. On page 46 Geertz claimed that 'culture is an essential condition for human existence.'

rejected the idea of culture as early as 1940 when he objected "that culture was not empirically real... was not directly observable - 'since that word denotes, not any concrete reality, but an abstraction, and as it is commonly used a vague abstraction'."[7] Clearly, Radcliffe-Brown's complaints did not deter people from employing the idea of culture, nor did they inhibit the concept's growing popularity, although they, arguably, slowed the concept's progress down in Britain.[8] The extent to which it is problematic to employ the idea of culture as 'a vague abstraction' is a question I will return to in the final section in this chapter. In the meantime, the actual existence of 'culture' has been continually attacked on two fronts; the empirical and the theoretical. Empirical criticisms are easily laid at the culture concept's door and are an obvious point of critical departure, whereas the theoretical objections are a complex labyrinth of complaints. I will take each of these critical approaches in turn before focusing on the accusations of essentialism that they eventually generate.

George Stocking suggested that the modern concept of culture was distinguishable from the humanist conception of culture by its crucial components of "historicity, plurality, integration, behavioural determinism, and relativity," but the Boasian idea of culture also implies a number of things about communities.[9] The most problematic features that the anthropological concept invokes on behalf of communities have been identified as the assumptions of singularity, homogeneity, and consensus, which in turn rest upon certain notions of exclusivity, continuity, and authenticity.[10] The reader should be aware that different critics focus on these elements in different ways and do not always take them all into consideration. So, for example, Lila Abu-Lughod is concerned that the idea of culture is "shadowed by coherence, timelessness, and discreteness," whereas, Walter Benn Michaels is primarily concerned with questions that centre on exclusivity, continuity, and

---

[7]   Adam Kuper, (1996) p.185. Also see Adam Kuper, (1999), p.xiv

[8]   It is well known that Radcliffe-Brown exerted a considerable influence over the British discipline, which may, in part, account for the observation made by a recent commentator that, "By the 1970s, when cultural anthropology was well established... in the USA, in British anthropology 'culture' had nearly disappeared from view." As we know from the discussion in Chapter 1, the only place where one could find culture in Britain and lots of it, supposedly, 'fully in view,' was in the discipline of Cultural Studies. However, it should be clear to the reader that this was a very different idea of culture from that being employed in the United States. Susan Wright (1998), p.7

[9]   George Stocking (1968/1982), p.200

[10]   Robert Brightman has usefully discussed the key problems that critics associate with the culture concept. Robert Brightman (1995)

authenticity.[11] Nonetheless, most, if not all, critics would agree that it is impossible to capture 'a culture' ethnographically in the singular, homogenous, and consensual terms that reference to 'a Balinese culture,' for example, implies. Where critics disagree, however, is over the question of whether or not it makes sense to continue with this concept. Current anthropological debate cleaves into two camps over the question of culture; should the concept be rejected or reformed? Reformists still consider that the idea of culture has utility and is a concept that, in the word of James Clifford, they "cannot yet do without."[12] Rejectionists, on the other hand, have no difficulty in advocating life without the concept of culture; Lila Abu-Lughod actively (and famously) advises 'writing against culture,' while Joel Kahn hopes for the concept's immediate demise.[13]

The immediate and obvious grounds for arguing that we can do without the concept of culture are empirical. Establishing the existence of culture empirically (capturing it ethnographically) is a seemingly impossible task. It is no secret that culture is impossible to locate either physically/behaviourally or ideationally in the sense in which it is spoken about. To speak of a culture, say that of the Balinese for example, is to assume an object or entity in the singular and homogenous sense. The presumption of singularity is betrayed by the most frequently encountered question, what is culture? However, what anthropologists have always known, and had varying degrees of difficulty of coming to terms with, is that there is no such thing as 'a culture' in the singular (i.e. Balinese) sense. There is no identifiable entity, out there, that is Balinese culture. Therefore, investigating 'what Balinese culture is, or what this culture consists of' is a project fraught with difficulty from the outset. What one is likely to encounter, if one interrogates any society, is debate, diversity, and disagreement over even the most simplistic of issues. As the ethnographic fieldworker George Hunt complained in a letter to Franz Boas: "You know as well as I do that you or me cant find two Indians to tell a storie alike" (spelling in original).[14] Moreover, much of the information ethnographers gather is contradictory, while their actual experience in the field undermines the idea that people have anything distinctive in common in the first place, which, according to Andrew Vayda was P.G. Wilson's verdict

---

[11]   Lila Abu-Lughod in Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.147 & Walter Benn Michaels (1995)
[12]   James Clifford (1988/1994), p.10
[13]   Lila Abu-Lughod in Richard Fox ed. (1991) and Joel Kahn (1989)
[14]   Quoted in George Stocking ed. (1996), p.239

on the Tsimihety of Madagascar. Apparently, Wilson "found no distinctive Tsimihety way of doing things or, as he put it, no Tsimihety "ethnographic trademark.""[15] Wilson's phrase, 'ethnographic trademark,' usefully sums up what scholars are looking for when they investigate 'culture.' The idea of culture does invoke images of values, habits, and traits etc. that are singular, homogenous and to some degree consensual (collectively agreed upon) to the extent that they represent a distinctive 'ethnographic trademark.' This understanding of culture has become something of an orthodox view and one that extends far beyond the disciplinary borders of anthropology. How anthropologists have dealt with the problems of internal communal contradiction and diversity, and continue to deal with it, is another matter; but it is also a matter that has implication for anyone employing the notion of culture, including those in IR.

Clifford Geertz famously suggested that ethnographers read a culture like a book and then wrote about it, but this observation was not quite as innocuous as it initially seemed.[16] As Joel Kahn has pointed out, this would seem to imply that the only 'culture' ethnographers uncovered was that which they had published.

> If culture is, as Geertz is honest enough to say, an anthropological construction, then the text is, in fact, the culture itself. Culture is, then, according to anthropological tradition, something extrinsic to the peoples under study not because it is a super-organic phenomenon with an ontological reality in North Africa or Indonesia, but because it occupies a space, albeit a small one, in the culture from which the anthropologist comes.[17]

Where Geertz had raised questions about methodology (how should we study culture?) and epistemology (what should we study?), a subsequent generation of scholars began to ask more searching disciplinary and ontological questions. Investigating the nature of the culture that past ethnographers wrote about soon raised the question, 'whose culture is this?' The answer to this question appeared to be, as Kahn suggested above, that the 'culture' described in ethnographic texts was much more of the authors making. Geertz's post-positive successors chose to focus their critical energies on the act of writing culture.

---

[15] P.G. Wilson, 'The Problem with Simple Folk,' *Natural History*, December 1977, cited by Andrew Vayda in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.321
[16] Clifford Geertz (1973/1993). Geertz outlines his approach in Chapter 1. On page 19 Geertz says, "The ethnographer "inscribes" social discourse; *he writes it down*."
[17] Joel Kahn (1989), p.12

James Clifford, George Marcus, Michael Fischer and Renato Rosaldo all complained in one way or another that the assumptions past ethnographers had set out with had led them to subjectively re-write, or even totally write (invent) if Clifford is to be believed, culture as they saw fit.[18] This group of scholars easily levelled the criticism (perhaps a little too easily as we shall see below) that previous anthropologists had regularly and succinctly failed to take the complex and diverse reality of society into account. Moreover, these critics forcibly demonstrated that ethnographers actually 'wrote' more of the culture than they claimed or even realised, which should have confirmed the actual lack of existence of 'culture' had the critics followed the logic of their position through to its obvious conclusion. Branislaw Malinowski was chastised for writing up a very coherent story from the contradictory and 'unreliable' accounts he had obtained from his Melanesian informants; while E.E. Evans-Pritchard was criticised for telling an equally distorted story, one that conveniently ignored the brutal pacification programme the Nuer had been subjected to.[19] The principle objections were that past ethnographers had created timeless, homogenous, static, consensual and uniform portraits of the societies they 'wrote' about. Classic ethnographies, it was argued, had perpetrated a 'billiard ball' view of the cultural world.

Malinowski struggled to find the definitive 'story' among Trobriand Islanders and was severely criticised by James Clifford for misleading his readers into thinking that he found one. Apparently, Malinowski was surrounded by informants who were 'unreliable;' as his diary revealed, he could not find two Trobriand Islanders to tell a story alike, but that did not prevent him from successfully conveying their 'ethnographic trademark' in singular and homogenous terms.[20] Malinowski's experience of 'unreliable informants' was not unique in anthropology, nor was it indicative of the total anthropological enterprise, although it was indicative of the wider 'factory and positivist conditions' determining the

---

[18]   See James Clifford (1988/1994); James Clifford and George Marcus eds. (1986); George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1986); & Renato Rosaldo (1989/1993)

[19]   James Clifford (1988/1994) on Malinowski, Chapter 3; Renato Rosaldo (1989/1993), pp.42/3, on Evans-Pritchard. Robert Brightman demonstrates that, for most part, these critical scholars have set up 'straw-men' in their arguments. One could hardly accuse Boas or Sapir of a closed and fixed view of culture, for example. Robert Brightman (1995)

[20]   See Branislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense*, (London. Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1967) & *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London. Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1922)

nature of disciplinary activity and more specifically the work of Malinowski himself.[21] A point Clifford ignored in his enthusiasm for critique, but one of considerable significance as we shall see in a moment. We can witness the effect of these 'factory conditions' vividly on the anthropologist Colin Turnbull, who faced similar difficulties to those encountered by Malinowski. Over the course of several years, Turnbull made return trips to the Mbuti among whom he conducted his ethnographic research. To his irritation, he found that he had to re-write his findings because his ethnography did not correspond to Mbuti reality. Turnbull blamed himself for the constant revisions, believing that he had repeatedly mis-conducted his research. However, as Michael Carrithers has sympathetically pointed out, all that Turnbull was witnessing was "change going on before his very eyes."[22] The inability to capture a culture in time and space speaks volumes of the nature of the 'object' under analysis and it was the inability to account for change within 'cultures' that stimulated new discussion about the nature of the subject matter. However, from a contextual point of view, the repeated attempts made by past ethnographers to capture '*the* culture' seems to tell us more about the disciplinary conditions and criteria they laboured under than it does about the 'failings' of their research.

The less than veiled yet underlying criticism being expounded by James Clifford and Renato Rosaldo etc. was that many a classic ethnographic text was misleading and fundamentally flawed, bordering on worthless. However, three criticisms require mentioning at this point. The first is, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has pointed out, 'that anthropology was positivist in a positivist age, structuralist in a structuralist age' and, I might add, in the business of writing monologic monographs, is neither 'intriguing' nor very useful as a form of criticism.[23] There is nothing like stating the obvious and then mistaking that statement for an intelligent form of argument.[24] Secondly, as Adam Kuper has pointed out, it raises the rather important and thorny issue of whether there is anything of value to be found in the classic monographs despite their obvious weaknesses. While thirdly, as Robert Brightman has correctly pointed out, many of these critical authors have

---

[21]   Branislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense*, cited by James Clifford, (1988/1994), Chapter 3. See Introduction (this thesis) and the discussion of Richard Fox' idea of 'factory conditions.'
[22]   The Colin Turnbull experience is cited Michael Carrithers (1992), p.22
[23]   Michel-Rolph Trouillot in Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.29
[24]   Robert Brightman implicitly makes a similar criticism. Robert Brightman (1995)

been highly selective in their complaints and succeeded in painting a distorted view of the discipline.[25] Unfortunately, many of the critics of culture focused too closely on the 'act of writing' and this has weakened their theoretical position somewhat, as Brightman neatly indicated. The failure of Clifford and Rosaldo, for example, to take the restraints of the wider 'factory conditions' into account led them to avoid important theoretical issues that the idea of 'writing culture' invokes. By selectively focusing on individual scholars and their texts, they overly attributed the failure of the concept to account for internal diversity, for example, to the ethnographer. This enabled the critics to easily gloss over the weaknesses inherent in the concept itself. Reference to the 'wider factory conditions' and disciplinary restraints acting, say, on Malinowski might have revealed a deeper source of the problems than those immediately discernible in the scholar's ethnography. In my view, many of the criticisms, although useful, have been misdirected primarily because the critics still believe in the basic tenets of the concept and 'cannot bring themselves to live without' the idea of culture; this results in an inability to identify the source of the conceptual difficulties properly.[26]

It is important to note that not every anthropologist has been guilty of the sins, say of homogenisation, identified by many of the critics and not all research was conducted in the manner that the post-positivist critics suggested. Franz Boas, for example, was well aware of the diversity within cultures and sought to capture as many examples as possible for future generations to contemplate. Granted, it is not obvious in *Patterns of Culture* that Ruth Benedict was describing the ideal conditions of the three groups of Indians, but she makes it clear enough in her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* that she is portraying an 'ideal conduct of life,' as she put it.[27] The criticisms invoked by describing ideal types are all too obvious to be laboured over here. The basic point is that the difficulties involved in attempting to capture 'a culture' ethnographically are well documented in anthropology,

---

[25]   Robert Brightman (1995)

[26]   Brightman's paper offers an excellent synthesis of the problems and arguments surrounding the idea of culture, the only problem is he thinks this enables him to rescue the concept. In this sense, Brightman commits the same error as the authors he criticises in his paper. He mistakes the empirical content of their arguments for the theoretical, in showing that their examples are misguided he believes that he has undermined their arguments against culture. He has done nothing of the sort in my view; he has merely shown that the critics need to construct their objections on more sophisticated ground.

[27]   "The ideal authority for any statement in this book," Benedict says, "would be the proverbial man in the street." Ruth Benedict (1946), p.16

while the obvious methodological problems and attending epistemology that lead to the enormous scholarly abstractions and/or the gross reduction of communities to generalisations have, inevitably, been the source of much debate. The criticisms resulted in a shift of emphasis away from thinking about culture as an entity (or thing) towards thinking about culture as a matter of debate and diversity and, in turn, to thinking about culture as a process.

Scholars like Renato Rosaldo and James Clifford advocated a definition of culture that allowed for a multiplicity of interpretations not simply the ethnographer's reading. Rosaldo suggested that

> culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its borders...[28]

The retention of 'borders' within this definition is theoretically problematic, but I will return to this difficulty in a moment. The recognition of internal diversity and discrepancy within culture is a point well taken by anthropologists these days, while criticisms of speaking about culture as an entity or thing are so well worn that their appearance in IR does not mark a major theoretical advance.[29] The general view is that anthropologists have moved towards thinking about culture not as a singular and describable entity but as a process, especially since Robert Thornton warned them not to confuse the politics of 'what culture is' with 'what culture does.'[30] In itself, this represents a significant theoretical move, but it is clear that the implications of this move have not been fully absorbed by some theorists, as will become apparent below. Although the obvious problems of singularity, homogeneity and, to some extent, consensus have been dealt with by opening up the idea of culture to 'a porous array of intersections' for example, the underlying problems of exclusivity, continuity and authenticity remain, but it is only through close theoretical interrogation that their problematic persistence is exposed.

---

[28]   Renato Rosaldo (1989/1993), p.20
[29]   See Yosef Lapid's 'Introduction' to Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997)
[30]   Robert Thornton cited in Brian Street (1993), pp.32/3

2.2 - *Meaning and Otherness*

The problem that has dogged the Boasian concept of culture is that it is founded on the intellectual assumption that there always ought to be a 'distinctive way of doing things' or 'ethnographic trademark.' Apparently, a culture is what a people have in common, and what they share collectively in distinction from *others*. Ruth Benedict famously opened her *Patterns of Culture* with a Digger Indian proverb about a cup,

> In the beginning God gave to every people a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life.[31]

The imagery of the cup is very striking, as Michael Carrithers has pointed out.[32] Cups clearly have hard edges and their content, as suggested in the proverb, is the 'culture' itself. Culture appears very much as a bounded, self-contained, autonomous, static and homogenous entity in this image and what is more 'every people' have their own cup. Even Albert Kroeber, who appeared to adopt a more humanist approach than Benedict, noted, "that "the container" of various distinctive cultures altered much less through time than the items, traits, and complexes that were "contained"."[33] The contents of a specific culture may vary over time, but nonetheless, the orthodox idea of culture conveys notions of communal integrity and saliency that are, somehow, 'all of piece' and contained, even if only in a loose sense. No matter what shape 'culture' takes, or indeed, how much the boundaries were recognised as porous, 'something' still gave culture its distinctiveness and, therefore, maintained its intellectual utility. What this 'something' of culture *is* has yet to established in both theoretical and substantive terms, while the continued presence of the unspoken assumption that there is 'something' to culture leads, somewhat inevitably, to the suspicion of essentialism or that there is an 'essence' of culture, but I discuss the problem of essentialism in the next section. Undoubtedly, it is the individualism of culture and its discreteness that attracts most attention. In the orthodox view, cultures do appear to be a bit like 'cups;' bounded, discrete and coherent entities. However, where there is boundary (no matter how porous) the assumptions of continuity, authenticity and exclusivity, or an 'ethnographic trademark,' quickly follow. Cultures appear as discrete pieces or events that

---

[31]   Quoted by Ruth Benedict (1935/1952), facing page.
[32]   Michael Carrithers (1992), p.15
[33]   A.L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), p.360

have their own self-contained and self-perpetuating history and traditions. As Roger
Keesing pointed out,

> "A culture" had a history, but it was the kind of history coral reefs have: the cumulated
> accretion of minute deposits, essentially unknowable, and irrelevant to the shapes they
> form.[34]

All of this was fairly self-evident and obviously transparent when culture was taken as a
discrete entity or 'all of piece' as it was in Benedict's day, it has become less obvious,
however, that these things remain now that culture has been declared a process and a matter
of debate and diversity. The shift towards thinking about culture as a process, as was also
the case with the shift from behaviour to ideas, does not, necessarily, denote a dramatic
intellectual departure from the fundamental idea, particularly if *otherness* and the causal
qualities of culture are retained in a less than specified way.[35] In short, the orthodox
assumptions that lie behind the Boasian concept of culture remain in place even though the
epistemology and methodology has varied greatly. Whether 'culture' is viewed as
predominately a matter of behaviour or ideas, or whether it is thought to be an entity or
process, and whether or not it is something to be interpreted, matters much less than the fact
that the synthesis between the concept, a specific group of people and their distinctiveness,
remains. The 'something' of culture ensures that 'culture' must belong 'somewhere' in
spite of the empirical difficulties involved in identifying either the 'something' or
'somewhere' of culture.

The image of a culture as a 'coral reef' with its own exclusive, authentic, and
continuous accretions is a persistent one. However, this image can only be maintained by
certain ontological assumptions concerning *existence*, *meaning*, and *otherness*; assumptions
that have become inherent features of the Boasian concept and around which a number of
illusionary performances can occur. The most notable of these 'illusions' is to link culture
emphatically, and not to mention unproblematically, to 'a way' or 'ways of life.' The
'existence and meaning' of culture are thought to be justifiable on the grounds that people
do have 'a way of life.' Although, it should be immediately apparent to the reader that the
term 'ways of life' can be accounted for by a variety of conceptual means, not least

---

[34]   Roger Keesing in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.301
[35]   Joel Kahn (1989) and Walter Benn Michaels (1995), present two of the best arguments against the
idea of culture I believe.

Matthew Arnold's notion of culture. Defining culture in any particular way is a conceptual issue and one rendered all the more obvious in view of the point that one can speak with equal persuasiveness of religious 'ways of life,' class based 'ways of life,' racially distinguishable 'ways of life,' not to mention 'savage,' 'barbarian' and 'civilised' ways of life. The phrase, 'ways of life,' is a red herring, neither adding nor detracting from the idea of culture. Yet, it is hoped, or intended that the idea of 'culture' is suggestive of 'a way of life' in a sense that is still exclusive, continuous, and authentic in some way. The idea of culture is supposed to capture the idea of 'a way of life' but more often than not, the presumption of a 'way of life' is called upon to illustrate the presence of 'culture.' In either case, it is not 'a way of life' that requires explanation, but the concept of culture invoked on its behalf. What makes a 'way of life' a matter of culture is an epistemological issue that in these post-positivist times readily lends itself to discussion, or ought to, if one is not placing the idea of culture above all other conceptual categories in this respect.[36] Another prominent illusion, or, myth, stems from the seemingly unproblematic recourse to empirical evidence, which has been a major source of critique for the idea of culture.[37]

It is well recognised, even within IR, that empirical evidence carries no weight on its own and, in this instance, reliance on 'actual examples' merely maintains the mythical status of culture. Worse, allegedly demonstrating the existence of culture by way of actual, concrete, examples, especially those highlighting difference, merely exposes one to a classic and well known tautology in anthropology. As Roy D'Andrade explains,

> If the term "culture" refers to what some group of people does, then we add nothing except confusion when we say that some group of people does what it does because of its culture. *In the "totality of behaviour" sense, the concept of culture has no explanatory value.*[38] (italics in original)

The claims made on behalf of the idea of culture contain an inbuilt circular argument, which throwing more examples at, does not resolve or even avoid. This is to say that reliance on empirical evidence as proof of the existence of culture makes no sense, since the people in question would need to be in possession of 'culture' in the first instance in

---

[36]   For me, this is an important critical point: 'cultural' ways of life seem to enjoy a status that places them beyond reproach in a way that the idea of class based ways of life, for example, do not seem to share. We can reject the idea of class more easily than the idea of culture, it seems.

[37]   For an excellent case of this see Samuel Huntington (1993/1996) & (1996/1998)

[38]   Roy D'Andrade in *Current Anthropology* (1999), p.16

order for them to able to do things differently (and 'be' different etc.), and 'make' that evidence worth citing. It is what people are in possession of, namely 'culture' as concept, that requires explaining, while merely invoking that possession in name, has as D'Andrade indicates 'no explanatory value' whatsoever. In fact the same evidence of difference, 'what people do,' can be convincingly interpreted under a variety of theoretical schemes, the least dramatic of which is to say that differences are the outcome of habit and are wholly disconnected from anything a scholar might want to call 'culture.'[39] Again as with 'ways of life' there is nothing as such, or nothing that should immediately convince us, that the differences between people, and even groups of people, are in fact 'cultural.' Indeed there are plenty of excellent reasons as to why we should not accept any difference described under the terms of 'culture,' but more of this in a moment. The crucial question for the reader and the scholar to come to terms with in his/her own mind, is what makes anyone think that any difference is cultural? In what ways does the idea of culture capture difference or ways of life? The key point to draw the reader's attention to at this stage is, in all probability, counter-intuitive; this is to say that both empirical evidence and the suggestion of 'ways of life,' are spurious issues when it comes to discerning what culture actually amounts to in conceptual terms.

If collecting and interpreting empirical evidence is a problematic issue and carries little or no theoretical weight in itself, then what does the idea of culture amount to if demonstrating its actual concrete existence is seemingly impossible? Clearly, as the association with a 'way of life' suggests, 'culture' is about *otherness*. Indeed, Roger Keesing has argued that anthropologists have contributed more than their fair share towards meeting the need, as he sees it, in Western philosophy for 'radical otherness.'

If radical alterity did not exist, it would be anthropology's project to invent it.[40]
The Boasian concept of culture, as Keesing and Kahn among others have pointed out, depends on radical *otherness*. It is not so much that the *other* is separate from the *self*; it is that under the terms of the concept of culture the *other* must be intrinsically different and distinguishable from all other individuals or groups. The idea of culture enables one to distinguish 'the natives' from 'the tourists' so to speak because 'the natives' are,

---

[39]   It is important to note this distinction between habit and culture because it becomes relevant in Chapter 6 (this thesis) with respect to Martin Wight's work.
[40]   Roger Keesing in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.301

apparently, nothing like 'the tourists,' or, if 'the natives' are like 'the tourists' it is only the case in terms of appearance. For it is one of the fundamental assumptions inherent in the 'culture' concept that if one scratches the surface of a 'native' who appears to be passing as a 'tourist' hard enough, one will reveal his/her true cultural essence or self. This 'true self' – the culture - is exotic, separable from us, and, presumed to be have certain traits, values, and so on, in common with all, or most, native members of a community.[41] *Otherness* is inscribed on the heart of the Boasian culture concept, but it is the underlying presumption of meaning, or that this *otherness* is *meaningful* in its own right, that is the heart of the idea itself. Even if the boundaries are porous and outside influence is recognised as having some impact on a society and even if one cannot distinguish 'the natives' from 'the tourists' in reality, the underlying presumption of a community in possession of a (or even a multiplicity of) distinctive trademark(s) ensures that culture acquires essential meaning in some way. It is only in this communal, bounded, authentic, and exclusive manner, or what has come to be recognised as *essentialism* that the idea of culture is claimed to make sense. The *meaning* of culture is: exclusive, it can only belong to this community; it is enduring, passed continuously from generation to generation albeit with some noted modifications; and it is genuinely theirs, and therefore authentic in some way. *Meaning* ensures that, not only is it possible to speak of the culture of a community, but it guarantees that community *powerful integrity and saliency in spite of the chaotic reality of every day life.* Retaining this presumption of underlying (if not enduring) integrity, saliency and meaning, has generated the most potent form of criticism to date, that of essentialism and given rise to the emergence of a new approach, that of anti-essentialism.

2.3 - Essentialism and Anti-essentialism

In its simplest expression, essentialism is a modern form of 'geist;' the hidden spirit of distinction operating behind the scenes of society. Although to be sure there is hardly

---

[41]   Epistemologies that refer to culture as a matter of competency or distribution assume that most but not all members of a community share in 'the culture.' The belief is, by recognising that only certain members may be 'competent,' or that culture has been unevenly distributed, is one way of dealing with the problems of internal diversity and heterogeneity. However, the difficulty with these approaches is that they still rest upon the initial proposition that there was 'something' in the 'true' sense that could be distributed or that people could have been competent at in the first place. In short, there is still an unspoken standard of culture at work here, and the same is true of arguments based on the notion of hybridity (see footnote 55 below).

anything 'simple' in the way essentialism manifests itself in culture theory, indeed, some of the covering arguments are highly sophisticated and distracting in their complexity, which is arguably the case with some of the post-positivist literature. Nonetheless, essentialism or the presumption of an 'essence of culture' can be detected in even some of the most unlikely of scholars work, including many of the radical critics of culture. Essentialism relies on the unspoken assumption that there is 'something' that makes a particular culture the way it is. Unless a scholar is prepared to tell us otherwise (and I stress this point because few are prepared to admit that they have abstracted the 'culture' they describe), the idea that a group of people share 'something' *meaningful* in common and are distinguishable on that basis, leads to the suspicion that there is an 'essence' of culture supporting the theoretical claims made on behalf of the concept of culture. If we are led to believe that 'we are our culture' or that 'culture makes us what we are' then we must know what this idea of 'culture' is that hides behind the claim. Actual examples are inconclusive; it is the conceptual content of 'culture' (i.e. the scholar's understanding attached to the word) that requires exposition, while failure to provide such an exposition leads to accusations of essentialism. Anti-essentialism, on the other hand, presents an alternative conceptual state of mind to that held by an essentialist, but it is largely through the criticisms of essentialism that the anti-essentialist position begins to make sense.

Recognising that ethnographic research failed to account for the extent of debate and diversity within a community generated the question, as Andrew Vayda points out, of

> whether variations themselves, as much as, if not more than, any putative sociocultural patterns or norms, are to be made the objects of explanation and generalization.[42]

Anti-essentialist scholarship "sees variations as [the] "fundamental reality"... and not as mere accidents about norms."[43] The problem with essentialist accounts of 'culture' is that they are 'biased' towards presenting an orderly and distinctive portrait of communities in their totality; a portrait that is almost impossible to sustain empirically and difficult to justify theoretically. There is just too much diversity in reality for an orderly view of 'culture' to stick. Theoretical silence over what might make an orderly view of 'culture' plausible is one of the key features that generate the suspicion of essentialism. A reader is

---

[42]   Andrew Vayda in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.322
[43]   Andrew Vayda, *ibid*, p.320

75

entitled to presume (in the absence of any statement to the contrary) that a scholar is working with the underlying and unspoken assumption that there is an 'essence' of culture that s/he accepts (uncritically) as the source of community distinction when a scholar writes of the 'culture' as though it only could belong to a particular community. Yet, in terms of theory, the essentialist argument only succeeds by default; we all recognise the existence of communities and we all recognise the existence of difference, however, in culture theory we are also asked to recognise the coincidence of these two as being the work of 'culture.' The fundamental difficulty is that a thorough elucidation of the nature of the work that 'culture' does (how, why, when, where, etc. 'culture' does what it does to bring about and maintain the coincidence) is usually absent. We find plenty of examples but not much theoretical justification for the deployment of the idea of culture. Ultimately, the idea of culture relies on our intuitive knowledge about the world and rests upon the invocation of 'something' vaguely stated, which the reader is entitled to believe (because she has not been told otherwise) depends upon a mysterious 'essence' of some sort.

Talal Asad was among the first to identify the fundamental problem with the idea of culture and its essential conceptual component. Asad suggested that the crucial theoretical problem lay with

> a notion of culture as an *a priori* totality of authentic meanings to which action and discourse must be related if they are to be properly understood and their integrity explained.[44] (italics in original.)

The basic problem, shared by otherwise quite diverse theorists, was, in Asad's view, the 'emphasis on meaning,' which at his time of writing made social change difficult to conceptualise. It may be unkind but it is certainly not unreasonable to suggest that any scholar who operates with the unspoken assumption that culture entails a pre-existing and enduring meaning has an essentialist conception of culture. 'Culture,' arguably, belongs 'somewhere,' but it is only through accepting the presence of a mysterious 'something' that our co-operation as readers can be secured in the agreement that this is the 'culture' of a community. Pointing to the differences between communities and claiming that this is the work of 'culture' is not sufficient to justify the claim that culture was the 'thing' that did the deed. It is not as self-evident and obvious that people do have 'culture' in the way

---

[44]   Talal Asad, (1979), pp.608/9

76

popular opinion seems to dictate. On the one hand, empirical evidence does not support the case as strongly as may be believed, while on the other hand, recourse to something other than the contradictory nature of the evidence leads to the suspicion that the claim for culture resides less on the actual evidence and more on the assumption that a community shares a 'pre-existing meaning through which its integrity can be explained.' It may not be necessary to subscribe to a singular and homogenous view of culture in the manner of Benedict or Malinowski but it is inevitable that an essentialist conception will share with these scholars the view that there is a synthesis between community, difference, and 'culture.'

Communities are believed to have an internal 'logic' or meaning that passes for 'culture.' This 'culture' may be unseen, working mysteriously behind the scenes a bit like gravity but it is nonetheless a commonly held and pervasive, if not persuasive, belief that (like gravity) 'culture' exists everywhere and affects everything even if we cannot actually 'see' it. Yet, as Adam Kuper points out, these days "[f]ew anthropologists would claim that the notion of culture can be compared in "explanatory importance" with gravity, disease, or evolution."[45] However, in spite of the fact that few would claim this level of 'explanatory importance' for the concept of culture as Kuper rightly indicates, it is, nevertheless, an assumption that remains *implicit* in a variety of work. It is not even necessary for a scholar to demonstrate the 'existence' of culture in the manner of 'gravity or disease,' the mere presumption is enough for the idea of culture's explanatory value to be implied as a self-evident and therefore, 'taken-for-granted' issue. A presumption that is evident in the wild claim that 'culture' is shared values, norms, or 'a way of life' for example, and is something that all readers are expected to accept and recognise in a vague and intuitive sense. That many people do accept this claim or recognise 'culture' in these instinctive terms is not the point, it is the ontology of the 'thing' we are being asked to subscribe to that is open to question. There is no escaping the 'fact' that it is widely accepted, in the word of Roy D'Andrade, that "culture is a big thing that does things;" the big question is how scholars think this 'thing' called culture works.[46] As Vayda has said of Marshall Sahlins,

---

[45]   Adam Kuper, (1999) Preface, p.x
[46]   Roy D'Andrade in *Current Anthropology* (1999), p.17

77

> Sahlins himself... claims that each society is ordered by a meaningful and essential cultural logic of which the society's members are more or less unaware and that the criterion by which the events in which members participate are to be judged important and worthy of anthropological attention is whether we can discern this cultural logic or order (or changes therein) in the events...[47]

What the job of an anthropologist or ethnographer is in the task of unmasking culture is a secondary issue. It is of greater concern how scholars conceive of culture and without doubt the thread that holds all the conceptual manifestations of essentialism together, is *meaning*.

Essentialists do not invoke the idea of culture as a mere descriptive term, they invoke it, as Sahlins does, as an explanatory devise and what this idea of culture is expected to convey is specific community meaning in a quite explicit sense; better still, this is something that the members of a community are blissfully 'unaware of.' The *meaning* of culture belongs to a particular community of people and is shared by them, and by them alone. The meaning(s) that the Chinese community share, or the thing(s) that ultimately gives them their Chinese-ness, cannot belong to any other community. Moreover, this kind of *meaning* is assumed to be pre-existing, enduring and the *source* of distinctiveness. These things can be stated either implicitly or explicitly, but nonetheless the presumption that 'culture' entails *meaning* is one of the most problematic theoretical issues inherent in the Boasian conception of culture. *Meaning* is not taken as an epistemological issue for either the scholar or (in their assessment) the participants – it is not invented or constructed on the spot, nor does it occur as the result of political or social events or forces, although a more astute scholar would acknowledge the influence of such things in the matter. *Meaning* is the 'thing' that determines how people will react to, interpret, or deal with any event and force. The status of meaning in the culture concept is secured through its assumed ontological status as a self-evident and really-existing phenomenon denoted, rather confusingly, by the idea of culture itself. The role of meaning becomes visible when scholars discuss what they believe 'culture' does. If a scholar believes that 'culture' makes

---

[47]   Andrew Vayda in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.325

us what we are, as Margaret Mead once had the audacity to claim, then s/he has entered the realms of essentialism.[48]

A major point of distinction between an essentialist and an anti-essentialist is whether 'culture' determines *being* in some way or other, or whether 'culture' is simply a covering term for *doing*. The issue that signifies this distinction perhaps more than most is that of the 'problem' of cultural loss. For essentialist theory, cultural loss is a serious problem, but the way in which 'loss' is conceived often betrays a bell-jar view of 'cultures' and is frequently entangled with normative assumptions. The idea that a community can lose a culture is one of the more bizarre notions that the concept of culture generates, although it has proven a politically useful idea.[49] However, to be without culture, a bit like being without history as Eric Wolf cogently pointed out, is merely a matter of perspective, and one that tells us more about normative assumptions of the claimant than it does about anything called 'culture.'[50] This perspective is preoccupied with establishing authenticity in the meaningful, exclusive, and belonging sense. In short, an ethnographic trademark must be identified in order for arguments about cultural loss (and even arguments invoking notions of imposition, assimilation, and dilution) to hold water, since the basis of the argument resides in the displacement of one ethnographic trademark by another. The argument for 'cultural loss' necessarily fixes the idea of 'culture' in homogenous and continuous, if not singular, terms. It also contains an inbuilt normative assumption – cultural loss is generally seen as a 'bad' thing. Yet, the mere 'facts' of the case tell us that people lose culture on a daily basis - 1990s Britain has lost the culture it had in the 1950s. Moreover, as Michael Carrithers has said of Ruth Benedict's work, despite having 'broken their cup' the Digger Indians seemed to be getting along somehow. This may strike the reader as a harsh comment in view of the historical colonial experience of the first Americans, but one should not mistake the general observation and theoretical point for an evaluative comment here. Whereas cultural loss is, arguably, a daily event, it is clear that the normative impact of any social change/loss is another theoretical issue entirely, as is any normative appraisal of loss. Focusing on social and political change as a matter of 'cultural loss' as cultural theorists do, however, detracts from the serious issues of whether

---

[48] Margaret Mead (1942/1943), p.21
[49] How many times do we hear the claim that we need to preserve culture or cultural values?
[50] Eric Wolf, (1982/1997)

there has been injustice, a lack of power and control, and of whether one human being has abused another. What is certain is that evaluations of this order cannot be made on the grounds of culture; they can **only** be carried out because of political and normative theory, which needs to be disengaged from cultural theory. Evaluations cannot be made on cultural grounds because that issue rests entirely on one being able to identify the content of a culture (its ethnographic trademark) in extremely detailed and specific terms – namely, which values count as a part of which culture, and when and where they disappeared. Further, one must bear in mind that everyone must agree to this if 'culture' is a shared, homogenous, and continuous experience identifiable with a particular community.[51] Since no such level of agreement has ever been found among any community of people (and if it were we ought to be highly suspicious of it) this has led some anthropologists to adopt the approaches of Cultural Studies in order to deal with supposed cultural claims.[52]

In an anti-essentialist view of culture, however, one does not 'swap' one culture for another; it is all part of an ongoing process. From an anti-essentialist perspective, it is particularly important that variation and change are thought not to be an indication of 'cultural' or social "disintegration." Arguments centred on 'disintegration,' like those of loss, clearly pay homage to the essentialist premise that there was 'a culture' or cultural logic that existed in the first place and has collapsed.[53] As Vayda has said of P.G. Wilson's work among the Tsimihety of Madagascar,

> Although he [Wilson] found no distinctive Tsimihety way of doing things or, as he put it, no Tsimihety "ethnographic trademark," neither did he find the people to be living in chaos or anarchy.[54]

This should come as good news for those who think that the alternative to culture in the homogenous and 'trademark' sense means cultural chaos, 'hybridity,' or worse still, no

---

[51]   This still holds for people who accept internal diversity. Speaking of a particular culture makes no sense, or none that can be qualified in cultural terms, if some level of homogeneity is not entered into by the people under discussion (i.e. the Balinese etc.). Unless, of course, we accept that the idea of culture is fiction.

[52]   An interesting example in this genre can be found in Susan Wright's discussion of Terence Turner's work with the Kayapo of Brazil. Turner introduced the term 'culture' to the Kayapo who then employed it for political purposes. They abandoned Western-style dress for a more "traditional" mode of clothing and solicited Western support as a culture under threat in their disputes with the Brazilian government. However, as Wright points out, despite the homogenous appearance there was a considerable amount of debate behind the scenes as to what should be presented as Kayapo culture. Susan Wright (1998)

[53]   Andrew Vayda in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.321

[54]   P.G. Wilson, 'The Problem with Simple Folk,' *Natural History*, December 1977, cited by Andrew Vayda, *ibid*, p.321

culture whatsoever.[55] In an anti-essentialist sense, we all have 'culture' no matter what has come and gone over the years and irrespective of where we actually are. Under anti-essentialism, 'the tourists' must be considered along with 'the natives,' and the breaking of cups, accepted as a daily occurrence. The difference between essentialism and anti-essentialism on questions concerning variation and loss demonstrates that it is not the substantive 'facts' of the case that matter most, i.e. an obvious change in habits or practice, but how a scholar chooses to see and account for such things. In short, how one conceives of culture shapes the theoretical framework within which all manner of events are then intellectually structured and commented upon. If you believe that 'cultures' have a *meaning* or 'logic' of their own then you can believe that this 'culture' can be lost, eroded away, or dislocated in some way. In any event, every kind of social change is being measured against an assumed and hidden standard of meaning, which ought not to change, or not very much, if the 'culture' is pure and true to itself.

This may seem an extreme way of presenting the ideas that lie behind the Boasian concept, but the assumption that cultures entail a coherent and distinctive way of doing things to the extent that they bear an 'ethnographic trademark' is so widespread, it is accepted as true. Even where empirical evidence does not support or substantiate the claims made by the culture concept about meaning, as, for example, when 'you physically can't find two Indians to tell a story alike,' the theoretical assumption of meaning persists. The theoretical premise usually endures through a radical and instantaneous process of abstraction; after all, two Indians are nothing like two Chinese and it is obvious (isn't it?) that, when viewed en masse, the French are different from the English. In terms of what we 'know' about the world, the English may be nothing like the French, but it requires an enormous leap of faith to believe that the reasons behind their differences can be a) aggregated under the assumption of shared meaning, and b) explained away on that basis. Nonetheless, it is a prevalent and persistent assumption that 'culture' does work in this way even if cannot be proven to exist. Take this statement on culture by Simon Murden, from a

---

[55]   The notion of hybridity is a particularly malevolent form of essentialism in my view. The 'hybrid' (person or group) is neither one thing nor the other but the 'freakish' amalgam of two 'pure' cultures, usually the home and host cultures. The 'hybrid' is not an original nor is it permitted to be itself – it belongs in its own special category.

recently published introductory text to IR, in which the 'facts' of culture are seemingly established beyond dispute.

> The human experience is one of cultures. Culture and cultural differences have been at the heart of human behaviour throughout the history of international politics. Indeed, at the end of the twentieth century, the significance of culture was being reaffirmed... The 'shrinking' of the globe brought different cultures into closer contact, and represented a world-wide challenge to traditional patterns of culture...Peoples across the world were having to face the dilemma of what in their cultures could be maintained and what would be lost... Culture is a powerful underlying force, but in the contemporary state system it is also one that still struggles to gain a coherent voice.[56]

There may be much in the statement that solicits a sympathetic response from the reader, but Murden has a long way to go before he can convince me, at least, that there is anything in his words worth taking notice of. Murden will have to demonstrate that 'cultures' do exist as discrete and coherent entities before we can begin to accept his argument that they are under threat of extinction from globalisation. He will have to tell us much more about the nature of this 'powerful underlying force' and offer a comprehensive account of 'traditional patterns of culture,' especially, since traditions come and go as Turnbull's Mbuti experience evidences. Murden will certainly need to elucidate his bell-jar view of cultures in order to justify the claim that they 'face a dilemma over what to maintain and lose.' He will also be required to explain how cultures are going to do this, or who is going to decide this on their communal behalf. He will need to explain fully why and how 'culture has been at the heart of human experience' before we will allow him to tell us that this has (categorically) affected international relations. And he will have to do all of this in theoretical terms not because of his instinctive knowledge about the world. In short, Murden delivers nothing more than a comprehensive list of 'unspoken' assumptions that can only hold if one accepts the idea of discrete and exclusive 'culture' in the first place.[57]

---

[56] Simon Murden, 'Cultural Conflict in International Relations: The West and Islam,' in John Bayliss and Steve Smith ed. (1997/1998), pp.374/5

[57] Murden goes on to say, "Culture is a social construction that is so multi-faceted that it may be difficult to define precisely." This allows Murden to slip into hyper-referentialism: culture is everything including the kitchen sink, with a bit of anthropological 'totemism' thrown in and if that isn't sufficient he offers us evidence of the matroushka doll version of cultural identity. The point is, even though culture is virtually impossible to pin down in a precise and coherent manner, it nonetheless clearly "defines difference" and, therefore, cannot be that elusive. Simon Murden in John Bayliss and Steve Smith ed. (1997/1998), p.376

Basically, Murden's comments serve as an excellent illustration of essentialist dogma in which each 'culture' must "be put in separate compartments" and kept there, if it is a genuine case.[58] Indeed, I would argue that we have learnt nothing about the world of 'culture' from Murden but we have learnt a good deal about his epistemic outlook and his normative assumptions all of which appear as a political statement of intent rather than anything that should be taken as serious academic commentary.

An essential or underlying meaning of culture leads to the unspoken assumption that cultures are a bit like coral reefs as Keesing described, which in turn raises some awkward questions about the continuity of culture and its relationship to history. Since cultures are assumed to be, more or less, self-perpetuating and self-contained entities or processes, the link to the past is a crucial component in the essentialist argument. It is on this basis that 'cultures' can be identified in the first place and lost or eroded away by outside influences. However, there are some serious weaknesses in thinking about 'cultures' in this way, some of which make for uncomfortable reading. Where culture is linked to identity, it becomes particularly important that we are aware of the kind of problems essentialism entails. If culture is believed to influence 'who we are' and our identity is a statement of our being, then, clearly, the idea of a cultural-identity only succeeds because it relies upon an essentialist conception of culture. We must have a culture in the meaningful and exclusive sense for our identity to be recognised. But as Walter Benn Michaels asks, 'why does it matter who we are?' and why does it matter that this is cast in cultural terms? Michaels offers one of the best theoretical discussions of how and why culture and cultural identities matter so much, in my view. As Michaels says,

> The answer can't just be the epistemological truism that our account of the past may be partially determined by our own identity, for, of course, this description of the conditions under which we know the past makes no logical difference to the truth or falsity of what we know. It must be instead the ontological claim that we need to know who we are in order to know which past is ours. The real question, however, is not *which* past should count as ours but why *any* past should count as ours.[59]

---

[58] Roger Keesing in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.302
[59] Walter Benn Michaels (1995), p.128

The problem with the idea of culture is that it commits people to a particular past (as tradition, cultural heritage, memory, etc.), or, alternatively, enables a group of people to claim a particular past exclusively as their own. However,

> Virtually all the events and actions that we study did not happen to us and were not done by us. In this sense, the history [that] we study [or learn] is never our own; it is always the history of people who were in some respects like us and in other respects different. When, however, we claim it as ours, we commit ourselves to the ontology of [for example] "the Negro," to the identity of "we" and "they" and the primacy of race.[60]

Michaels argues that the idea of culture is a continuation of race theory because it relies on an essentialist view of who people are and what is rightfully theirs. Unless we allow 'geists' and mysterious essences into the frame, the only tangible way in which we can justify a commitment to cultural-identities is on the basis of blood-tie.[61] The culture that 'belongs' to a particular community of people in a meaningful sense cannot simply be a matter of learning or epistemology, although it is believed to belong to (or is identified as belonging to) a particular community, it must be rooted in other kinds of claims. Therefore,

> We are not Jews because we do Jewish things, we do Jewish things because we are Jews.[62]

In a cultural argument it really does not matter what people actually do, the culture that determines a cultural-identity derives explicitly from who people are and to whom they were born. It is only in this way that exclusivity can be claimed, continuity maintained, and authenticity established. In short, the *meaning* of culture and the *otherness* it creates depend on biological descent and lineage, not 'culture;' irrespective of how 'culture' has been defined. This has led to the claim that 'culture' is functionally equivalent with race theory, it does not replace it.

We can see this lineage at work in the arguments surrounding the Makah Indians request for a whaling exemption quota under the International Whaling Commission's

---

[60]   Walter Benn Michaels, *ibid*, p.128

[61]   A cultural-identity is quite unlike any other form of identification. Religions and religious identities obviously exist, and we may be convinced by arguments for class or gender based identities, but there are no reasons to believe that 'cultural identities' operate in the same way. Indeed, we ought to be more suspicious of the politics that may be involved with any cultural claim.

[62]   Walter Benn Michaels (1995), p.139

moratorium on commercial whaling.[63] The Makah had not whaled for 70 years, yet the younger generation demanded the right to resume the practice on the grounds of 'cultural heritage.'[64] Opponents emphasised the lack of continuity in the community with the practice of whaling, but the Makah successfully argued that they had the right to resume whaling in spite of 70 years discontinuance.[65] Initially the claim of the Makah seems to challenge the concept of culture – how could they resume a practice that they had obviously 'lost?'[66] Plainly, the post-positivists would seem to have the answer; under the terms of James Clifford and a more discursive conception of culture, the discontinuity of a practice is no barrier to an argument based on 'culture.' The younger Makah had simply re-invented their culture, demonstrated by their humane approach to the hunt itself. In a Cliffordian approach this would be something to celebrate and provides an excellent example of the modern fluidity and adaptability exhibited by 'culture.' But the cultural basis of the argument is not as straight-forward as Clifford and others, including many of the Makah, assume. Since no-one could remember how to whale and all the Makah who had whaled were dead, there was no knowledge of the practice that could be, or had been, passed on. Whaling as a practice died in the 1920s and there was nothing, epistemically, that could be re-invented, or to be more accurate, there was nothing that could be exclusively re-invented by the younger generation of Makah Indians. If the younger Makah had to re-learn the art of whaling, so could anyone else. In theory then, anyone who learnt the art of whaling could claim that they belonged to Makah culture. Of course, this kind of argument flies in the face of the unspoken assumptions over what culture is and should be

---

[63]   Under the schedule of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), there is provision for 'cultural' exemptions – The 1982 Aboriginal Subsistence resolution. The regime draws up a quota for communities to whale. There was an amendment to the schedule on October 23rd 1997 which allowed the Makah to exercise aboriginal rights. For details of the Makah whaling plan see http://conbio.rice.edu/nae/docs/makahplan.html For a review of the history of the International Whaling Commission and aboriginal whaling see Ray Gamble (1993)

[64]   See http://www.makah.com/whales.htm & 'The Makah Indians: Keeping their Culture Alive,' *The International Harpoon*, No.4, 1995

[65]   The Makah's claim was strengthened by the Treaty of Neah Bay that they had signed with the United States Government in 1855. The Makah demanded that the US Government honour the treaty and sponsor their claim at the IWC, which it duly did. The Makah resumed whaling on May 17th 1999, claiming both treaty and cultural rights had been honoured. In July 2000, however, the decision that the government took to support the Makah at the IWC meeting was challenged by appeal to the 9th Circuit Court, which indicates that this issue is far from being resolved.

[66]   This was an argument that some of the Makah themselves put forward including Roberta Thompson a Makah elder. For some idea of the opponents views see http://www.safepassing.org/ & http://elfnet1a.elfi.com/csicaptivity.html#MakahHunt

about, even for the Clifford. The principle claim of the idea of 'culture' is that it is not available to everyone; it only belongs to the community it should obviously belong to. They may hold pow–wows in Cheltenham but that does not make the participants 'Indians;' they are cast aside as cultural imitators, copyist or cranks. It was the hidden theoretical dishonesty inherent in the idea of culture was the object of Michaels's argument. Michaels has demonstrated that the notions of exclusivity, continuity and authenticity, all crucial elements in the Boasian idea of culture, are falsely premised on the presumption of a 'cultural essence,' whereas they can only be based on blood-ties if they are to hold for an identifiable group of people in actuality. As for the Makah and the resumption of whaling, the epistemological claim that this was a matter of cultural heritage was flimsy to say the least, but the blood-tie claim was obviously evident. The younger Makah could claim a biological heritage, a line of descent back to those Makah who had whaled, and therefore could take up the ontology of race theory under the guise of the language of 'culture,' although to be sure, the Makah never recognised the claim in race terms. For the Makah, this always was a cultural issue.[67]

Michaels's argument that culture theory is a continuation of race theory and that the idea of a cultural-identity that does any work necessarily requires race theory more than indicates the need for exercising caution when employing 'culture' based arguments. The culture-identity link is only sustainable through an essentialist conception of culture that does not refute the ideas behind race theory; meaning, that 'the natives' are connected in essence by 'something' that is theirs and is pure. 'Culture' may be discursive and liable to change, but it still makes us, essentially, who we are and therefore, justifies what we do. Many a critic has made the connection to race theory, including Joel Kahn who says that culture is little more than "a new kind of racism" and Lila Abu-Lughod who recognises that "the culture concept retains some of the tendencies to freeze difference possessed by concepts like race."[68] Verena Stolcke claims that 'cultural' arguments merely create new

---

[67]   In my view, the Makah claimed the 'right' to whale because the Treaty of Neah Bay *and* the possibility of an Aboriginal Subsistence quota enabled them to do so. If there were no reference to 'cultural rights' under the Schedule of the IWC, then the claim would have lost part of its validity. I am not being critical of either the Makah or the IWC here, I am simply pointing out that arguments based on 'culture' require the recognition of something called 'culture' in the first instance and this much is also true for opponents like the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, for example, who doubted the 'cultural authenticity' of the hunt; whereas, it is the politics and debate surrounding this issue that captures my attention.
[68]   Joel Kahn (1989), p.20 & Lila Abu-Lughod in Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.144

boundaries and new rhetorics of exclusion.[69] This may be so, but the new boundaries and new rhetorics of exclusion appear remarkably unchanged from the old boundaries and old rhetorics. It may be impolite to speak of different races, but we can positively enthuse over the culture of the Makah, the Balinese, and the Nuer as a discrete group. We still want this concept to distinguish 'the natives' from 'the tourists' and to separate those who can authentically whale as a matter of cultural heritage from those who dress up and pretend to be Indians at the weekends.

Conceptually, 'culture' is too close to race theory for comfort, while the connection to identity is hardly questioned, but there are additional theoretical reasons for avoiding conceptions of culture that assume there is an 'essence of culture' at root. The question arises as to whether it is appropriate to think about the world in this way. The grounds upon which we would like to think the idea of culture enables us to make the distinction between 'natives' and 'tourists' are where the obvious objections to this concept are made. As Keesing points out,

> How often, still, do I hear my colleagues and students talks as if "a culture" was an agent that could do things; or as if "a culture" was a collectivity of people. Of course, we profess that we don't really mean that "Balinese culture" does or believes anything, or that it lives on the island of Bali (it is all a kind of "shorthand"); but I fear that our common ways of talk channel our thought in these directions. Moreover, attributing to "Balinese culture" a systematic coherence, a pervasive sharedness, and an enduring quality – so that Bali remains Bali through the centuries, and from south to north, west to east (even nowadays, despite the tourists) – commits us to an essentialism of an extreme kind. Balinese culture is the essence of Bali, the essence of Balineseness.[70]

Keesing fears that the 'common ways of talk channel our thoughts in the direction' of essentialism, but my fear is that we have never established enough distance between our thoughts and essentialism in the first place. It is not sufficient to claim that this 'is all a kind of shorthand,' the damage has already been done. Why commit ourselves to this kind of shorthand in the first place? The reason why James Clifford 'cannot live without the concept of culture' is that he still believes that individuating communities in cultural terms

---

[69]   Verena Stolcke (1995)

[70]   Roger Keesing in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), pp.302/3

is a meaningful and useful thing to do. Yet, where the reality of 'culture' makes it difficult to distinguish between 'the natives' and 'the tourists' and therefore makes it all the more necessary to remove that 'reality' to the realm of ideas, then, ironically, we have invoked a radical form of essentialism. As Keesing points out,

> I have just come back from a Solomon Islands where dreadlocks in the style of Bob Marley and Kung Fu videos are the stuff of contemporary "culture." More than ever, the boundedness and the essentialism that motivate it must depart from observed "realities"; the gulf between what we see in the field and the ways we represent it widens by the minute.[71]

Closing the gap between 'reality' and theory is a particularly urgent problem if the concept of culture is to be retained in an intellectually useful sense and one that is not essentialist, a continuation of race theory, or confusingly caught up with other concepts like identity. The real question is what kind of 'reality' do we want the idea of culture to portray.

2.4 - Noun or Verb?

A key development in the concept and one that marks the difference between an essentialist and an anti-essentialist lies in employing the 'word' culture as a noun or as a verb. The change from noun to verb requires a subtle conceptual alteration in the meaning of the word. Whether this can actually be achieved, remains to be seen, but it is an interesting theoretical proposition I think. Brian Street, who has suggested that 'culture is a verb,' explains,

> what culture does is precisely the work of 'defining words, ideas, things and groups'...The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definitions but of 'discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons.'... Indeed, the very term 'culture' itself, like these other ideas and definitions, changes its meanings and serve different often competing purposes at different times. Culture is an active process of meaning making and contest over definition, including its own definition. This, then, is what I mean by arguing that *Culture is a verb.*[72] (italics in original)

---

71   Roger Keesing, *ibid*, p.302
72   Brian Street (1993), p.25

In many respects, Street's argument represents a close synthesis between Cultural Studies and Cultural Anthropology, but where Street will take this idea, remains to be seen. It is not at all clear as to how Street envisages 'culture' as a verb working in practice. Whether this is something that still pertains to a whole community in terms of defining their definitions or whether this too is a fragmented experience, is not obvious. What is clear is that 'culture as noun,' the essentialist version, always depends upon the presence of an abstract force operating behind the scenes of society that determines who people are and what they then do. 'Culture as verb,' on the other hand, is something people do; it is social interaction. 'Culture as noun' explicitly focuses on being – we do what we do because of who we are, and we are identifiable as who we are because of our culture. 'Culture as verb,' however, focuses on doing in a way that is disconnected with being as it is defined under the noun sense of the word. Under anti-essentialism, we do what we do for a whole variety of reasons many of which have yet to be identified and discussed. 'Culture as verb' undermines 'culture as noun' simply because what people actually do may have little or no relationship to who they are when they are identified in other terms. A group of people like the Chinese or Chicanos for example, may be less determined by who they are and more so by what they do, therefore it would not be possible to identify them on the basis of 'culture as noun.' The deployment of 'culture as a verb' separates the critics of essentialist conceptions of culture who are still essentialists at heart, i.e. the James Cliffords and Renato Rosaldos of this world, from the anti-essentialists who are making a genuine attempt to reconfigure the Boasian concept of culture.

Accusations of essentialism are readily applied when it is assumed that culture acts a bit like gravity, affecting everything and existing everywhere in an invisible way. Essentialism assumes that the distinctiveness of culture not only speaks for itself but is also the source of explanation accounting for distinctiveness between communities. In short, where it is believed that cultures have an enduring core of values, elements, ideas etc. (however the scholar chooses to identify such things) that belong exclusively to a particular community, then essentialist assumptions have entered the theoretical framework. The problem is not that communities do share meanings or values, because clearly they do; the problem is attributing such things to 'culture' in a manner that more than suggests these things are pre-existing and enduring (unless they happen to be lost). The crux of the matter

is that culture is assumed to work behind the scenes of a community in a mysterious way; in short, it is an unspoken assumption that there is an 'essence' of culture. Even if we cannot see it, are incapable of defining it, or unable to demonstrate its existence, an 'essence' must be present in order for this conceptualisation of culture to work. Anti-essentialists not only dismiss the assumptions underpinning the orthodox culture concept, but have radically re-defined the concept through their criticisms. Terry Eagleton claims that "[i]t would be odd to see three people as forming a culture, but not three hundred or three million," which sets him apart from anti-essentialist theorising and provides me with a useful example to explain the distinction.[73]

In order to envisage *a* culture of 'three hundred or three million people' some enormous generalities need to be reached and attained in a meaningful sense if one is not relying upon stereo-types or ideal types. The methodological difficulties of capturing the attitudes, the values, the 'whole way of life' of a community of this size are considerable. Even if these problems were surmountable, what anthropological experience teaches us is that a study based on this proposition would only reveal debate and diversity. It would certainly not reveal the level of agreement and homogeneity that reference to 'a culture of three hundred people' implies. What permits this form of totalisation is the assumption of communal cohesion or an underlying shared essence of community meaning. Anti-essentialists deny both the possibility of an underlying force or essence determining communal distinction **and** the possibility of methodologically essentialising large groups of people in this way. They do this through two alternative conceptual assumptions; first, they speak of culture as aspectival (Carrithers) or in terms of variations (Vayda), which abandons the prospect of portraying culture as a totality. Eagleton commits a fundamental error when he thinks he can speak of the culture of three hundred, let alone three million people. Secondly, anti-essentialists have a greater interest in doing than being. In both cases, the possibility and plausibility of mapping or capturing the 'culture' of three people is greater (and certainly a more manageable project) than that of three hundred. Inevitably, this approach transforms both the subject matter or object of analysis and the means of recognising it. Clearly, this focuses study on what people do, how they interact, their intersociality and intersubjectivity.

---

[73]   Terry Eagleton (2000), p.37

This approach is much more than a methodological shift; it is a profound epistemological and ontological one. Anti-essentialists accept that there is no such thing as *the* culture, as in an underpinning essence or 'authentic set of exclusive/discrete meanings.' For these scholars, 'culture' is about strategies of interaction and intersubjectivity, which are necessarily open-ended, subject to a wide range of influences, and hardly predictable.

The difference between essentialism and anti-essentialism occurs over the relationship between meaning and otherness. For the essentialist it is self-evident that people have culture and that this is *meaningful* and because it is *meaningful*, it confirms and fixes their *otherness*. For the anti-essentialist 'culture' is something like a strategic manoeuvre – *meaning* is created by a variety of forces, including politics, social pressure and the penchant for telling a particular historical story in a particular way. None of this is enduring – people can and regularly do learn new habits and tell new stories about themselves. *Otherness* and *meaning* are taken as constitutive elements in the same process. Let me provide a concrete example, not the best example perhaps, but one that most students would be familiar with.[74] The Chinese, apparently, need to 'save-face,' this is, we are frequently told, part of their culture. For the essentialist 'saving-face' is a cultural response, it is bred into the fabric of Chinese society because of Chinese culture. Chinese people cannot help but save-face; it is a peculiarly Chinese trait indicative of their Chinese-ness. In anti-essentialist terms, the manifestation or social articulation of 'saving-face' is a socially strategic move that occurs under certain conditions. Why 'face-saving' occurs is not a cultural question it is a social/political one: why behave in public in this way? Why now? And what is it that determines this response? Under anti-essentialism it is not obvious that Chinese people need to save-face, although it may be obvious that they 'regularly' do engage in such a practice. The questions that 'saving-face' generates for an anti-essentialist are not focused on the Chinese **nature** of the people involved but on the process of interaction that generate such a response. It is the ethnographer's job to trace the process and all the intervening factors that feed into that process. It is not the ethnographer's job to record and fix difference; it is to enquire more deeply into what

---

[74]   This is not a good example in my view because I do not accept that 'saving-face' is an exclusive Chinese habit – Westerners also need to 'save-face.' Any peculiarities in Chinese and Western responses are not so easily or directly attributable to 'culture' in my view.

Vayda calls, "intelligible connections" within a context.[75] This results in a very different kind of explanation for events; one that is sensitive to the context and more discerning in identifying the causes it attributes to outcomes. As Vayda explains,

> Explanation in the contextual mode consists of contextualizing actions or consequences by tracing the threads of influence upon them outward in space and backward in time... Thus, to support the explanations of actions in particular cases, connections may be asserted among certain *kinds* of actions, certain *kinds* of reasons for them, and certain *kinds* of contexts in which they take place. The connections are set forth as being intelligible and as occurring *sometimes* but not as being necessarily universal.[76] (italics in original)

Similarly, Michael Carrithers has argued that the point of enquiry is to pick up a strand in a "tangled knot of puzzles" and to follow where it leads.[77] For Carrithers it leads into the study of inter-subjectivity and inter-sociality in an aspectival way. One of the exciting implications of this kind of enquiry, in my view, lies in its potential to liberate us from the synthesis between the concept of culture and the orthodox notions of difference and community that it has generated. No longer is it possible to say that the Chinese do what they do because of the Chinese-ness or culture. The axiomatic connection between communities and 'culture' has been fundamentally questioned and broken. The anti-essentialist approach shares with the humanist conception of culture an ability to transcend the orthodox boundaries of difference albeit in very differing ways and through differing means.[78]

Employing the word 'culture' as a noun or a verb is one way of distinguishing the essentialist from the anti-essentialist, while the conceptual distinction may be best conveyed by way of a visual analogy. In the essentialist world of culture, culture resembles a plate of salami at a buffet. No longer stacked vertically in the matroushka doll model favoured by T.S. Eliot for example, cultures now overlap horizontally just as they would if

---

[75]   Andrew Vayda in Robert Borofsky ed. (1994), p.323
[76]   Andrew Vayda, *ibid*, p.323
[77]   Michael Carrithers (1992), pp.3/4
[78]   I am well aware that ideas involving 'processes of meaning making,' 'intelligible connections,' and 'intersubjectivity,' present an interesting challenge in terms of delineating the subject matter and how we, as scholars, decide to close enquiry. It seems to be one of the implications of anti-essentialism that scholars need to be more self-aware about the kinds of closure they impose on their subject matter.

92

one was preparing a plate of salami. On such a plate, each individuated slice of salami overlaps its neighbours. A slice of salami may have many neighbours and be overlapped by them to the point it is submerged under many layers, but it is, eventually, the individualism of the slice that determines the attention drawn to it. Anti-essentialism attempts a different way out of the 'anthropologists predicament' by changing the nature of culture altogether. Under anti-essentialism, the world takes on the appearance of a great bowl of thoroughly mixed spaghetti. The point is not to focus on a single strand of spaghetti to the exclusion of all others but to follow that strand where ever it leads and to note the connection with other strands affecting its course round the bowl. The neatness of a plate of salami stands in sharp contrast with the 'untidiness,' to borrow a phrase from Michael Carrithers, of a bowl of spaghetti. Following threads or strands of spaghetti is to follow Vayda's 'intelligible connections,' or Street's 'processes of meaning making,' for which the usual conceptual pre-givens of *meaning* and *otherness* as well as the assumptions of exclusivity, authenticity, and continuity, are all absented. Under such theoretical conditions, it appears to be impossible to individuate cultures in the orthodox sense. Indeed, there are no obvious grounds for closure in the orthodox or essentialist 'cultural' sense: there is no Balinese culture because there is no 'culture' that belongs to Bali.[79] The means for individuation have been transformed into a scholarly difficulty that transcends all the 'old' ways of identifying cultures. An inability to individuate cultures in the orthodox and bounded sense is, like the problem of identifying the 'something' and 'somewhere' of culture, only a problem if one wants to individuate cultures in this way. The 'fact' that an anti-essentialist conception of culture makes it impossible to isolate and substantiate the idea of a Balinese culture is not the issue. The anti-essentialist throws the question back: if it is not possible to sustain the idea of a Balinese culture or even to be able to justify it in its own terms, then why would one want to look for such a thing? What purpose does the idea serve? If it cannot be made to justify itself, then what does the idea of a Balinese culture or a multiplicity of cultures, justify? The answer to these kinds of questions begins to sound very similar to the kinds of responses one finds in Cultural Studies, namely, this serves

---

[79] The reality of life on Bali is a mish-mash of many things, some of which may be similar or dissimilar to life elsewhere. The differences may be attributable to habit, politics, social interaction, etc. the key thing is, they cannot be attributed to something called 'culture.'

someone's political purpose. I am less concerned here and at this stage, however, with the political dynamics of society and more concerned with those employed in scholarship.

Finally

When Radcliffe-Brown complained that cultures were not real and were nothing more than a vague abstraction he implied that the idea of culture was nothing more than a matter of faith, which the experience of empirical research seems to support. Yet, even if cultures are nothing more than a matter of faith, and a powerful one at that, the criticism may not undermine the idea of culture entirely. As Clifford Geertz pithily observed several decades later, structure (Radcliffe-Brown's preferred approach) was an equally vague abstraction and as directly unobservable as culture.[80] Clearly, many things are vague abstractions and in this respect, Geertz was quite right to criticise the structuralist's approach, but the more important question centres on whether such abstractions are, in any way, useful. Since empirical evidence that confirms the presence of an 'ethnographic trademark' is problematic to obtain and does not theoretically prove the existence of culture in itself, the usefulness of the idea of culture must lie with its initial conceptualisation and the extent to which the concept conveys a meaningful 'reality.' There are two areas of criticism; the nature of the conceptualisation of culture and the extent to which it captures 'reality.' Identifying the problem of essentialism served to question both these elements by drawing attention to the hidden conceptual assumption that there is an 'essence' of culture and by demonstrating that the 'reality' of life was more discursive and disputed than we had previously been led to believe. However, as insightful as much of this criticism is, the underlying difficulty is that accusations of 'essentialism' although easily detectable in some work still operates in an unspoken way in other, apparently, critical work and this results in only a partial exposure of the problems inherent in the idea of culture.

Although the identification of essentialist thinking and the criticisms it has generated have proven extremely useful, the problem of delineation on the grounds of an

---

[80]   Geertz acknowledged, "The term "culture" has by now acquired a certain aura of ill-repute in social anthropological circles because of the multiplicity of its referents and the studied vagueness with which it has all too often been invoked. (Though why it should suffer more for these reasons than "social structure" or "personality" is something I do not entirely understand.)" Clifford Geertz, (1973/1993), p.89. Also, see Chapter 6.

unspoken assumption of an 'essence' of culture is ever present where the synthesis between the idea of culture, community and difference remains. In this respect, there are two kinds of essentialism, which in turn generate two theoretical objections. On the one hand, there is the overt form of essentialism that everyone objects to; this is the 'ethnographic trademark' form of culture, which is impossible to sustain in theory and practice. On the other hand, there exists a covert form of essentialism that many scholars still subscribe to. Since, many anthropologists accept that culture is a process and a matter of debate and diversity nowadays and the essentialist scholar sounds very similar to the anti-essentialist, the problems with the Boasian concept need to be isolated in other terms. The obvious theoretical difficulty, and easily exacted criticism, is that 'culture' does not exist in the manner in which it is spoken about; the less obvious theoretical problem lies in the nature of delineating the subject matter. The problem with the idea of culture is not so much that 'one cannot find two Indians to tell a story alike,' because, clearly, on occasion one will be able to find at least two Indians telling similar stories; the serious difficulties concern the scholar who wants to keep two Indians together who may never tell a story alike. When reality suggests that it is better to place an Indian and a tourist together because they are telling a story alike, what are the grounds for keeping all 'the natives' together and maintaining the distinction between them and 'the tourists?' Anyone who claims that the grounds for distinction are 'cultural' has some serious theoretical explaining to do. The fact that James Clifford, Renato Rosaldo etc., avoid this level of explanation (preferring to descend into an inexplicable form of self-identification) demonstrates that this is a concept that, for them, is still required to do some 'old' (essentialist) delineating work in a new guise. The problem is not with essentialism as such, but with the belief that 'culture is a big thing does things only for **these** people,' and that this idea of culture provides a scholar with a ready-made explanatory basis for everything that follows. In short, it is questionable whether post-positivist conceptualisations of culture have opened up the idea to the extent that it does correspond to a 'reality' that does not depend on radical *otherness* and can comfortably accommodate 'the natives' with 'the tourists.' Of course, if one wishes to portray the kind of 'reality' the orthodox and essentialist concept advocates then one clearly needs to offer some justification as to why this is preferable rather than to simply assume

95

that this 'reality' is both obvious and acceptable; further, one should not rely on being unchallenged in this respect.

In itself, Radcliffe-Brown's claim that culture does not actually exist need not present too much of a problem, or one that is not entirely insurmountable if the scholar was clear about what they were doing. In theory, the absence of a concrete reality for culture does not undermine its possible 'existence,' it merely shifts that existence to another location, which is arguably what happened with the shift from behaviour to ideas. Removing culture to the realms of idealism seemed like a smart move and one that still allowed for the 'existence' of culture to remain convincing. 'Culture' was something we learned and acquired, it was a cognitive process and a mentalist acquisition, but this idealist 'culture' now looks radically essentialist. What is missing is the theoretical detail that enables a more discursive yet still bounded 'reality' to continue as though 'culture' really does exist. This is where I believe we have not put enough distance between the idea of culture and the essentialist assumptions that are inherent in the orthodox Boasian conception.

Reification and essentialism are not, in my view, the most serious problems, although they have provided the obvious points of critical departure. The complaint that scholars have reified and essentialised culture is not disastrous; as the anthropologist Roy D'Andrade points out, 'we reify and essentialize all sorts of things, but that does not necessarily undermine their conceptual utility.'[81] Indeed, without some measure of reification and essentialism, "there is no way to explain things."[82] One needs to be very clear though, about the nature of one's concepts in order to convince an audience on an, otherwise, easily criticisable issue. As D'Andrade has pointed out,

> Most social scientists agree that race as a biological construct does not have the causal
> properties that racists give it. On the basis of the preponderance of the evidence, it is
> an empirical error to essentialize race by giving it causal properties. But does *culture*
> have causal properties? Does it, *as a totality*, reproduce itself, give meaning to life,

---

[81] Yosef Lapid has pointed out that Samuel Huntington has simply recreated a form of state centrism as a "reified world of pregiven cultural agents," which demonstrates, in Lapid's view that reification and essentialism are engrained in the discipline. Contrary to the argument presented by Lapid, the problem is not one of reification and essentialism but of corresponding reality and existence. Lapid misunderstands that culture is necessarily going to remain a reified and essentialised issue under the community-based terms he continues to consider it. Yosef Lapid & Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997), p.8

[82] Roy D'Andrade, *Current Anthropology* (1999), p.17

legitimate institutions, etc? Can we reasonably essentialize and reify culture? Can we say that *culture is a big thing that does things*? [83] (italics in original)

Without better conceptual and theoretical clarification, culture may not be employable in the way that some scholars would like, meaning it may not be possible or indeed plausible to speak of the culture of three hundred people, and this would also include some of the critical work. The question is not necessarily one of whether we have reified or essentialised the world of 'culture,' but whether 'reality' lends itself to this form of reification and essentialism and, moreover, whether 'culture' is a useful and appropriate concept in this respect. As D'Andrade posits, can we reasonably justify essentialism and reification? Is it plausible to aggregate such a large number of issues under the heading of culture, in the manner of Simon Murden above? Is there anything 'out there,' so to speak, to be essentialised? The difficulty that separates critics of essentialist conceptions of culture from those advocating anti-essentialism is that many of the critics still believe that 'culture as noun,' as 'something' that belongs to a particular community, is an acceptable form of idea. It is the blind acceptance that there is something out there to be essentialised in a self-evident sense that is the most pressing theoretical concern in my view, and anti-essentialists are right to reject this unspoken assumption about culture.

The idea of culture as a really existing phenomenon has no content; arguably where 'culture' is taken as an '*a priori* set of integrated meanings and shared ideas' it has even less content. However, there would be nothing to prevent a scholar giving this idea of culture content that s/he had abstracted, so long as, like Ruth Benedict, the scholar was honest enough to admit this. If the scholar tells us that s/he is investigating what a group of people do and do not share within a certain geographic area s/he has identified, for example, or that s/he is interested in this group because they adhere to a particular religion, or because they have experienced a common event, then this is a more reflexive and honest basis from which to proceed in my view. To be claiming that one is investigating a group of people on the grounds of something that is assumed to be manifestly self-evident as their 'culture' is to be blatantly misleading. The obvious contemporary problem is that people like the idea of culture in its essentialist sense and seem likely to continue to speak as though it were a meaningful concept in spite of all the criticism that this word has attracted.

---

[83]   Roy D'Andrade, *ibid*, p.17

Indeed, it is remarkable that such a small word, 'culture,' can generate so much conceptual confusion and controversy and still grow in popularity. The growing popularity of the essentialist version of the Boasian concept with its orthodox baggage in tow ensures that the problems and difficulties this idea generates are set to continue. Complete conceptual reformation of the kind advocated by the anti-essentialists offers one prospect of disassociating the concept of culture from its most problematic assumptions of *existence*, *meaning*, and *otherness*, by radically reconfiguring our sense of 'reality' and the conceptual criteria employed to capture it.

There is an alternative solution to that of reforming the idea of culture, which is to reject the whole notion completely. This proposition is actively promoted by a growing number of scholars, notably Joel Kahn, Lila Abu-Lughod and Adam Kuper. Given the volume of confusion that this word creates, one is inclined to agree with Adam Kuper who suggests that might it be "more advisable… to avoid the hyper-referential word altogether, and to talk more precisely of knowledge, or belief, or art, or technology, or tradition, or even of ideology (though similar problems are raised by that multivalent concept)."[84] Like Kuper, I wonder what advantage is to be gained from re-packaging otherwise innovative ideas (as I see them), such as Vayda's 'intelligible connections,' under the confusing banner of culture. Advocating the death of culture, as Kahn does, appears almost perverse nonsense in view of the powerful 'taken for granted status' that the concept of culture currently enjoys, even within IR. Yet, our disciplinary experience of the word 'culture' in IR in both its Arnoldian and Boasian guise teaches us that we have lived without the idea of 'culture' before, and so the possibility is ever present that we could learn to live without it again in the future. I now begin to survey IR's experience of the word 'culture' and its attending conceptualisations, leaving the reader to decide for him/herself whether the Boasian concept of culture should be reformed or rejected, or whether we should return to the humanist understanding of the term.

---

[84]   Adam Kuper (1999), Preface, p.x

TEXT

Chapter Three

Norman Angell and 'the survival of the fittest'

<u>Norman Angell</u> (1872-1967) [1]

The Great Illusion 1911 first published as *Europe's Optical Illusion* in 1909

Introduction

On the eve of the First World War, the concept of civilisation enjoyed a dominant position in Western thinking and framed most people's thoughts about *others* and themselves. The concept of civilisation had not altered much, in its essentials, from the 19th century; civilisation was still considered a matter of progression, hierarchy, achievement and technical advance. However, during the late 19th century the idea of civilisation had become inextricably associated with evolutionary theory and, increasingly, subject to the influence of biological determinism, or race theory. This intellectual development added a new dimension to the hierarchic and progressive elements inherent in the civilisation concept; people could be ranked biologically. It became common place to think about social relations in terms of the 'survival of the fittest,' an idea derived from evolutionary theory, as well as in terms of racial differences, an ideology based on extreme biological explanations about the world. According to Ivan Hannaford, race became a particularly prominent element in social thinking from, about, 1870 onwards and he counts the years to 1914 as the 'high point of race theory.' [2] Developments in evolutionary theory influenced international relations as much as they did other subjects. Many statesmen and commentators believed that weak states were not 'fit' enough to survive and were destined, therefore, to be dominated in every aspect. Yet, critical voices were beginning to express

---

[1]   Norman Angell (1911/1972)

[2]   See Ivan Hannaford (1996), Part 2, especially Chapter 10

opposition to some of the ideas that the social evolutionists and biological determinists, in particular, espoused and Norman Angell's work, *The Great Illusion*, is of considerable significance in this respect. Whereas in the United States Franz Boas and his students were beginning to attack evolutionary theory from an anthropological perspective, Angell, among others, had already begun to challenge the same idea from an entirely different standpoint – that of international relations.

It is commonly thought that our disciplinary interests were founded on *Idealism* and the desire to prevent another war, and this was certainly a major factor in the founding of the discipline. Although one would not want to belittle the role of the war in this respect, here, however, the emphasis is on the debate of ideas that pre-date the war. An examination of this order, as Brian Schmidt has demonstrated, provides us with a more thorough appreciation of the context out of which the discipline emerged, rather than creating the impression that it was founded as a spontaneous response to the war alone.[3] As *The Great Illusion* predates any obvious idealist concerns that were identified by scholars in the aftermath of the conflict, it proves an extremely useful text for grounding our story of the concept of culture in IR. Angell's text sheds light on the prevailing and dominant ideas that existed prior to the First World War, and serves as an excellent illustration of the kinds of appeals that were necessary before 'culture,' in its guise as a critical tool, could succeed during the inter-war period.

Three issues are focused on here: first, the significance of *The Great Illusion* itself and its place in the general scheme of things; second, Angell's perception of the problems that were associated with the idea of civilisation, which reveal much about the 'factory conditions' under which he worked; and lastly, how Angell conceived of difference under the civilisation concept and the language in which he expressed his thesis. Taken together, these issues demonstrate the changing nature of the meaning of 'civilisation' and serve to indicate the extent of continuity, as well as adjustment, within the 'conventional standards' of the time. This suggests that *The Great Illusion* can be read as part of the process that contributed to the redefinition of civilisation, which would prove a useful accomplishment

---

[3]   Brian Schmidt (1998)

for the future of the concept of culture in IR.[4] 'Rescuing' the idea of civilisation from the biological determinists would, eventually, pave the way for the appearance of 'culture' in IR and ensure that the concept would play a part in the post-war reconstruction of international politics.

3.1 - What is the Great Illusion?

It is an obvious point that authors write about the subjects that concern them most, but one easily overlooked or distorted when taken out of context. In sincerity at least, the contextual methodology is most advantageous for reading early IR texts and we can witness the benefits of this approach on Norman Angell's famous work *The Great Illusion*. We are familiar enough with Norman Angell's 'Idealism' within IR, but less well publicised are the arguments he constructed around his internationalist outlook and why. While Boas was arguing against evolutionary thinking in the United States, Angell set about arguing against another manifestation of evolutionism, 'the survival of the fittest,' or Social Darwinism as S.J. Stearns calls it, in international politics.[5] It is little known, or insufficiently known, that *The Great Illusion* was a popularisation of his arguments against biological determinism and that it was this, as much as, if not more than, his anti-war sentiments, that comprised the central component in his thinking. The 'great illusion' turns out to be all the manifestations of biological determinism in international politics.

Angell breaks his argument into numerous 'optical illusions;' the key ones are of successful military conquest, the transfer of wealth to the strongest parties, and an unchanging human nature. The assumption that the most powerful and the most aggressive states can conquer and inherit the earth, as well as profit by it, are dangerous illusions for Angell, since this form of IR relies on a conception of an unalterable human nature, and it

---

[4]   To be sure, I am not claiming that Norman Angell single-handedly redefined civilisation or indeed that this text succeeded in that matter alone. It is that Angell is representative of a growing number of intellectuals, many of whom, significantly, end up as IR scholars, who object to the determinists grip on the idea of civilisation.

[5]   The term Social Darwinism is misleading, primarily because many social scientists turn out to be more influenced by Lamarck than Darwin, for these reasons the term Darwinism rather than Social Darwinism is preferred here. Herbert Spencer who coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest' was "a crude Lamarckian," according to Adam Kuper, as is Angell who was influenced by Spencer. Strictly speaking, Darwinian theory is a matter of biological selection, while Angell factors the environment into his thesis; therefore, S.J. Stearns misleads us, to some extent, with his introductory terms. See Adam Kuper (1988), Chapter 1

is the prevailing view (or 'conventional standard') of the 'nature' of human nature in international politics that the author sets about demolishing. The book itself is divided into three parts; the first part deals with 'the economics of the case,' the second part, 'the human nature of the case,' while the final section offers a 'practical outcome' to the problems of international relations as Angell perceived them. Angell's thesis first appeared in essay form in 1909 before it was expanded into a volume in 1911. Inevitably, the book gained in popularity during the war and inter-war period, but this is not my concern here. As the work pre-dates the war, it covers a wide range of issues, not simply the prevention of war, and affords additional insight into the institutionalisation of interest in that subject we know as international relations.

The strongest element to emerge from the work is Angell's emphasis on global interdependence. However, the fundamental argument, and one of the interesting aspects of the work from a contextual point of view, is that it takes issue with the prevailing and dominant ideas of the day. Whether the assumptions and problems that Angell discussed represent the dominant social view is not of concern here; the fact that Angell wrote as if they were, is significant for our understanding of this work. What is more, Angell frequently refers to contemporary and popular literature in order to illustrate the kinds of ideas he opposes and to make his points against contemporary figures.[6] From this we gain a good insight into the kinds of assumptions and arguments that Angell found problematic, assumptions that he describes as 'the great illusion' of his time.

The key substantive issue in the text concerns the Anglo-German naval rivalry and rearmament programmes, which form the back drop to Angell's argument. Rearmament caused Angell considerable unease, simply because he thought talk of war and preparation for it would eventually lead to conflict. Moreover, the rivalry exhibits all the characteristics of 'the illusion.' Drawing out the similarities between the British and German people and challenging stereotypes is an important feature of the book.[7] Angell was no pacifist or unilateralist, as he made clear, but the Anglo-German rivalry provides Angell with the perfect example for demonstrating the anachronistic content of ideas that he believed

---

[6] For example, he frequently draws upon articles and letters published in *The Times*, *The Spectator*, and *The Daily Mail*. He opposes, among others, Theodore Roosevelt, General Homer Lea, and Admiral Mahon.

[7] See, for example, Angell's discussion of Mr. Blatchford, Norman Angell (1911/1972), pp.263/5 & p.291

dominated the pre-war period. It is not that Angell thinks these ideas are morally questionable; it is that they are, in his conception, fundamentally out of date and inappropriate for the current state of civilisation. The perception that civilisation has reached a new level in its development and one that renders many of the prevailing assumptions redundant, is the central thesis informing Angell's work. This much is indicated in Part 1 of the book, which is devoted to refuting the notion that economically there is much to be gained by being the strongest and most dominant party in international relationships by relying on the evidence of the transformation in international economic affairs. Here Angell is principally arguing against a Darwinian conception of economic relationships, but interestingly he retains the language of 'race' and 'survivalism' in order to make his case, which only serves to reveal how widely accepted this form of discourse was. Part 2 of the text focuses on the idea that war, or "general pugnacity" as he calls it, is an inherent feature of human nature and 'bred in the bone.' This section merely reinforces the argument made in "the economics of the case," but here the objection is biological determinism and the modern scientific twist given to the ancient idea that man's nature is fixed in a conflictual way. Part 3 offers the reader practical solutions to the problems Angell identifies.

It is one of the most striking features of early IR literature that commentators believed that they were living in a 'new age' and one that was markedly different from that of the previous generation. The massive development of international organisations, the expansion of global interdependence in trade, finance and manufacture, is something we take for granted these days.[8] To turn of the century theorists, however, these developments all appeared remarkably new and were an observation they frequently made much of.[9] For Angell these new developments herald the need for a new philosophy, or at least mark the death of an old one. As he tells us,

> Most of what the nineteenth century has taught us of the evolution of life on the planet
> is pressed into the service of this struggle-for-life philosophy. We are reminded of the

---

[8]   For discussions of these developments, see John Boli and George Thomas (1999). F.S.L. Lyons in *Internationalism in Europe 1915-1914* (Leyden: A.W. Sythoff. 1963) identified some 200 organisations, cited in Akira Iriye (1997), p.28.
[9]   Chris Brown has said, "What is truly remarkable is that we no longer find all this remarkable – at least not within the countries of the advanced industrial world" and it is worth reminding ourselves of the unique nature of the developments occurring at this time, I believe. Chris Brown (1997), p7

survival of the fittest, that the weakest go to the wall, and that all life, sentient and non-sentient, is but a life of battle.[10]

Clearly, the 'struggle for life' between states over territory and economic prosperity are obvious grounds with which Angell can take issue in view of the growth of international interdependence. Economic interdependence is a key aspect of his thesis and this makes him, as David Long and Cornelia Navari point out, among the first theorists to focus on global interdependence in international relations.[11] Angell's recognition of growing global interdependence, and the increase in co-operation that he believed would inevitably be generated, are the obvious source of his 'idealism.' However, Angell was arguing against the dominant popular and intellectual sentiments of his day; sentiments that were preoccupied with the survival of the fittest in social and international terms.[12] As Navari points out, Angell tackles the question of liberal internationalism in its "modern sociological form," which, in her view, "marks a vital shift in... [this] tradition."[13] This is an important observation by Navari, since advocating 'new thinking' is the main purpose of *The Great Illusion*, but Angell is 'marking a vital shift' in more than one 'tradition' here. It is not just that Angell is drawn to economic interdependence in a sociological way; it is perhaps more important that, at this point in time, he, like Boas after him, is attempting to break with a scientific tradition – biological determinism. This explains why he devotes so much time to unpacking, carefully, the ideas that the strongest states gain all of the benefits and that this, somehow, amounts to a fixed 'law' of human nature.[14] It is co-operation in all of its expressions that figures as his main point of concern.

It is true that Angell is occupied with arguing against laissez faire economics, but it is the way in which he is concerned about liberal economics that is most revealing. For it is the expansion of international interdependence and the implication this has for international politics that determine the nature of his arguments. In a crucial passage stressing the interdependence of communities, Angell says

---

[10]   Norman Angell (1911/1972), p.4
[11]   See David Long in David Long and Peter Wilson eds. (1995), Chapter 12; & Cornelia Navari (1989)
[12]   Norman Angell (1911/1972), See Part II, Chapter III especially.
[13]   Cornelia Navari (1989), p.342
[14]   Angell refers to small states that, under the prevailing paradigm ought not to exist let alone thrive and behave decently to their neighbours.   See for example, Norman Angell (1911/1972), pp.60/2 & p.35

105

> In a thousand respects association cuts across State boundaries, which are purely
> conventional, and render the biological division of mankind into independent and
> warring States a scientific ineptitude.[15]

The language could not be plainer; dividing humanity along biological lines in order to render them into warring states is a scientific ineptitude. Angell is not claiming that it is a 'moral ineptitude' or even an economic one; it is a matter of faulty scientific thinking, which was a critical stance at the time and, to some extent, a radical one. The nature-nurture debate was only just beginning in the United States; Franz Boas, Robert Lowie and Albert Kroeber have not issued their 'intellectual manifestos' yet (see Chapter 1 this thesis). Yet, Angell, already, takes the view that "the natural law in this matter has been misread."[16] What is more, "[t]he individual in his sociological aspect is not the complete organism... [n]or is the nation" it is humanity in general.[17] It is revealing that Angell employs the term 'sociological' rather than anthropological, which indicates where the dominant disciplinary interests lie.[18]

Angell accepts that 'general pugnacity' is not disappearing but emphasises, in common with many thinkers of this period, that the conditions of life have changed dramatically, and it is this that renders aggression out of date and anachronistic. Modern life is redefining the nature of international relations and changing the nature of civilisation.[19] Repeatedly Angell argues that the idea of the 'survival of the fittest' is erroneous, especially in war.

> War... does not make for the elimination of the unfit and the survival of the fit.   It
> would be truer to say that it makes for the survival of the unfit.[20]

War was not the province of the "civilised" in Angell's view and it certainly was not evidence of the survival of the fittest nations. That war might be the province of the fittest clearly derives from evolutionary thought, however, Angell's objection to the philosophy of

---

[15]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.154
[16]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.146
[17]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.146
[18]   Reminding the reader that Anthropology was a very small discipline, conducted by only a handful of scholars in both Britain and America. Elsewhere, Angell says, "that the process of elimination of the good in favour of the bad is quite as much sociological as biological" further confirming his Larmarckian sympathies. Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.196
[19]   Angell says that he has been thinking about the changes for "some fifteen years." Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.313
[20]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p,194 – the point also appears on p.74

the survival of the fittest in all spheres of life, does not imply that Angell was against evolutionary thinking altogether. On the contrary, Angell is very much in keeping with much evolutionary thinking of his day, but he does not rest his argument on 'evolution alone.' He couples evolution with "common sense and common observation."[21] Angell rejects the genetic approach to politics for one that allows space for the environment. He acknowledges the 'new environmental thinking' of which Herbert Spencer was a leading figure at the time. Angell was clearly drawn to and influenced by Spencer's historicist sociology, which confirms in him a Lamarckian rather than a Darwinian evolutionary mode.[22] Following Spencer's distinction between militancy and industrialisation, as indicated by J.D.B. Miller, Norman Angell suggested, "that just as one gets away from militancy one gets towards advance and civilization."[23] Spencer enables Angell to remain well within the confines of the biological and evolutionary frame of reference (the dominant ideology) and to allow space for environmental influence that enable him to conceive of alternative constructs for international politics.[24]

It is Angell's thesis that humanity can create a new world, by adapting itself to the new environment. "The most recent opinion on evolution would go to show that environment plays an even larger rôle in the formation of character than selection."[25] What is important is that Angell accepts human society as a biological whole –

> Man's struggle is the struggle of the organism, which is human society, in its adaptation to its environment, the world – not the struggle between different parts of the same organism.[26]

In the footnote that accompanies this passage in the Third edition of the book, Angell points to a recent publication by M.J. Novikow who makes the similar case about the correct application to society of evolutionary theory.[27] Following Herbert Spencer and Professor

---

[21]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.172

[22]   Angell refers to Herbert Spencer on several occasions. Norman Angell, *ibid*, see pages 145, 157, 159, 187, & 224

[23]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.190, see also p.187. J.D.B. Miller in David Long & Peter Wilson eds. (1995), p.106

[24]   For example, when demonstrating the negative impact of war having killed off the fittest of men and leaving the unfit, Angell refers to the impact of the Napoleonic Wars, the outcome of which was the French shrunk an inch in height, apparently. Norman Angell (1911/1972), footnote pp.194-5

[25]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, see last footnote bottom p.172

[26]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.144-5

[27]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, footnote p.145

Karl Pearson, Angell draws on Novikow to demonstrate that the "real application of the biological law" is to the whole of human society, not simply elements of it.[28] As with the reference to 'the new environmental thinking' mentioned above, Angell is participating in an on-going debate here, along with a growing number of intellectuals.[29] His reference to literature published between the First and a Third edition of *The Great Illusion* indicates how topical a subject of debate 'correct' evolutionary thinking was. According to evolutionary schema, and when placing humanity alongside other 'organisms,'

> The higher the organism, the greater the elaboration and interdependence of its part[s], the greater the need for co-ordination... If we take this as the reading of the biological law, the whole thing becomes plain; man's irresistible drift away from conflict and towards co-operation is but the completer adaptation of the organism (man) to its environment (the planet, wild nature), resulting in a more intense vitality.[30]

Although Angell is quick to point out that "[c]o-operation does not exclude competition," this is not an argument for harmonious and familial existence.[31] It is simply that, in Angell's view, the evolutionary law has been misinterpreted.[32] "Our struggle is with our environment, not with one another," he says, while the substantive 'facts' of developments taking place within civilisation have been misread, or pass unrecognised.[33] In theory, humanity is a complete organism, while empirical evidence of interdependence has altered relations to such an extent that in Angell's view "the possibility of one part injuring another without [causing] injury to itself has been diminished."[34] Psychological, moral and intellectual changes clearly do occur and must, therefore, contradict and undermine the determinists' thesis. History is littered, in Angell's view, with the evidence that supports his case.

Ultimately, it is the change in mentality on which Angell's argument for a different view of international relations rests.

---

28   Norman Angell, *ibid*, footnote p.145
29   The First edition of the book generated much criticism; Angell tells us that he has collected some 300 cuttings. Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.303/4 & Chapter II, Part III on his critics generally.
30   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.146
31   Norman Angell, *ibid*, footnote p.146
32   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.183
33   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.231
34   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.230

I have attempted to show how enormously the mechanical development of civilization

is shifting the real conflict of humanity from the physical to the intellectual plane.[35]

The nature of the intellectual plane is crucial to Angell's thesis. Where there has been technical/mechanical progress, there is (or should be) intellectual progress; the problem is, according to Angell, that people have not consciously recognised this. Unlike biological determinists, the intellectual plane is not 'immutable' for Angell; substantive changes and developments confirm that humanity can, must and will have to adapt to the new environmental circumstances in which it finds itself. What is more, Angell believes that the rapid rate at which mechanical development and interdependence is increasing amounts to a 'Law of Acceleration' in history.[36] Opening up the idea of civilisation to environmental influence and visualising humanity as a complete organism allows for a shift in the argument against biological determinism. The crucial factor in international survival exists on the 'intellectual plane' not the physical one; the real force that matters is "of intelligence, character, and rationalism."[37] The significance of the intellectual plane becomes readily apparent towards the end of the book.

The only permanent revolutions in the history of civilization are those that result from a revolution of ideas.[38]

The main difficulties confronting politicians come from ideas and social divisions that cut across state boundaries, since 'civilisation,' in this respect, knows no boundaries.

The role of the intellect and intellectuals in shaping the world was acquiring greater significance in the face of biological determinism, and it was an increasingly widespread assumption, fuelled by the hierarchic assumptions of civilisation, that the intellectual plane was what mattered the most, even in international politics. Angell rejects the prevailing scientific view as he saw it.

It is urged that the condition of man's advance in the past has been the survival of the fit by struggle and warfare, and that in such struggle it is precisely those endowed with combativeness and readiness to fight who have survived. Thus the tendency to

---

[35]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.108 – see also Chapter V, Part II
[36]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.158
[37]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.233
[38]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.315/6

combat is not a mere human perversity, but is part of the self-protective instinct rooted in profound biological laws – the struggle of nations for survival.[39]

Struggle and war between nations rests upon the assumption that fighting is a "manly" and virtuous thing to do.[40] Education and civilisation will ensure that violence diminishes among individuals and will also serve to undermine the erroneous assumption that the state is like an individual person. The State is not akin to a person, in Angell's view, a conviction that stands in sharp contrast to the organic, national, racial, and, emerging, kultur-based conceptions of the state. Finally in Part 3, Angell offers practical advice on the means of countering 'the great illusion.' He proposes a propaganda campaign against the prevailing political philosophy.[41] Education departments would draw up new curricula to train the citizens of the future in the new thinking that should accompany the newly materialised civilised world order.[42] The choice is between "great moral and intellectual movements" and leadership on the one hand, and "blind obedience to primitive instinct and old prejudices..." on the other.[43] Matthew Arnold would have been impressed, I think, with Angell's proposed programme of education.

3.2 – A Civilising Environment

The key challenge Angell poses is the question of what civilisation is all about. Is the future of international relations determined by social and biological forces beyond our control, or is it more flexible and open to reconstruction? While the bigger challenge is one of whether civilisation belongs to everyone and if it does, what will it look like? Angell's answer is clear, civilisation belongs to everyone, although it was obvious to him that there were plenty of uncivilized areas that required 'civilising.' The retention of the evolutionary framework is crucial, because it permits Angell to speak of progress, development, and advance under the term of civilisation while also accepting that civilisation evolves.

The prevalence of the concept of civilisation, noted in Chapter 1 (this thesis), pervades early IR theorists' work with the equal passion and persuasion held in society at

---

[39] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.134
[40] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.185 – see also pp.138-9
[41] Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.328/9
[42] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.330
[43] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.331

large and Angell is quite typical in this respect.[44] Assessing the context and the work of his peers sheds light on how Angell fits in with both the early heritage of the discipline (the context in a broad sense) and his overall ambitions (illocutionary force). In the letter in which David Davies and his sisters proposed the founding of the Woodrow Wilson Chair at Aberystwyth, Davies argued, "old problems must be confronted in a new spirit." The new Chair was established "in memory of the fallen students of our University... and for the encouragement of a truer understanding of civilisation other than our own." The need to understand and further civilisation was at the heart of many intellectual problems, but since the dominant 'paradigm' was biologically determinist, this makes Angell's work all the more significant. The key debates about the nature of people are conducted under the concept of civilisation and spill over to international politics. Angell's work represents a rejection of that biologically deterministic view of civilisation and all of the implications it has for international politics. What would international relations be like if the determinists were right? This is more than a question of peace, but a theoretical issue surrounding the correct interpretation of civilised progress itself, as the Davies's letter shows.

The backlash against biological determinism manifested itself in all areas of the social science, from the work of the Boasians in the United States, to Julian Huxley and A.C. Haddon's famous rejection of race in 1935.[45] While World War One clearly served to make the 'truer understanding of civilisation' all the more urgent and the founding of a formal programme of study all the more necessary, it is easy to ignore the general interest in civilisation that predated the war and fuelled some of the major theoretical questions of the day. To illustrate just how important an issue this is, in 1916, Leonard Woolf argued that in its

> broadest aspect the problem is to develop a whole system of international relationship in which public war shall be as impossible between civilised States as is private war in civilised States.[46]

Woolf pointed out that the problem itself was not new, and elaborated that

---

[44] See David Davies (University of Wales 1918); Gilbert Murray (1948); Philip Noel-Baker (1925); Leonard Woolf (1916). Gerrit Gong discusses the prevalence of the concept especially as it appeared in international law and commentaries on law by leading scholars from the 19th century to the early 20th. Gerrit Gong (1984)

[45] Julian S. Huxley & A.C. Haddon, *We Europeans: a survey of 'racial' problems*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935)

[46] Leonard Woolf (1916), p.8

It has for many centuries exercised the minds of those people who, because they were civilised, have at all times been contemptuously called theorists and Utopians by plain men, their contemporaries; but periodically, when the world is swept by the cataclysm called war, plain men, amazed to find that they are not civilised, have themselves raised a cry for the instant solution of the problem.[47]

It would be easy to read Woolf's objection to war in this statement as *idealist*, or, in his terms, 'utopian,' but the underlying focus is the distinction between those people who 'are civilised' and those who 'are amazed to find that they are not' – a distinction that carried considerable normative weight at the time. Clearly, in 1916, war was the subject that provided the focal point of any discussion on civilisation, but what it meant to be civilised was hardly a foregone conclusion in the *idealist* sense, from an IR point of view. As Gilbert Murray commented several years later, the early supporters of the idea of a League of Nations

were ridiculed as cranks with our new and fantastic 'League of Notions'; as unpatriotic, with no pride in the Empire and its achievements; as unpractical pacifists when advocating general disarmament, and as war-mongers when demanding the fulfilment of the obligations of the League against aggressors.[48]

That the early supporters of the League 'were ridiculed as cranks' is very revealing, for it tells us that the public perception on this matter altered considerably in the process of the war and with the establishment of the League itself.

Part of this process of changing public perception centred on re-defining the concept of civilisation itself and this was a process that had begun well before the League was established as *The Great Illusion* indicates. Angell is not consciously redefining civilisation because he is not openly arguing that people change the meanings attached to the term, rather, he is participating in a debate over the correct interpretation of the nature of civilisation. Angell's intention is to persuade readers that his interpretation of civilisation is the 'correct' one for the 'new' age, which is, predominantly, an intellectual matter in his view. Angell argues that the words attached to and the concepts popularly associated with civilisation are no longer appropriate for the empirical evidence of the

---

[47]   Leonard Woolf, *ibid*, p.8
[48]   Gilbert Murray (1948), pp.2/3

'stage' of civilisation he finds himself inhabiting. His book aims to bring society face to face with the reality, as he sees it, of social change. In this sense, *The Great Illusion*, forms as much a part of the social change as the 'mechanical developments of civilisation' itself.

Angell's fundamental thesis is Lamarckian. He bases the main points of his case on the fact that civilisation has progressed and that this has not only profoundly altered substantive relations, notably economic, but has also effected a profound psychological change in human behaviour. The assumption of continued progress is an essential element of his argument, but Angell's idea of progress is one tempered by environmental influence.[49] By way of numerous historical comparisons, from the Roman period, the medieval era, and examples of mechanical developments, he demonstrates how much life has changed both normatively and structurally.[50] More than a few of his examples appeal explicitly to popular sentiment, but they also shed light on how Angell viewed history.[51] In order to demonstrate progressive co-operation over food for example, he tells us "cannibalism was a very common characteristic of early man."[52] This is a highly dubious claim, but nonetheless one that was, undoubtedly, easily accepted and made all the more plausible under the civilisation concept and the colonial experience of administering 'savages.'[53] In every respect, the advance of civilisation profoundly alters social life – it represents a normative advance. Quite simply, habits change and qualitatively so. "The German Generalissimo in London might be no more civilized than Attila himself, but he would soon find the difference between himself and Attila."[54] Modern life is completely different from all past forms in every way; this is especially noticeable in terms of the quality of life among 'civilised' nations.

> This interdependence is the result of the daily use of those contrivances of civilization **which date from yesterday** – the rapid post, the instantaneous dissemination of

---

[49]   Norman Angell (1911/1972).   See Chapter II, Part II in particular for evidence of progress.
[50]   Norman Angell, *ibid*. See p.229 for a list of mechanical changes & p.235 for values of Middle Ages.
[51]   Some of the language is blatantly offensive by today's standards.   See for example Angell's accounts of "the Dervish mind," "the Fuzzy-Wuzzy," and the "superior brain and character" of the English masters.   Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.232/3 Also see his approval of Professor William McDougals description of "barbarous peoples," pages.257 & 259
[52]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.147
[53]   Angell is fond of 'cannibalism' as well as Herbert Spencer – See Chapter III, Part II, where he discusses "The progress from cannibalism to Herbert Spencer." Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.157
[54]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.48/9

financial and commercial information by means of telegraphy, and generally the incredible progress of rapidity in communication...[55] (my emphasis)

It is the normative change that Angell relies on to reinforce his arguments that life has much improved. Duels have been abandoned. 'Herbert Spencer does not have the same feelings as Palaeolithic man' and 'Lord Roberts does not drive his motorcar over the bodies of young girls in the manner old North men drove their wagons.'[56] "What was once deemed a mere truism would now be viewed with horror and indignation."[57] The changes in religious practice are important illustrations of this point; the decline of religious persecution and the Christian crusades mark major forms of progress for Angell, who believes that these kinds of development will extend to other spheres.[58] "Is it to be expected," he asks, "that the rationalization and humanization which have taken place in the more complex domain of religious doctrine and belief will not also take place in the domain of patriotism?"[59] Although he does recognise the "survivals of the old temper," it is the changing attitude towards war that he considers most pressing, especially in view of the substantive developments taking place at his time of writing.[60]

To provide the reader with some sense of contemporary attitudes, Angell tells us that in 1871 Ernest Renan declared that "[w]ar is one of the conditions of progress, the sting which prevents a country from going to sleep, and compels satisfied mediocrity itself to awaken from its apathy."[61] In 1910, ex-President Roosevelt said in London, "[w]e despise a nation just as we despise a man who submits to insult."[62] From an early IR point of view, many argued that this mentality was disastrous, but crucially, the term employed to normatively entrench this fact was civilisation. Arguments based on the notion of 'the survival of the fittest,' as a determining outlook at the international level, were simply 'uncivilised' and therefore, inappropriate. Much of Angell's argument is directed against those prominent politicians, militarists and 'clergymen' who believed that 'war facilitated

---

[55]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.47
[56]   Norman Angell, *ibid*.   On duels, see pages 160 & 175.   Reference to Herbert Spencer and Lord Roberts is on p.159
[57]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.163
[58]   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.162-7 & 308
[59]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.166
[60]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.237
[61]   Cited in Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.139
[62]   Cited in Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.139, repeated p.175

progress and was a significant factor in the development of civilisation and humanity.'[63]
'Warlike nations will not inherit the earth.' Angell argues that they may conquer territory but they will not reap the benefits that civilisation has constructed, which is why 'new' thinking is inevitable in Angell's view.[64] What is more, Angell states quite categorically "the world as a whole is drifting away from the tendency to warfare."[65] All that remains is to change the public's opinion and the mindset of a few old generals who seem to think that the only 'true patriot is the one who fights.'[66] Under 'modern conditions,' according to Angell, it was no longer acceptable to link civilisation to war as Theodore Roosevelt and his generation had done. Many early IR thinkers, including Norman Angell, David Davies, Philip Noel Baker, and Leonard Woolf, accepted a different or new interpretation of civilisation; to be civilised was, in their view, to be peaceful. *The Great Illusion* seeks to rescue the idea of civilisation from the "military conception" of it.[67] Indeed, Angell claims that even "war is becoming as hopelessly intellectual and scientific as any other form of work."[68] We can begin to see why the role of the environment in augmenting changes in the intellectual plane or mentality occupies a prominent position in this text. In Angell's view, the environment is all the things that the process of civilisation and progress brings, and, more importantly, it is political (see below). How Angell thinks about differences between people in this respect, acquires considerable significance with regard to my interests here.

3.3 - Difference, Race and Culture

Angell wholly relies on the language of civilisation and, in these terms, *The Great Illusion* offers useful insights as well as confirmation of the pervasiveness of the civilisation concept and evolutionary social theory. Angell, unquestioningly, accepts the distinctions of the civilised, uncivilised, and "semicivilized territory" (the New World).[69] There are

---

[63] See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.137/8
[64] See Norman Angell, *ibid*, Chapter IV, Part 11
[65] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.168
[66] Angell is clearly disgruntled with General Lea and Admiral Mahan – see for example, Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.168-70 for Lea & p.35 for Mahan. Force is not the 'foundation of civilized life' for Angell as it was for Professor Spenser Wilkinson with whom Angell takes issue, Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.247/250
[67] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.186
[68] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.234
[69] Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.108

references to, a "civilized world"; "civilized community"; 'economically civilized countries'; and even taxation, it appears, is a matter of civilized standards.[70] The outcome of the Boer War in particular leads him to discuss the 'civilised treatment of natives' by colonial states.[71] Angell also recognises the existence of "moral differences," not only between different periods of history but also between different states.[72] However, whatever moral differences do exist between states it becomes clear that civilisation is the determinant factor. There is, he says, "no such thing as British morality as opposed to French or German morality, or art, or industry."[73] The moral differences that do occur are between the different 'races' and religions. Angell is challenging the conceptual assumptions of readers who believe human nature is unchanging, but crucially only **within** the confines of the civilisation concept and with the new version of evolutionary thought to hand. Angell is not offering a radical rejection of the conventional standards of his age, but a critical stance.

There are only five references (emphasised below) to 'culture' and its grammatical derivatives in *The Great Illusion*. All of these references to 'culture' are made in association with other authors and appear late in the text. This implies that 'culture' was not a term that Angell was comfortable with in his own work. Of these examples, only one is ambiguous enough to be read as either Arnoldian or Boasian, all of the others are obviously Arnoldian. The first two appear in a quotation from Herbert Spencer who refers to "**uncultured** masses" and "the **cultured**," and does not appear until page 224, a good way through the book.[74] The third reference is to "[a]n able and **cultivated** British officer," while the fourth is in connection with "a man of sterling character and **culture**."[75] Each of these instances of 'culture' express an Arnoldian outlook; only the final example might be read alternatively. In a footnote, Angell cites an uncertain author; ""Germany implies not one people but many peoples,...of different **culture**, different political and social

---

[70]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, "civilized world," p.133; "civilized community," p.252; economics, p.51 and taxation, p.71

[71]   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp. 96/7

[72]   Moral differences can be turned into causes of war, not simply as the result of religious dogma, but as between races, i.e. the fanatical Asian races can be set against the white race.   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.135/6

[73]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.255

[74]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.224

[75]   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pages 242 & 243 respectively.   Here Angell is speaking in connection with Captain March Phillips and J.A. Hobson.

institutions...""[76] The reference to 'peoples and their culture' sounds very similar to the modern concept, however we should remind ourselves that academically speaking this concept still has a long to travel before it reaches fruition in its anthropological sense in the social sciences. This example aside, it is most relevant to my concerns, not to mention obvious, that Angell does not employ the language of culture in his own writing. It is civilisation not 'culture' that is his most favoured term, while the key to understanding his lack of use of the term 'culture' lies in his discussion of differences.

Angell clearly recognises differences both within and between communities, and where he discusses these differences, he employs the language of race. That race is the language of difference and differentiation is very much in keeping with the dominant notions informing the concept of civilisation and evolutionary thinking at this time, as indicated by George Stocking and Ivan Hannaford.[77] Angell argues that "our terminology is a survival of conditions no longer existing, and our mental conceptions follow at the tail of our vocabulary."[78] "International politics," Angell insists, "are still dominated by terms applicable to conditions which the processes of modern life have altogether abolished."[79] Nevertheless, modern life has not removed 'the tyranny of obsolete terminology' entirely even for Norman Angell.[80] Remnants of old language remain and since Angell does not recognise them 'as survivals' as we would today, this must mean that certain terms and phrases, especially those associated with race and hierarchy, remain useful and connected to the modern condition in a manner that is uncritically accepted by Angell and his readers. Angell has no difficulty in referring to "savage peoples" and "backward or disorderly populations," while race is *the* prevalent term.[81] There are "warlike races;" "peoples of the Germanic race;" "the white race;" and "a thousand different races scattered over various parts of the earth."[82] There is no "inherent racial hostility" in the national characters of the British, French or Germans, it is that "respective interests or apparent interests have

---

[76]   Cited by Norman Angell, *ibid*, footnote p.265
[77]   George Stocking, (1968/1982), Chapter 6 generally, and p.112, where he says race must be considered part of evolutionary thinking.   Ivan Hannaford (1996) Chapter 10, Part II
[78]   Norman Angell (1911/1972), p.44
[79]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.44
[80]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.108
[81]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.45 & p.121 respectively.
[82]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, "warlike races," p.17; "peoples of the Germanic race," p.39; "the white race," p.107; and "a thousand different races," p.261

modified in the last ten years, and our political preferences have modified with them."[83]
The Great Illusion urges contemporaries to adapt their modes of thought and their politics
to the new modern state of civilization. They can construct their own future if they have
the right ideas and intellectual outlook, while interdependence brings co-operation and
mutuality that mean progress is inevitable. This is an important point. What differences do
exist, as Angell perceives them, they are not as determining an aspect of international
politics as others (who are more biologically minded) imagine.

Perhaps of greater relevance to IR than Angell's acceptance of race, is his interest in
the differences within states, which he acknowledges can be as great as, if not greater than,
those that exist between states. Angell explicitly rejects the 'approximation of the state to a
person' and "the conception of a State as the embodiment of "the whole people's
conception of what is true etc.""[84]

> A State is nothing of the sort. Take the British Empire. This State embodies not a
> homogenous conception, but a series of often absolutely contradictory conceptions of
> "what is true, etc."...[85]

'Modern tendencies' have 'broken up the doctrinal homogeneity' upon which the analogy
between the state and a person rests – this simply becomes evidence of "the survival of a
terminology which has become obsolete."[86] For Angell, states may not be homogenous but
tribes clearly are, which marks the presence of an assumption long remaining in IR, even
though anthropological literature tells us otherwise.[87] What is certain is that European
races and provinces "have become so inextricably mixed" that the ""natural" and
"inherent" divisions" no longer make sense.[88] Substantively, interdependence has made it

> impossible to fix the limits of the community, and to say what is one community and
> what is another. Certainly the State limits no longer define the limits of the
> community...[89]

---

83   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.258 & p.259 respectively.
84   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.255 & Chapter VI, Part 2 generally.
85   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.255
86   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.257
87   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.259/260. Also see Hedley Bull (1977/1995), p.61
88   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.261
89   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.153

Community interests in all of their variety, "material and moral," have no regard for 'State boundaries,' which "renders the analogy between nations and individuals an utterly false one."[90] Angell reinforces the substantive lack of homogeneity within communities –

> An English nobleman has more community of thought and feeling with a European Continental aristocrat (will marry his daughter, for instance) than he would think of claiming with such "fellow" British countrymen as a Bengal babu, a Jamaica negro, or even a Dorset yokel.[91]

State boundaries have become disassociated with the interests and concerns of the people within it. Moreover, "[i]t is no longer possible to hold an entire nation collectively responsible for the action of its Government, and educated people are coming more and more the world over to realize this fact."[92] Governments no longer 'speak on behalf' of a people in a coherent and homogenised sense, or if they do, 'educated people' are able to disconnect the Government from the nation. Civilised people can make a distinction – they do not hate or blame all Germans or Russians for the policies of their governments, whereas, the Chinese Boxers, an uncivilised lot, were apparently incapable of making this kind of distinction.[93] The substantive fact of the internal differences that Angell recognises leads him to envisage cosmopolitan alliances that transcend state boundaries. Under this conception of civilisation, intellectual and racial affinity can transcend other forms of difference.

> Will not our children find better and more congenial conditions... in Philadelphia, which is "foreign," than in Bombay, which we "own"?[94]

Some states are clearly more civilised than others are, while some nations, like people, are more advanced than others and have more in common with each other.

The crucial question then is one of where Angell thinks the most significant divisions and important differences lie and critically, in what terms. The pertinent differences seem to lie, for Angell, in the "sentimental sphere" but even here, "association

---

[90]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.153
[91]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.153
[92]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.175
[93]   See Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.175-6 for discussion of Russian sinking of a Hull trawler and Chinese morality. On the Boxer rebellion and the Chinese inability to distinguish between 'foreign devils' see Norman Angell, *ibid*, pp.262/3. Gerrit Gong also discusses the semi-civilised Chinese and the Boxer rebellion as problematic to the 'standard of civilization'. Gerrit Gong (1984), p.28
[94]   Norman Angell (1911/1972), p.111

and co-operation" will emerge.[95] In a crucial passage, that seems to pre-empt Samuel Huntington, Angell says,

> We shall come to realize that the **real** psychic and moral divisions are not as between nations, but as between opposing conceptions of life.[96] (my emphasis)

Elsewhere, Angell offers a number of examples that

> includes conceptions absolutely opposed to other conceptions in the same State, but many of them absolutely agreeing with conceptions in foreign States.[97]

It would be very easy to read these 'opposing conceptions of life' in terms of the Boasian notion of 'culture,' and it would be completely erroneous to do so from a contextual point of view. To read 'opposing conceptions of life' as 'culture' would be to re-transcribe the terms that Angell employed into language he did not use and probably would not recognise. However, the recognition of 'opposing conceptions of life' does raise a general theoretical question. If recognition of differences between communities is as old as humanity itself, then what difference does it make for us to think that what Angell refers to as 'opposing conceptions of life' now means 'culture as a way of life?' Seemingly, acknowledging competing conceptual systems would be the same thing no matter what terms are employed. In this particular instance however, and restricting our interest to the word 'culture,' it is certain that the actual word 'culture' means something very different in the text, and so by reinterpreting other ideas while also employing the same term would be to invite confusion. More importantly, and in addition to this contextual point, the language employed today surrounding difference is very different from the language employed in Angell's time.

Angell makes it quite clear that community is impossible to locate and that interests cut across State boundaries; it is not certain that particular conceptions of life can be so easily attributed to the kinds of community scholars identify today and this is an important point. The main sources of distinction, in 1911, are between 'the civilised' and 'uncivilised races' and religions, although Angell has no difficulty in accepting that "[o]ne may, indeed, talk of an English conception of life, because that is a conception of life peculiar to

---

[95]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.155
[96]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.155
[97]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.255 – he is referring to the British Empire, which contains "the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Copt, the Catholic, the Protestant, the Pagan conceptions of right and truth." It is clear that religion is a major source of these 'opposing conceptions of life.'

England..."[98] Whatever Angell has in mind here as the content of 'conceptions of life' (and it is on the whole limited to religious conceptions) it cannot be the same thing that the Boasian concept of culture invokes; quite aside from the fact that the Boasian concept was not in place in 1911. For the Boasian, culture is more than religious outlooks and what is more, it is wholly disconnected from race. Indeed, the concept came into being precisely to oppose the kind of hierarchic, progressive and racial argument that Angell's thesis propounds. Furthermore, Angell is convinced that eventually even the 'psychic' differences will be eliminated.

> Just as in material things community of interest and relationship cut clear across State boundaries, so inevitably will the psychic community of interest come so to do.[99]

Angell's belief in 'the psychic community of interest' cutting across state boundaries serves as a good illustration of a fundamental theoretical point; namely, how similar issues can be captured by alternative conceptual frameworks and evaluated in competing ways.

Norman Angell believed that civilisation would progress and continue to progress to such a level that it would extend, eventually, to the whole of humanity. However, what is clear is that an extension of civilisation would not put an end to differences within the world entirely. Under the terms of his thesis, there would still be different 'races' and, presumably religions also. Even if the 'uncivilized' all became civilized and 'opposing conceptions of life' became the same conception of life, meaning that we shared the same religion, the racial component would remain and would therefore continue as a source of differentiation under the civilisation concept.[100] 'Civilisation' does not destroy this kind of difference. Moreover, Angell seems to suggest that national conceptions will remain, as is the case, for example, with the English who live under civilisation with the Scots. The conception of difference within the framework of the civilisation concept, even anti-biological determinist readings of civilisation, does not, necessarily, lead to an understanding of the world in terms similar to those found in (anthropological) culture theory. The contrast between Angell's epistemic outlook and that of the Boasians is quite

---

[98]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.255
[99]   Norman Angell, *ibid*, p.154
[100]   It is only when the existence of race has been denied that this form of categorising difference disappears, or is capable of disappearing. Similarly, when the concept of civilisation comes under threat, because it is racist, then this framework for situating other people and their differences becomes discredited. Whether Boasian culture is a viable alternative to civilisation is much doubted here.

profound. Under the Boasian concept of culture sharing the same 'way of life' (or civilisation) and eliminating 'opposing conceptions of life' is something to be feared and resisted, precisely because it is believed that this level of harmonisation would remove all 'known' forms of differentiation. An international manifestation of (cultural) sharing is feared because it would seem to entail the removal of all of the essential forms of difference (particularly conceptions of life) in favour of a homogenised (civilised) world. The suggestion that there might be a 'psychic community of interest' above and beyond material matters is one likely to strike terror in the heart of a committed 'culturalist.' How well founded the fear of homogenisation is, is open to question. Certainly, it would not have been a question that would have occurred to Angell and his contemporaries, although it is a problem inherent in the Boasian concept of culture. In the same way that Angell recognised a German race and a British one, he and his contemporaries acknowledged that most white Europeans were 'civilised' but that did not make them the same type of Europeans. All of which raises an interesting proposition concerning the current (Boasian) culture concept – it is not so much that differences would be foolishly ignored if we were to abandon the Boasian concept, it is rather a question of whether this concept best accounts for the differences that plainly do exist. It is clear that sharing the same culture in contemporary terms is not like sharing the same civilisation under Norman Angell, either substantively or theoretically. Nor is Angell's conception of civilisation the same as Samuel Huntington's; there are glaring differences between these two scholars on this matter. Angell conceives of civilisation as a progressive and totalising phenomenon with an inherent potential for universal manifestation, whereas Huntington rejects this view completely, as we shall see in Chapter 7. On matters concerning the differences between people, especially with reference to maintaining or eliminating them, the gulf between Angell and contemporary culturalists (and for that matter civilisationalists) could not be greater. Early IR conceptualisations of community, commonality and diversity, found in Angell for example, are thoroughly disconnected from the idea of culture as a 'whole way of life.' Indeed, where the term 'culture' does appear in early literature, it does so in its Arnoldian guise, which points the way to alternative understandings of issues in international politics that have no need to rely on the Boasian idea of culture, at least in theory.

Summary

Despite the many criticisms of the term, *idealism* is the word that is commonly found supplying an explanation of the origins of the discipline.[101] From E.H. Carr onwards, we have tended to describe the internationalist sentiments scholars like Norman Angell espoused as *idealist*. From the standpoint of the protagonists however, this was more than a 'utopian' outlook, it represented a whole way of life – that of the civilised set against the barbarian, the savage and the 'uncivilised.' As Gerrit Gong has demonstrated, the criteria of civilisational spheres were deeply entrenched in turn of the century thinking and assumptions.[102] From a contextual viewpoint however, *idealism* is not wholly appropriate as a description of the literature of the founding period. On the one hand, no author describes him/herself in these terms, although some like Leonard Woolf recognised the sentiment as a form of abuse (see above), while on the other hand, it is the idea of civilisation not *idealism* that dominates early authors' thinking. Applying the term *idealism* retrospectively to the work of early scholars appears to obscure some important aspects of the literature from this period. The growing awareness of an emerging new order, or at least the frequent references to the 'death of an old one,' plus the recognition of a massive increase in global activity and international connections, are all concerns that predate the war and were central to commentators' interests in world politics. The idea that carries this increasing variety of interests and recognitions through in theory and practice is the idea of civilisation.

The concept of civilisation itself underwent a subtle, yet not inconsiderable, alteration, from an international relations perspective, around World War 1. Many an IR theorist was actively involved in propagating support for this change through their work in setting up the League of Nations, conducting the Peace Ballot and participating in public meetings, for example.[103] The key thing, from an international relations point of view, is that the concept of civilisation has to be 'rescued' from the determinists, be these religious, military, economic or scientific, all of whom drew strength from the, so-called, 'evolutionary law.' In rejecting this view of international relations, Angell created space

---

[101]   See David Long and Peter Wilson eds. (1995)
[102]   Gerrit Gong, (1984)
[103]   Key figures here include, David Davies, Gilbert Murray, Philip Noel-Baker, and Alfred Zimmern. See David Long and Peter Wilson eds. (1995)

123

for the environment and the hope of a more constructed form of progressive civilisation. Many of the early IR scholars took the view that the future of progress laid not with war and the 'old order' but in civility, peace, law, and rationality. This was the new mantra of civilisation and to claim civilisation's mantle, states would have to behave, like individuals, in an entirely different manner. In many respects, Angell is typically concerned with the well-being of civilisation, not because he fears that it will die out as the later inter-war theorists will do, but because he believes that it is the fate of all civilised and educated people to progress round to accepting the 'truths' he has uncovered.[104] For Angell, people who do not acknowledge the 'truth' of the matter are simply not concerned "for the well-being of civilization as a whole" as much as they ought to be.[105]

It is important to note, then, that although Angell discusses many issues that would be familiar to us in the post-Cold War era, namely internal diversity, international co-operation and economic interdependence and the problems these entail, he does not understand these things in terms of 'culture,' as we might be inclined to think of such things today. This much is confirmed by Angell's recognition of the importance of differences, be these religious, racial or national, but perhaps, of greater significance is the fact that Angell does not employ the term 'culture' even in its Arnoldian sense in his own voice. This is not so unusual. Leonard Woolf writing around the same period also makes no reference to 'culture' either, it is only during the League of Nations era that 'culture' in its Arnoldian sense comes into popular use in IR literature, as we shall see in the next chapter.[106] Furthermore, Angell's acceptance of race and environmental influence is entirely in keeping with Lamarckian evolutionary thinking, which enables him to accept, axiomatically, that civilisation will not only continue to progress but improve the nature of humanity and international politics as a consequence.

Angell's faith in civilisation is unquestionable. For pre-war scholars, civilisation is a concept beyond fundamental critique; it is the 'conventional conceptual standard' for the age. It will only be in the aftermath of the First World War that doubts over the substantive future of civilisation will be raised. Further, it will only be as the result of decolonisation

---

[104]   Gong suggests that the beginning of the end of the 'standard of civilization' in name at least, occurs 1937.   However, many British scholars continued to employ the concept of civilisation in their work, and perhaps Arnold Toynbee is the most notable figure in this respect.   Gerrit Gong (1984), p.87
[105]   Norman Angell (1911/1972), p.12
[106]   Leonard Woolf (1916)

and the advent of critical scholarly approaches that the actual idea of civilisation will be challenged as a mode of thought and finally rejected because of its embarrassing connection to colonialism, imperialism, racism and the subjugation of *others*. For Norman Angell and scholars of the pre-war era, however, civilisation was not a concept to be challenged; only some interpretations and assumptions as to what this process entailed appeared questionable. It is significant that just as duels had been abandoned as Angell argued, so the idea of war itself would come to be disassociated with the concept of civilisation in the aftermath of the First World War. It was no small achievement that Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* came to be counted as one of the influential texts that played a role in changing popular attitudes and mindsets towards a more peaceful and international definition of civilisation. In order for this to be successful, all forms of determinism needed to be rooted out in favour of what might be better described as a more 'constructivist' approach. Angell's work can be considered as an early example of part of a much more general movement that redefined the notion of 'civilisation' from an international relations perspective as he described, away from the 'militarists' and, I might add, the biological determinists 'conception of it.' This proves to be extremely useful and important to subsequent theorists, particularly those scholars associated with the League of Nations, because it provides a firm anchorage for them to develop their ideas of international relations and enabled scholars, like Alfred Zimmern for example, to work with an idea of 'culture' at the international level.

Chapter Four

Alfred Zimmern and the Civilising Tool of Culture

Sir Alfred Zimmern (1879-1957)[1]

Europe in Convalescence, first published 1922

The Prospects of Democracy and Other Essays, first published 1929

The League of Nations and the Rule of Law – 1918-1935, first published 1936

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the changing nature of the civilisation concept and how this concept informed the First World War generation's thinking and their outlook on the world. Gilbert Murray provides us with a useful insight into what civilisation meant to his generation,[2]

> There was...[he said, a] faith more universal and more deeply and unquestionably
> held...a profound belief in the value and rightness of Western Civilization with its
> characteristic attributes - its faith in progress, its liberalized Christianity, its
> humanitarian ethics, its free democratic institutions, its common sense, its obedience
> to law, its triumphs of applied science, and its vast and ever-increasing wealth. To the
> men of my youth Western, and especially British, civilization was simply the right road
> of human progress: other civilizations, if one could call them civilizations at all, were
> just false roads or mistakes.[3]

---

[1]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), (1929) & (1936)

[2]   Gilbert Murray offers a wonderful insight into the changing attitudes over this period in his book of published lectures, *From the League to the UN*. Gilbert Murray (1948)

[3]   Gilbert Murray, *ibid*, p.20

Murray, like most people during this period, expressed an optimistic faith in the idea of civilisation and its future progress. Yet, by 1935 the mood had changed to such an extent that Murray was claiming,

> there is something wrong. There is a loss of confidence, a loss of faith, an omnipresent, haunting fear. People speak, as they never spoke in Victorian days, of the possible collapse of civilization.[4]

Commentators noted a change in attitude between the 1920s and 1930s, from one of optimism to one of increasing pessimism.[5] There was a growing fear that civilisation might, itself, be in peril; a fear that Oswald Spengler famously capitalised upon in his *Decline of the West*.[6] Most people, however, continued to think in civilisational terms and believed the concept had utility and a future of sorts, albeit a future fraught with growing qualification.

The First World War had given rise to the idea that civilisation might be a fragile structure and something that required effort in sustaining. The self-assured confidence that we found informing Norman Angell's work, begins to evaporate; faith in civilisation's durability and some of its characteristics was shaken. The schism between biological determinism and the environmentally based approaches became pronounced in the immediate aftermath of the war. While the supporters of race theory continued to preach the politics of division and increasingly, hatred, the environmentalists began to put their ideas into print and practice with a particular focus on the institutions of the League of Nations. Overall, the First World War generated two important and immediate developments, which stemmed from the questions surrounding civilisation's future. First, the concept of civilisation was itself widely questioned ensuring that the issue of what constituted the nature of civilised activity remained very much a matter for debate. The argument that peace not war was the more civilised activity, which began before the war, continued, in earnest, in its wake. The founding of the institutions of the League of Nations substantively reflected the changing context and provided major new sources for discussion.[7] Second, the means for preserving and/or disseminating civilisation became 'modernised' and internationalised. This necessarily afforded the idea of 'culture' a greater instrumental role, but one that depended

---

4   Gilbert Murray, *ibid*, p.23
5   See Gilbert Murray, *ibid*, Alfred Zimmern (1936) and E.H. Carr (1939/1995)
6   Oswald Spengler (1926/1928/1939)
7   See Alfred Zimmern (1936), p.176

entirely on a new conceptualisation of civilisation generated by the debate over the nature of civilisation itself. Together, these developments necessarily formed the 'factory conditions' against which IR theorists worked. The first development was introduced in the previous chapter and it is the second development that largely draws my attention here.

In the post-war period, 'culture's' place within the civilisation concept rose considerably with regard to international relations and was reflected in the work that IR scholars, like Alfred Zimmern, produced during this period. Alfred Zimmern, whose work is under discussion in this chapter, is taken as representative of the period in so far as he worked within the civilisation concept, but who, like many of his contemporaries, found himself drawn to the idea of culture. Zimmern is a great cultural enthusiast, but it is the Arnoldian concept of culture that plays an extensive and central role in his work. It is noticeable that the principles Alfred Zimmern advocated in the aftermath of the First World War continued to inform his political outlook and determine his activities for the rest of his life.[8] Moreover, from the standpoint of the discipline, Zimmern's work demonstrates an important alternative experience for culture theory in IR to that found in the latter part of the 20th century. In Norman Angell's work, an alternative conceptualisation of community and difference (to that of the Boasian concept) was associated with the civilisation concept and evolutionary theory, in Zimmern's work, however, a contrasting vision is clearly identified with the concept of culture. In this chapter, I focus on Zimmern's argument for fostering mutual understanding, the role of education in this process, and the idea of culture that underpins these two propositions. The aim in this chapter is to not to explain or to demonstrate to the reader that Zimmern's fundamental concept is civilisation because this is self-evident; rather it is to show how, within the confines of the idea of civilisation, the concept of 'culture' played a distinct instrumental role in his thinking. Moreover, I suggest that it is only through opening up the notion of civilisation to environmentally based definitions in the pre-war period and, as a result of the war, through questioning the assumption of civilisation's continued progress in the post-war period, that 'culture' is able to attain international significance in the 1920s and 1930s in IR. There is a considerable shift in the 'conventional conceptual standards' of the age, but one should not overlook the element of continuity in ideas informing thinking about international politics at this time.

---

[8]   For biographic details, see D.J. Markwell (1986) & David Long and Peter Wilson eds. (1995)

4.1 – Fostering Mutual Understanding

At first sight, Alfred Zimmern appears as a natural successor to Norman Angell. His internationalist outlook would seem to imply a smooth continuation of Angell's ideas. However, Zimmern does not simply assume this role; he is critical of the easy and self-evident internationalism that Angell advocated. For Zimmern, politics have forced their way onto the scene, and it is his recognition that 'civilisation' requires effort in sustaining in international relations that leads him to focus on issues that Angell, arguably, took for granted. Crucially, it is the idea of culture that both informs and facilitates Zimmern's theorising. In a lecture delivered in 1924 on 'Education and International Goodwill,' Alfred Zimmern discussed the question of how 'international understanding and mutual self-respect might be promoted among nations with diverse personalities.'[9] Although the recognition of diversity among national personalities was a long standing one, and one Angell was aware of, the question of 'fostering international understanding and mutual respect' was an altogether newer development and one of the most pressing concerns in the aftermath of the First World War. Although, it might be said that the question of how diverse peoples can live more peacefully and respectfully together has been a persistent theme within the discipline. In his 1924 lecture however, Zimmern approached the 'problem' somewhat differently from how many might do so today. Zimmern was looking for a way of creating an "organic relationship" between diverse nations at the international level; he was not concerned with 'celebrating diversity' in the manner in which we might be drawn to approaching this issue currently. Indeed, one of the underlying points of this lecture was to advocate the 'obliteration of difference,' not to preserve it; a suggestion likely to generate much discomfort these days. Yet, 'obliterating differences' was a serious argument for Zimmern and one that requires closer inspection.

Zimmern's proposals for constructing an 'organic international relationship' are not quite as 'utopian' or sentimental as they may appear, at first sight.[10] "The problem," he stressed, "is that of promoting international *understanding*, not that of promoting

---

[9]   Zimmern 'Education and International Goodwill,' The Earl Grey Memorial Lecture, delivered at Armstong College, Newcastle-on Tyne, April 26, 1924. Alfred Zimmern (1929)
[10]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.53

international *love*," and he put the key terms in italics to emphasis the distinction.[11] As he explained, the problem was, at root,

> one of knitting intellectual relations, not emotional relations, of developing acquaintanceship and mutual knowledge, not the warmer feelings of friendship and affection.[12]

Zimmern was not interested in fostering sentimental and affectionate feelings between people; instead, he wanted to strengthen intellectual understanding and 'mutual knowledge.' The emphasis on intellectual relations and developing mutual knowledge sounds elitist and rather restricted to our contemporary ears, but this kind of thinking was typical of the Arnoldian culture concept and would have passed largely unchallenged in 1924, although there were those sceptical of the impact this approach could effect, especially in IR (see below).

Zimmern considered several forms of international contact in his lecture and assessed them for their potential to create the kind of 'organic relationships' he envisaged. Primarily he was concerned with the institutionalised contact between states; trade; language; travel and information. He made it quite clear that to develop and promote mutual understanding, required something more than 'mechanical' contact, and, crucially, far more effort than Angell had imagined.

> It is indeed one of the common fallacies of the age to believe that international understanding is brought about automatically, as a result of the play of impersonal forces.[13]

The distinction between what was once thought to be an 'automatic' outcome of other 'impersonal forces,' economic interdependence say, and 'real' understanding, is an important development in IR, and one that demarcates pre-war thinking from inter-war thinking on this matter. An international federation of states or governments, like the League of Nations, could not effect the kind of mutual understanding Zimmern was interested in, simply because, at root, the problem was 'psychological.'[14] Even if people agreed to form a common international government, Zimmern doubted its effectiveness in 'obliterating

---

11   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.54
12   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.55
13   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.55
14   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.56

differences.' "I wish I could believe this," he says, "for, if it were true, we need only fold our arms and let the Covenant of the League of Nations – which is for many purposes a common instrument of government for the members of the League – do its obliterating work."[15] To even contemplate 'obliterating' difference, let alone stand up and lecture on its merits, appears a strong, if not offensive, suggestion today. Yet, one needs to grasp the fact that Zimmern is not aiming to 'obliterate difference' in the Boasian cultural sense, as we would perhaps fear today with talk of homogenisation and the loss of distinctive 'ways of life.' Conversely, Zimmern is interested in this difference as a political matter, not a (Boasian) 'cultural' one.

Zimmern does not conceive of differences in the Boasian cultural sense, indeed, he tells us that the "deepest issues... arise between nation and nation, race and race...[and] between individual men and women..."[16] Like Angell, Zimmern recognises that there are major differences between communities and individuals, and similarly, he identifies these as 'the nation' and 'race.' Zimmern does not argue for the elimination of nations and race, neither does he think that the world will merge into homogeneity, far from it; instead, he seems to think that these sources of differentiation will remain. Rather, he objects to the politics of difference that these kinds of sources generate. Although Zimmern does not state this explicitly, he is arguing against 'fetishising' difference as a basis for politics. Zimmern argues for a form of relationships that will make the most of difference and at the same time break down the barriers that prevent a meaningful and 'civilised' internationalism. In many ways, by recognising the 'fact' of distinct national personalities and life, Zimmern is seeking to render real differences less *other*, therefore, it is distancing between peoples that requires 'obliterating' not their substantive 'way of life.'[17] This is no mere 'celebration of difference' for its own gratification, it is something of an, altogether, more complex approach.

Real differences do exist (in the form of nations and races) for Zimmern, but it is difference in its obnoxious political guise as nationalism and racism that are to be obliterated

---

[15]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.57
[16]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.130
[17]   This is how to read his discussion of Franco-German culture, which he describes as "an agreeable blending of cultures," not "the meeting place of two mutually incomprehensibles..." Alfred Zimmern (1922), pp.157/158. It is particularly important that we understand what Zimmern means here, because he tells us that the traveller is not conscious of a "clash" in the Alsace-Lorraine region, which could easily be confused with the suggestion of a cultural clash in the Boasian sense. Yet, Zimmern does not say this is a 'cultural clash' despite its close proximity to the word culture in this section.

or removed from the dangers of fetishism. Perhaps more accurately, following Walter Benn Michaels, it is 'nativist' ideology that worries Zimmern the most. Zimmern avoids emphasising differences in *parochial* terms in preference of the *international*. He clearly downplays the significance of difference in favour of finding and extending common ground, or that which all human beings, nations and races have in common and, therefore, can build upon. It is noticeable, then, that Zimmern does not mention culture as a source of deep difference indicating that there is a major conceptual and normative gulf between Zimmern's understanding of 'obliterating difference' and any current reading of these words. In Zimmern's view, the problems of difference have not been solved or overcome by commerce, language, travel or information, nor are they likely to be for this is to approach any difficulties with the wrong frame of mind. Differences must be positively worked with, which means working out an alternative social and 'political' solution that ultimately leaves a Boasian understanding of 'cultural' differences intact.

Zimmern argued against the belief that increased international contact would, by itself, create a better world. Zimmern is quite clear that this has not happened and is not going to happen. To achieve a deeper form of internationalism requires understanding, which in turn demands special effort. He notes that the Americans have discovered within the "last ten or fifteen years... that their nationality problems have not been solved, have indeed in some cases been intensified, by unimpeded commercial intercourse: hence the drastic new immigration policy..."[18] Indians have also discovered that free trade does not "break down political or religious differences."[19] Unlike Norman Angell, Zimmern does not think that 'international commerce or contact naturally breeds harmony.'[20] As for the promotion of a universal language, Zimmern suggests that

> The argument for a world-language is really, at bottom, a Roman, a Prussian, or, shall we say? a Chinese argument – the argument of a mandarin who feels himself to be at the apex of a pyramid of culture extending over some three or four hundred million

---

[18]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.59
[19]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.59
[20]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.60

people and is naturally contemptuous of smaller nationalities and more provincial tongues.[21]

(I shall return to the meaning of culture in this statement in a moment.) There are "many tongues" that "we are tempted to scoff" at, but it is essential that they endure in Zimmern's view because "language is an expression of life," which would, by our current conventional standards, seem to imply a parochial and relative perspective.[22] However, this is where the complexity in his thinking is best revealed. In his view,

> There is only one universal language that all men can use and understand – the language of feature and gesture. Side by side with that there are certain conventions which can be universalized, such as figures and mathematical symbols or mapmakers' signs.[23]

Zimmern not only demonstrates an awareness of difference, but also resists the notion of universal homogeneity. Crucially, it is the terms in which Zimmern thinks about difference that are markedly different from the way the Boasian concept of culture would frame any discussion. In Zimmern's view, the problem is not so much the need to maintain difference, or indeed to overcome it, the problem is to work with difference and to create something new out of it. There may be serious, natural, limitations to the extension of common ground, national barriers for example, and there may be some limitations that ought to be maintained in his view, namely local languages, but other possibilities do exist, and it is the development of these at the international level against a backdrop of diversity that captures his imagination.

> Do not let the Englishman try to gesticulate like a Frenchman, or encourage the Frenchman to imitate our English reserve. Our starch is real starch and is acceptable because it is real. French starch would be unreal and therefore only ridiculous.[24]

For Zimmern the most effective means for creating international understanding from difference (starch) are 'intellectual' or those achievements and products that came to be referred to as 'cultural interchange.' The League's 'International Committee for Intellectual

---

[21]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.62. It is interesting to note that Zimmern argues against language as the means for fostering mutual understanding since this was the age in which Esperanto and other universal languages became most popular. See pp.60/61 for Zimmern's argument. See also Akira Iriye (1997), p.77, & Young S. Kim in John Boli and George Thomas eds. (1999)

[22]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), pages 63, 63 & 62 respectively.

[23]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.64

Co-operation' (ICIC), of which Zimmern was an active and significant member, is an important institution here, although not one without its critics.[25] C.K. Webster and Sidney Herbert, for example, made the obvious critical point that a discussion on the role of poetry in binding nations together "is hardly likely to produce much effect on international relations;" a view echoed by future critics, as we shall see in the next chapter.[26] However, neither Zimmern, nor his colleagues at the ICIC, were much disturbed by such comments; this simply demonstrated the need for greater effort.[27] The 'culture' of 'cultural interchange' is strictly Arnoldian in conception involving art, literature, academic and scientific ideas. Zimmern explicitly refers to 'music, science and scholarship.'[28] Moreover, this 'intellectual' exchange was viewed as the means for fostering mutual understanding between differing national personalities and it is the power of culture, in its intellectual and spiritual capacity to render differences less *other* and 'obliterate them,' that Zimmern was keen to promote. In this way, culture was believed to be the means for not only fostering mutual understanding but also for creating a more civilised world order. Culture is, therefore, a powerful instrumental tool in international politics and one with universal application.

To achieve a deeper and 'organic' form of relationships, required opportunities "for co-operation" that would, in turn, lead to "real understanding."[29] There is an obvious humanist quality about this 'real understanding:' it is not simply about knowledge of people, but knowing in a deeper sense. As with individual cultivation and Herder's reading of Shakespeare, this normative argument is difficult to quantify and substantively intangible to

---

[24]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.71
[25]   I do not have space to discuss the ICIC here, but its purpose was to encourage cultural interchange. The Committee attracted some of the key figures of the age, including Bella Bartok, Henri Bergson, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein and Paul Valery. Gilbert Murray described the basic idea behind the Committee as one of "making use of the artistic, scientific, and literary interests which are actually common to all cultivated nations as an instrument for achieving that goodwill and co-operation which was the aim of the League." Gilbert Murray (1948), p.4   The Committee involved itself at the Paris based Institute, the International Educational Cinematographic Institute at Rome, and in various artistic, literary and musical activities – all with limited success. Most important from our point of view is that the ICIC inaugurated an Annual Conference of Institutes for the Scientific Study of International Relations in 1928. On the ICIC, see also Zimmern (1936) pp.316/317
[26]   This comment concerns a discussion that took place between the British Poet Laureate and M. Paul Valery organised by the ICIC in 1930. C.K. Webster and Sidney Herbert (1933), p.295
[27]   Movingly, Gilbert Murray wrote; "I am ashamed of my failure in Great Britain to convince either the people or the Government of the value of this work [of the ICIC]." Gilbert Murray (1948), p.5
[28]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.158

equate to an audience. Nonetheless, in spite of the difficulty in detailing the content, not to mention mapping the effects, of 'cultural interchange' in international relations, it is only through self-conscious, deliberate and determined effort (that all forms of 'cultivation' require) that social and political transformation can be brought about. By these 'cultural' means, it is not simply the case that anything is possible at the international level, but, rather, that something much better is possible; an argument Matthew Arnold would have appreciated. Zimmern tells us that he is not interested in the "empty rhetoric of cosmopolitanism," but in seeking the common ground "of a uniting and reconciling human experience," upon which to build 'confidence and even friendship.'[30] He even goes so far as to write of the "law of greatest effort," which is best illustrated by his description of the 'lack of effort' exhibited in travel and tourism.[31]

> The fact is travel is an art, an art of observation, of encountering new peoples and problems, of welcoming and enjoying the diversities of mankind. But the whole business of the modern tourist agency seem to be to preserve you from these thought-provoking encounters, to convey you, say, from Newcastle to Zermatt or Grindelwald with your national susceptibilities as unruffled and your comfort as undisturbed as if you were a parcel of eggs. The Englishman's shell must at all costs remain uncracked.[32]

The remedy that will 'crack' the problem, he suggests, is to 'travel more intelligently' so as to produce greater understanding of a people and their 'life' or personality.[33] It should be noted that he does not suggest we get to know a people's 'way of life.' The problem with the average English traveller is that s/he fails to experience or 'see' new peoples in a deep and meaningful sense. It is only by 'intelligent' effort that the 'real' benefits of travel, reading, and so on, can begin to be felt in a humanist way. Similarly, the League only provided "an opportunity for international understanding: it does not bring it about automatically."[34] Zimmern believes that the "Secretariat, the International Labour Office, and various technical conferences, between fellow professionals in different countries," will

---

[29]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.57
[30]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.161
[31]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.72
[32]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.65
[33]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, pp.65/66
[34]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.58

aid in the development of such international understanding.[35] However, "[a]utomatic internationalism is not enough," he argues; "to create goodwill through understanding" we need to vitalise this activity.[36] The means for vitalisation are typically Arnoldian in so far as they rest upon education, and are indicative of humanist concerns. "We need," he said, in a view not too far removed from Arnold's, "a revaluation of our western values and a new sense of kinship with those sections of the human family who have refused to bow the knee in the temple of material progress."[37]

4.2 – Education is the key to a better world

Alfred Zimmern argued that we need to exchange teachers and professors and to open our own minds to the worlds of different people. We need to introduce ourselves to other people and he explicitly advocates that we should take "for our model not the specialism of the nineteenth century but rather the **humanism** of the sixteenth." (my emphasis)[38]

> The most important thing of all is for our teachers to teach their students *how to open the windows of their minds*...[39]

This is a classic statement of Arnoldian sentiment. The 'right' kind of education creates the appropriate mind, one open to internationalism. We need to create forums where strangers are welcomed and can learn about British life, for example.[40] Moreover, this should be "a contact between equals" – as in equal human beings.[41] "There is," he says, "no more deadly foe to international goodwill than patronage or condescension. How many a gift has been spoiled by the manner of its giving!"[42] The emphasis on professionals and intellectual exchange is commented on elsewhere in Zimmern's work, but what bothers him is the

---

[35]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.58
[36]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, pp.66/67
[37]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.193
[38]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.70
[39]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.67
[40]   Zimmern wants to encourage women to participate in promoting international contacts, although entertaining "a Dutchman or a Spaniard at tea," as he suggests, is likely to invoke much criticism by today's standards. Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.71
[41]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.72
[42]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.72. I find it particularly interesting that he should equate intellectual exchanges with the giving of 'gifts' in this statement, especially since he plainly wants to avoid all notions of imposition and dominance. Where 'gifts' (however they are defined) are given freely, in mutual recognition

increasing parochialism not only in education but also in attitudes more generally. The "development of excessive specialization at universities" plainly disturbs Zimmern.[43] He makes a specific appeal to the Arnoldian ideal when he says, "Universities can and ought to be regarded as homes and radiating centres of culture."[44] However, his interest in education was widespread and more general in scope, best evidenced by his active involvement and support for the League of Nations' International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, the Workers Education Association, and the Manchester Guardian.[45] What is interesting to note is that Zimmern supported these organisations because he considered their work valuable and approved of institutions that maintained high cultural standards.[46]

For Ivan Hannaford, Zimmern is counted among the anti-racists of a particularly racist period.[47] We need to exercise some caution on this matter, because Zimmern clearly employed the language of race and, in keeping with his contemporaries, is comfortable with the concept of race and racial divisions. Hannaford characterises the racist period in terms of a shift away from politics towards science as holding the answers to the questions concerning how differences between people occurred and how different 'types' of people should live together. Clearly, racial theory, politics and differences, are all bound up with the civilisation concept at this time, but the growing schism between biological-determinists and environmentalists is a significant element in the development of early IR scholarship. Put this way, according to Hannaford, Zimmern's interest in the Greek political commonwealth, for example, and his argument for a new *res-publica* are of considerable importance; it emphasises the importance afforded to ethics in politics, while trying to maintain commonality with heterogeneity. Zimmern, Hannaford says, tried "to reinstate the idea of a political citizenship and a humanizing civilization in *The Greek Commonwealth*," but these ideas and intentions also inform his campaign for fostering deep and mutual

---

and on the basis of human equality, the idea of exchanging 'gifts' strikes me as an inspiring way to look at international relations.

[43]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.68 & (1922), pp.57/63

[44]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.58

[45]   Zimmern became Deputy Director of the Paris based Institute of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, and worked for UNESCO. Zimmern, also, ran a summer school in Geneva from 1924 to 1939; see D.J. Markwell (1986), p.281.

[46]   He says, "It is the intellectual tradition of Scotland which causes a Scottish leading article to be better argued, on the average, than its English compeer, and it is the sincerity and public spirit of Lancashire which keeps the *Manchester Guardian* up to the mark." Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.56. See also, 'England After The War,' Alfred Zimmern, (1929).

understanding at the international level, generally.[48] Moreover, I suggest that it is highly significant that this restoration of the political, as Hannaford sees it, is a prominent, if not distinguishing characteristic of many IR thinkers and practitioners during this period, and a feature one can find in E.H. Carr's work, for example.[49] An environmental and anti-biologically determinist stance is not exclusive to Zimmern as both Angell's and Carr's work, amply demonstrate.[50] Zimmern is preoccupied throughout his work with the idea of civilisation and civil exchange in political terms, not simply in *The Greek Commonwealth*. While we know that refining civilisation through biological solutions was increasingly opposed from many directions, as indicated in Chapters 2 and 3 this thesis, improving civilisation through international organisations and connections became the preferred alternative to solutions based on biology for IR scholars.[51]

Zimmern's appeal is to a higher form of politics, one in which well-informed and educated citizens actively contribute to and create a new *respublica*, or "Commonwealth of Man."[52] For Zimmern, politics are an ethical matter, and, as he makes plain, an international matter. Zimmern makes frequent reference to 'modern civilisation' whose special features are overwhelmingly determined by its 'large-scale' and international character. Like Angell before him, Zimmern recognises a difference in attitude and lifestyle from the previous generation. "We live in an age of democracy," he said, "but democracy has not yet discovered its appropriate institutions."[53] The problem of government facing democracy was, "for the first time, on the international plane."[54] Recognising this 'fact' was the net result of the tremendous changes that had taken place over the past century and a half. The international community may be divided into states but economically it was all of a piece, a view Zimmern shared with Angell, albeit with some reservations. Increasingly, democracy

---

[47]   Ivan Hannaford (1996), see Chapter 10 for Hannaford's view of the period 1890-1939.
[48]   Ivan Hannaford, *ibid*, p.344
[49]   E.H. Carr was plainly interested in the international level of analysis and political outcomes, which becomes clear in the Conclusion of *The Twenty Years Crisis*. See E.H. Carr (1939/1995). Ken Booth has pointed out there has been a tendency to gloss over the "utopian" elements in *The Twenty Years Crisis*, while Tim Dunne has indicated that Carr "was dissatisfied with a non-utopian realism, privileging in the final analysis a complex relationship between the two constructs" of realism and utopianism. Ken Booth (1991), pp.530/531. Tim Dunne (1998), p.24
[50]   See Carr's section on 'Darwinism in Politics,' E.H. Carr (1939/1995), pp.46/9
[51]   This is Carr's objection against Darwinism in *The Twenty Years Crisis*.
[52]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.131 & (1929), pp.315/316
[53]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.313
[54]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.316

would spread and this would 'intensify' public opinion, which in turn would call for self-determination. The League of Nations, in Zimmern's view, represented the best attempt at institutionalising government in a heterogeneous world. It allowed for the possibility of a universal plan for peace, which could counter parochial demands.[55] Regionalism was no solution to the growing demands of self-determination and the conflict that this would necessarily entail in Zimmern's view. Instead, global management, or governance, was the only solution. His faith in 'the political' reflected his concern for maintaining order in an increasingly diverse, yet shrinking, world of international relations. His interest in people is obviously connected to his conception of politics and international relations, but his concern for people went well-beyond their participation and general well-being. It is only under these terms and by understanding his aspirations for global governance that one can begin to appreciate Zimmern's interest in education, teachers and the university system, and why the idea of 'culture' and cultural interchange is so important to his theoretical outlook.

For Zimmern, education was *the* crucial factor in creating a more ethical form of international politics. The link between education and culture is accepted as obvious to the League era scholars, and what Zimmern has to say on these matters reflects his interest in democracy and the need to find political solutions to the world's problems.[56] In view of the increased role of the "common man" in public affairs in the era of 'modern' civilisation, education would inevitably play a crucial part in shaping public participation. I should remind the reader that F.R. Leavis was similarly concerned with the qualitative impact of education on 'common people' during this period. Leavis, however, approached this issue from a different perspective by focusing more sharply on the role of the vehicles for mass education, i.e. newspapers, since these appeared to be the immediate means of influence. In spite of their differing approaches and subject matter, Leavis and Zimmern, in keeping with many of their contemporaries, shared a commitment to certain assumptions (or 'conventional standards); first, both scholars believed in the value of the right kind of education and its beneficent effects on society, and second, they believed that, in many ways, education was being 'vulgarised' or 'levelled down.'

---

[55] See for example the Locarno Treaties that were drawn up with Germany.
[56] Paul Rich tells us that Arnold Toynbee was quite instrumental in encouraging Zimmern in thinking about the importance of intellectual communication and certain similarities can be detected in both scholars'

Education and cultural exchange were widely accepted as crucial elements in the 'new world order' by many of the thinkers of this period and certainly most of the supporters of the League. As we saw in the last Chapter, Angell ends *The Great Illusion* by arguing that education is crucial and that the 'English race' should lead the way on this matter in view of their superior qualities. Less ethnocentrically, the centrality of education resides in the thinking behind the statement, that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is the minds of men that need changing.' Woodrow Wilson is the person we most associate with advocating education in order to create more peaceful international relations, and under Wilson's guidance this principle went on to form an important element in the League itself. The 'Hue and Cry' principle illustrates the esteem with which world public opinion was held and the influence it was thought to wield.[57] The international community were expected to generate a 'hue and cry' *"against war as a matter of universal concern and a crime against the world community,"* but even Zimmern recognised the limitations of this approach.[58] Zimmern's interest in, and criticism of, the qualitative output of universities, religious institutions, the press, voluntary organisations like the WEA, and formal bodies like the ICIC, is not mere sentimentalism or intellectual elitism.[59] It is that Zimmern recognised these bodies as the key opinion forming and educative institutions in modern civilised society. Furthermore, these bodies are the most obvious points for intervention if 'true' democracy is going to be realised on the international plane. Therefore, their role and his normative appraisal of them form a central component in his international theorising. As he points out,

> In the modern democracy the platform and the Press, the orator and the editor, should be natural allies in the task of popular enlightenment. The work which falls to the latter's share is indeed one of the most essential public services in the whole range of the life of a civilized community...[60]

The problem with the Press, as in all other areas of public life, was that since the war it "had become increasingly commercialized, and had contributed sensibly to a debasement, a

---

work both in terms of their optimist outlook and their interest in communication. Paul Rich in David Long and Peter Wilson eds. (1995), Chapter 4.

[57]   Alfred Zimmern (1936) especially pages 176/178, 264/265
[58]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.265. On limitations see pp.418/419 & p.445
[59]   See Alfred Zimmern (1922) Part 1, 'The Upheaval.'
[60]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.53

growing frivolity and irresponsibility, in men's attitude of mind towards public affairs."[61] If you believe, as Zimmern did, that the public are going to play an increasingly active and articulate role in international affairs, and moreover, you believe that this should be positively encouraged to enable differing peoples to develop deeper, meaningful relationships based on understanding, then clearly, the outlook, mentality, knowledge and disposition of the average person involved in this kind of participation matters enormously. By shaping and influencing the 'raw material' so to speak, Zimmern believed that outcomes could be affected – he did not say that they 'inevitably' would be affected or that this was easily achievable. On the contrary, it is only through serious effort and, to use an old term, 'cultivation' that this becomes possible and it goes some way in explaining how a principle such as 'hue and cry' could, in theory, work and be taken seriously in the first place. The fact that 'hue and cry' and fostering mutual understanding could be discussed as serious issues, affords great insight into the thinking that lies behind these ideas. In this respect, Zimmern's lamentations over the standard and quality of European education, the 'spiritual levelling down' of the university system and the 'vulgarity' of the press, are perfectly comprehensible. Under such a theoretical scheme, intellectual interchange, and the exchange of 'gifts' given in the correct spirit, provide for the specific purpose of developing 'organic' relationships.

As late as 1939, Zimmern stated that one of the main intellectual preoccupations of the time was "how to establish a basis of order as a necessary condition for the progress, and even perhaps the survival, of our inherited civilization."[62] Against a civilisational backdrop, 'culture' is clearly employed by Zimmern to practical effect and this gives us some indication as to the meaning of the term. 'Culture' is an instrumental tool in international politics, not so much a critical tool as it was in Arnold's day, but certainly 'the best of everything that has been thought and said in the world.' Where this can be exploited in 'the pursuit of a more perfect form of world politics,' and therefore exchanged, it invokes a notion of international civility among diverse peoples.

---

[61]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.55
[62]   Alfred Zimmern (1939), p.xii

4.3 – Civilization, not that Continental Culture!

Like Norman Angell before him, civilisation is the concept that frames Zimmern's thinking about international relations. However, unlike Angell, Zimmern makes frequent use of the term 'culture' and it is an easy word to find in his work. This leads us to inquire into the nature of the kind of culture that 'the mandarin,' mentioned above, 'is at the apex of,' for example, and the other instances of the term found informing his work. Zimmern tells us that psychologists and even some biologists admit "that there is an intimate relationship between a people and its cultural inheritance, including of course, its inherited mode of self-expression."[63] We need to consider what these references to culture mean or could mean to Zimmern at this point in time, since he does not lay out the terms in any great or obvious detail. This is to return to some of the methodological issues discussed in the introduction to this research, for the meaning of 'culture' has to be distilled from Zimmern's work and examined along-side a contextual reading of the 'conventional standards' available at the time he was working. Clearly, Zimmern understood what he intended and meant by this term, and assumed that his readers would recognise it as well. So, it becomes significant that the word 'culture' appears in Zimmern's work as something quite separable from local or nationalised values, traditions and attitudes, unlike the Boasian concept that explicitly includes these things. Perhaps I should also remind the reader that it was early days for the 'modern' anthropological concept of culture even in the United States. Although it is not implausible to suggest that British scholars were aware and influenced by developments in American social science, I think that the evidence suggests that where this was the case, if at all, then at this point in the historiography of 'culture' that influence is only slight and awareness, minimal. As far as Zimmern's work is concerned, the evidence strongly leads us to identify his understanding of 'culture' as Arnoldian.

For Alfred Zimmern, 'culture' plainly transcends parochialism and is primarily an international issue. This is entirely in keeping with Arnold's definition of culture, but has developed the universal potential in the concept from an IR perspective. Zimmern makes it perfectly clear in *Europe in Convalescence*, that he rejects the German idea of culture in order to support the superior concept of civilisation as he sees it. An underlying belief in progress pervades his ideas about saving 'our inherited civilization,' as well as an appeal to

142

higher values that will create a self-conscious political state. In the 1920s, while discussing the heterogeneous nature of the British Empire, Zimmern said,

> the communities thus separated on the map present every variety of climate, of natural resources, of race, religion, culture and stage of development. Age-old civilisations like those of India and of the Chinese in Hong Kong and the Kowloon and Wei-hai-Wei territories are side by side with the young institutions of the settlers in New Zealand and Western Canada and the primitive and hardly yet adolescent races of Africa.[64]

I do not include these words from Zimmern to illustrate that he was a 'racist' (because Zimmern was clearly not racist in this sense) but simply to demonstrate that certain ideas of civilisation, race and primitives, were a fundamental feature of everyday speech during this period.[65] "If culturally the two peoples [of Germany and Britain] are far apart – for the North Sea and the Channel form one of the marked cultural frontiers of the world – racially they have much in common," he says.[66] Furthermore, "[r]acial affinities are a good foundation for mutual intercourse..."[67] It could be argued that it is possible to read these passing references to culture as having the same meaning as the idea of culture we know today. However, this would be mistaken. This is wrong, partly, because civilisation is the most clearly and frequently articulated idea for thinking about the world, and partly, because it is only by reading the term in conjunction with what authors like Zimmern were trying to achieve that the meaning of the word 'culture' becomes apparent.

In *Europe in Convalescence*, Zimmern refers to Matthew Arnold, whom, he says, "could point to Germany as the chief standard-bearer of spiritual freedom in its struggle against the debasing influences of the age."[68] He refers to a piece by Arnold, written in 1865, in which Arnold expresses his admiration for "the idea of culture, culture of the only true sort, [which] is in Germany a living power... If true culture ever becomes a civilizing power in the world, and is not overlaid by fanaticism, by industrialism, or by frivolous pleasure-seeking, it will be to the faith and zeal of this homely and much-ridiculed German

---

63   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.62
64   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, pp.291/292
65   See for example Alfred Zimmern (1922) p. 134, where he writes of "the agelong racial struggle between the German and Magyar and Slav and Roumanian..." and Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.302 on race ascendancy.
66   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.158
67   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.158
68   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.59

people that the great result will be mainly owing."[69] Zimmern, however, has acquired a very different view of Germany and culture (*kultur*) to Arnold in the intervening years. "German pride," Zimmern says, "has only survived the humiliation of witnessing the centre of the world's culture treated as an object of pity and relief by trying to regard it as an act of just, if insufficient, atonement to a martyr nation."[70] While Arnold 'could admirably point' to Germany as the 'centre of the world's culture,' for Zimmern this is problematic.

> During the half-century which has elapsed since these words were written [by Arnold,] the European University, and with it the European ideal and standard of culture, has suffered a decline comparable, in its own sphere of activity and temptation, to that of the Press.[71]

This is a very telling statement, particularly when one considers that the 'standard of culture' has been deemed to have declined to the level of 'vulgarity,' to coin a phrase, that Zimmern identifies with Press; an association that Leavis will also make. The problem with "culture" in Zimmern's view is that it has become commercialised, nationalised and debased. Where Germany was once recognised as standing at the centre of the world's culture, it now merely exhibits parochialism. Zimmern goes on to say,

> The fact, however, remains that the "culture" of which the world heard so much in 1914 was something wholly different from the "civilizing power," and the sincere, ardent, and almost religious service of truth and freedom which characterised the Germany of 1864.[72]

It is noticeable that when Zimmern is sceptical or critical of 'culture' he places the word in inverted commas.[73] The "culture" that he 'heard so much of in 1914' and is critical of, is, of course, *kultur*. For "culture," read *kultur* and a *kultur* that Germany fought the First World War in the name of against civilisation. Zimmern is acutely aware that this 'culture' has lost its civilising power and, what is more, he recognises that "culture had become," in the last two generations, "more and more an annex of the German, and especially... of the Prussian, state..."[74] This is a significant observation by Zimmern because it tells us that he is aware of

---

[69]   Cited by Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.59
[70]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.118
[71]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, pp.59/60
[72]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, pp.61/62
[73]   See also Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.158 & (1929) p.22
[74]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.62

both the changing 'conventional standards' in Germany and a growing distinction between the popular German conception of culture (*kultur*) and the (older) civilising concept of culture that Arnold wrote about. Under the conditions of the German state, "freedom of thought and integrity of soul declined."[75] In Zimmern's view, the German state has debased and destroyed civilising culture.

> Culture, in its most limited and mechanical sense, became an article of exportation and advertisement, and the young and aspiring Universities of Central and Eastern Europe, and even of France, Italy, Britain, and America, have been touched and tainted by its arrogant and devitalizing influence.[76]

Zimmern has recognised the link between culture and parochialism here, and suggests that this has spread its influence beyond Germany, and away from the old international idea of culture that so impressed Matthew Arnold. This is not the Boasian concept that Zimmern is taking issue with, as he still thinks about culture in terms of education and intellectual achievement. Rather, he fears the appropriation of (Arnoldian) culture by nationalism.[77]

> The old *universitas* of European culture will not be rebuilt in a day; but it is time for the new generation of students to realize the task which awaits them if European civilization is to survive.[78]

That Zimmern believes European culture can be rebuilt, and what is more the survival of civilisation might depend on it, confirms that his is an Arnoldian, gift-sharing view of culture, rather than something that is the province of a particular community. It is the task of a new generation of European students to revitalise and rescue the old humanist ideals embodied in the 'old *universitas*' from the influence of the Germans and their nationalised version of *kultur*. Significantly, it is 'civilisation' that will oppose this de-humanising and, essentially, lesser set of ideals that he calls "culture" (in inverted commas), while 'true' culture (without inverted commas) is still allocated an important role in his thinking.

---

[75]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.62
[76]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.62
[77]   In terms of international cultural relations, Zimmern is being unwittingly prophetic here, as we shall see in the next chapter. Increasingly cultural interchange became viewed less as the means for fostering mutual understanding and more a matter of 'selling the nation' abroad.
[78]   Alfred Zimmern (1922), p.63

Elsewhere he writes of culture being "politically-poisoned," which reveals where he believes the problem lies.[79] Nationalist politics have undermined the value of culture.

In 1922 Zimmern was sensitive to the changing expression of culture in Germany and drew a distinction between Matthew Arnold's generation and his own. Yet, by 1929, his patience has obviously worn thin and he is less sympathetic to Arnold. Indeed, he goes so far as to blame Arnold for the version of "culture" he despises, which would appear to present a problem with respect to the categories I have employed here. In referring to culture in association with Matthew Arnold, Zimmern articulates a specific and critical understanding of the term.

> It is easy to preach "education" to Englishmen: there have been exhortations in plenty during the past in this strain: Matthew Arnold and many another have ingeminated "culture" from commanding pulpits. But we have to face the fact, which is one of the most essential elements in the problem, that *the English people do not believe in education.* This disbelief, this sturdy and deep-rooted scepticism, is not simply due to prejudice or inexperience. It is part and parcel of our national character, of that very nature and inherited equipment which... it is our duty, in the emergency of this present age, to seek better to understand and to express.[80] (italics in original)

It is interesting that Zimmern thinks that the English are not only immune to education but that this is something engrained in their national character, rather than their 'culture.' "Culture," as he refers to it here, appears as something superficial and educational in a derisory sense. Zimmern goes on to complain,

> To preach education, then, according to the prescription set forth by Matthew Arnold and other students of Continental culture and organization, is to attack our island defences at the point where we are most impregnable.[81]

This statement is made in reference to Zimmern's belief that what the English need is better education and that a campaign for higher 'self-knowledge' is necessary to save the English from being 'levelled down' spiritually and politically. However, in sentiment and tone, Zimmern's views are obviously very close to F.R. Leavis's and Arnold's himself, in spite of

---

[79]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.158
[80]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), pp.21/22
[81]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.22

his criticism. Therefore, it is very interesting that Zimmern associates a certain conception of culture, 'Continental culture,' with Matthew Arnold.

'To preach education' in the manner of Arnold is to miss the point in Zimmern's view – this is not to 'preach' proper education at all, but some spurious and lesser Continental (Germanic) version of it. Zimmern is drawing a direct link here between Arnold's interest in German romantic philosophy and the German idea of *kultur*. While we might wonder who the 'preachers' were that Zimmern had in mind, the point is that Zimmern has, to all intents and purposes, misread Arnold on this issue. And it is Zimmern's theoretical intentions, or 'illocutionary force,' that provide the driving force behind this connection between Arnold and 'Continental culture.' Clearly, Zimmern's sympathies are in keeping with Arnold, although this is more obvious in 1922 than seven years later when the above piece was written. Arnold and Zimmern share the same humanist view of culture and hold common aspirations for it; and both scholars express a similar vision of a more educated world. Yet, it is the failure of the realisation of his educational ideas that lead Zimmern to adopt a more ardent tone. It is plausible to suggest that Zimmern is simply arguing against those who have employed Arnold in name rather than spirit. What is more, Zimmern patently disapproved of the parochial expression of culture and the German state's appropriation of it, which was increasingly visible on the eve of the 1930s. The situation is becoming increasingly urgent, and therefore requires a more outspoken response. Rightly, Zimmern is concerned about the influence of *kultur* and suspicious of anyone who thinks they can 'preach' about it rather than put in the sustained effort required to restore civilisation to its former glory.

Paul Rich suggests that Zimmern's most important book is *The League of Nations and Rule of Law*, and this is certainly a comprehensive and accessible account of the League era, but it is the things that Zimmern stresses he has excluded from his study that are of more concern here.[82]

> To understand international relations in their full extent involves not merely a
>
> knowledge of the relations between states but also of the relations between *peoples*.

---

[82]   Zimmern indicates, in the Introduction, that this text is a study of both the forms and forces of the League. He says that the League organisation is a 'particular, inclusive method for carrying on relations between states,' which he hopes will be better than anything that existed before 1914. Alfred Zimmern (1936), 'Introduction'

> Moreover, it involves not merely a knowledge of the relations *between* peoples but a knowledge of the *peoples themselves*.[83](italics in original)

The author underscores the issues that he believes matter, and clearly matter to him, by placing the key terms he wishes to draw to the readers attention in italics. Zimmern's interest in 'peoples' permeates his work, but crucially his conception of this did not lead him towards 'culture,' cultural relativism, or identity issues. His interests lay in a wider context of interaction and the relations between peoples and politics thereof. This much is revealed by his understanding of what the discipline should be about and beyond that, politics more generally. The study of international relations (or the League in this case) Zimmern claimed, must be taken in consideration of the historical context, otherwise it becomes

> unintelligible without a knowledge of the larger issues of policy involved and of the still larger problems of the relations between *peoples* and of the interaction of the cultures, traditions, attitudes, ingrained ways of thinking and feeling, which constitute the raw material of policy.[84] (italics in original)

It is interesting to note that 'cultures, traditions and attitudes' are held in distinction in this statement. Moreover, 'ingrained ways of thinking and feeling' are seemingly also separable from cultures. Today, we are more likely to employ the term 'culture' as a short-hand for all of these things, but Zimmern describes them individually. Zimmern, like many of his colleagues, retained some faith in the idea of civilisation, while the interesting thing is that despite its manifestation of ill-health, for the most part, they considered the civilisation concept worth defending. With the correct amount of effort in education and the involvement of informed public opinion, civilisation might not only survive, but flourish in a new direction. Culture and interchange of it, was one of the principle means that could facilitate the birth of a new and more modern and civilised form of international politics. This is where the relevance of his interest in 'peoples,' intelligent travel, and opportunities to meet and understand *others* becomes transparent. Zimmern feared that people would develop deeper relations only with those similar to themselves. This would, he believed,

---

[83]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.5
[84]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.6

lead to the division of the world into *blocs* of psychologically kindred peoples, aligned according to race or civilization or material interest, whereas our whole object should be to break down these natural barriers.[85] (italics in original)

The fact that Zimmern sees race and civilisation as natural barriers speaks volumes of the force of these concepts as 'conventional' categories for seeing the world, but also the fact that he is arguing against them illustrates the range of theoretical possibility under the umbrella of the civilisation concept. One can just imagine what he would have thought of Samuel Huntington's thesis based on 'kindred blocs.' The problem facing the 20th century, Zimmern claimed, was one of "inter-communication" of the world's wisdom, "the interpretation of its rich diversities of national inheritance and achievement."[86] Culture was not seen as the barrier to 'inter-communication' nor was it viewed as an essential determinant of diversity. 'Culture' was, to Zimmern, both the embodiment of rich and diverse national inheritance and achievement, as well as the tool for enabling global inter-communication to flourish. As Arnold had indicated, 'culture was the best of everything that had been thought, said and produced in the world.' If it can be retrieved from the 'Continentals' who have tainted the idea with their parochial and national politics, 'culture' can still play an important role in international relations. Culture was the means for visualising "a humanity united in one great community of mutual understanding."[87] As the 1930s unravelled, the idea of 'one great community of mutual understanding' appeared increasingly unlikely and dangerously unrealistic – as E.H. Carr cogently pointed out.

Summary

The term 'civilisation' was found pervading all texts here and requiring no special indexation. In normative terms, the concept of civilisation is the determining factor in most Westerners' intellectual lives. This was not the same concept of civilisation that had existed before 1914; it was, as Alfred Zimmern frequently pointed out, 'modern' civilisation and an increasingly problematic concept. If the predominant theoretical framework is civilisation, then the most obvious question to ask is what does 'culture' mean in IR during this time.
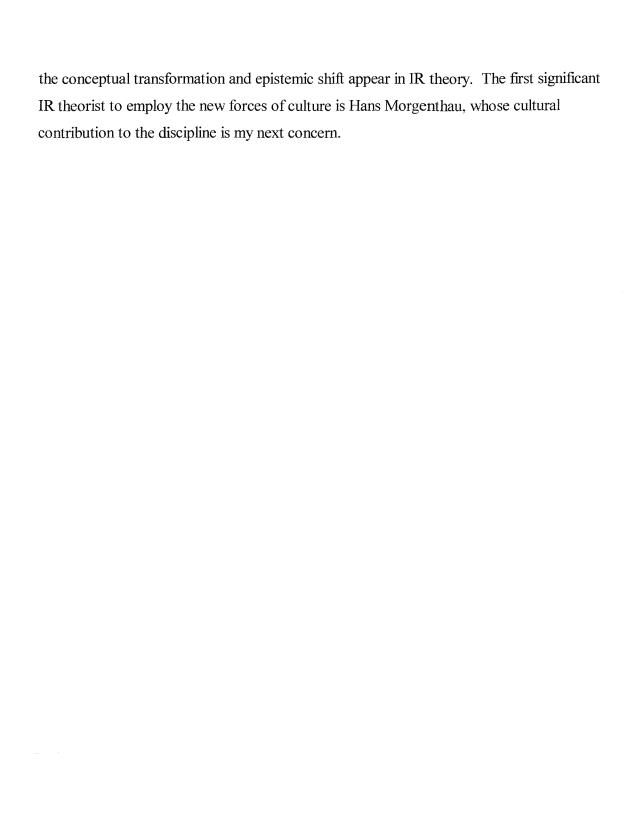
---

[85]   Alfred Zimmern (1929), p.73
[86]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.74
[87]   Alfred Zimmern, *ibid*, p.75

149

The short answer is that 'culture' stands for Arnoldian precepts. It does not at this stage represent 'a whole way of life' as we now think of it, only one small aspect of that life. Culture has an educational and formative quality. It predominately refers to the means of enlightened individual formation, and notably refers to music, art, literature and intellectual pursuits. Significantly, 'modern' civilisation, and its failing disposition, gave the idea of culture, which existed up to this point, a new lease of life. In addition to its application to the individual pursuit of perfection, it came to be thought of as capable of playing a prestigious role in international relations, of which the ICIC is the most obvious institutional manifestation. 'Culture' was 'gifts' to be exchanged and the means by which people could foster mutual understanding. It is a tool for realising a more civilised form of international relations and this was noted as a central element in Alfred Zimmern's work and practical activities.

The key figure of this period is usually taken to be E.H. Carr, yet when viewed from the perspective of culture, Carr does not stand out in any clear way. He did not have much to say on the subject and certainly added nothing of value to the idea of culture.[88] If we think about the role of 'culture' in IR theory overall during this period, then there are other scholars whose contribution is of greater significance than E.H. Carr's, in my view. Certainly, that small collection of scholars, including Alfred Zimmern, who were interested in culture as an instrument in fostering mutual understanding, and a tool for overcoming differences, made greater use of the concept of culture than Carr himself. In addition, their activities and work did much to facilitate and enhance this role for 'culture' under the civilisation concept. This was a short lived role for 'culture' in IR theory, but nonetheless, an important one. The League era scholars tapped into an idea of culture that can be traced back to Herder, if not beyond. Culture is a produce of differing peoples, to be shared between the whole of humanity. However, the door was soon shut on the idea of cultural interchange, as the Cold War got under way. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Arnoldian culture looks a little jaded and out of place, although UNESCO will pick up the mantle of the ICIC. It is in the United States, not too surprisingly, where the first signs of

---

[88]   There are only two references to culture in *The Twenty Years Crisis*, and is a matter of curiosity as to why there are not more. There are several confused instances of culture in *Nationalism and After*, which seem to suggest that a change has occurred in the British context during the 6 years between these

the conceptual transformation and epistemic shift appear in IR theory. The first significant IR theorist to employ the new forces of culture is Hans Morgenthau, whose cultural contribution to the discipline is my next concern.

---

publications, and has had some influence on Carr. E.H. Carr (1939/1995), p.27 & p.80; E.H. Carr (1945), p.8, p.52, p.59, & p.65

Chapter Five

Hans Morgenthau and the debut of Boasian Culture

<u>Hans J. Morgenthau</u> (1904-1980)[1]

Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, first published 1948

Introduction

The Second World War heralds a major turning point in the story of the development of culture in IR. During the war, 'culture' had become a matter of state policy under the fascist powers to such an extent that the 'Italian cultural relations programme' "finally came... to the frank assertion, "Culture is Fascism"."[2] The intellectual changes that had begun in the United States before the war, as discussed in Part One of this thesis, ensured the Boasian concept of culture a prominent position in American social science at its close. Anthropologists had done their bit for the war effort; many of them had drawn portraits of 'national characteristics' for the American government.[3] In addition to the work produced on 'national characteristics,' we can witness, also, the growing influence of the Boasian concept of culture on American foreign policy generally. The American scholar Frank Ninkovitch identified two schools of thought and sets of policy makers that co-existed towards the end of the war, and detailed their changing levels of influence in American government.[4] One group, he says, envisaged a limited role for government in cultural policy, or, 'cultural interchange' as this group understood it, whereas the other group saw 'government as the central policy mechanism.' The competing views of the role of

---

[1]   Hans J. Morgenthau (1948/1962)
[2]   Cited in Ruth McMurray and Muna Lee (1947), p.238
[3]   Perhaps, the most well-known volume in IR is Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a portrait of Japanese people and their culture. Ruth Benedict (1946)

government that each side envisaged playing in 'cultural affairs' are revealing. For one side, 'culture' was too important an issue to be left in the hands of particular governments, this was something that they believed a wider group of people (especially 'cultural' experts or connoisseurs) must be involved in; while for the other side, 'culture' was becoming an increasingly national issue that they considered should be under governmental control. Crucially, Ninkovitch indicates that these two groups were 'mutually exclusive' of each other.[5]

> The culturalists continued to hew to the reciprocity theorems of liberalism, whereas the informationalists were more congenial to what was an unashamedly nationalist approach.[6]

The 'informationalists,' as Ninkovitch has described them, were in the business of "selling America" to the world, whereas the 'culturalists,' whom he goes onto to call the 'fundamentalists,' were interested in exchanging culture for humanist and universal benefit in the manner, previously, advocated by Alfred Zimmern for example.[7] Ninkovitch's distinction between the 'fundamentalists and informationalists' is somewhat misleading from my point of view, but, without doubt, he has detected the differences between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts of culture informing American policy makers' thinking, although he has not recognised it in these terms. Ninkovitch has employed his own descriptive terms of 'informationalist' and 'fundamentalist,' but what is noticeable is that he argues that these two sides were incommensurable and competing for influence in American foreign policy. Significantly, he says that before the Second World War,

> When Americans spoke of cultural relations, they actually meant intellectual relations – it would not have occurred to them that the two were not identical.[8]

As contextualists it does not occur to us to transform these pre-war assumptions, as Ninkovitch does, to claim 'that the two were not identical.' 'When IR scholars, Americans, and most other westerners, spoke of intellectual relations they actually meant culture' and that deserves to be taken seriously, rather than reinterpreted from the standpoint of a different conception of culture. What is clear is that the 'informationalists' (or Boasians)

---

4   Frank Ninkovitch (1981)
5   Frank Ninkovitch, *ibid*, p.126
6   Frank Ninkovitch, *ibid*, p.126
7   Frank Ninkovitch, *ibid*, see Chapter 5

won the 'battle' for foreign policy and by 1950, according to Ninkovitch, 'American cultural programmes were committed to waging the Cold War.'[9] On the stage of the 'cultural cold war,' points were scored by Olympic gold medals, the grand tours of national orchestras and entertainment corps, and the defections of ballet dancers.[10] Against this Boasian background a new form of IR theory appears in the United States – Realism.

It might be thought that Realism, the theoretical approach that dominated the discipline throughout the Cold War period, has nothing to say on cultural matters and, at first sight, its well known interest in power would appear to support this assumption. If we were in a less charitable mood, we might even 'blame' realism for the lack of interest in culture within IR, until recently, in view of its disciplinary dominance. However, this assessment would be misleading in one crucial respect – it will not have shown an appreciation of the work of Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau is a key figure in the realist story and the term 'culture' features prominently in his work so that we can suspect that his realism, at least, has a place for the concept. What is more, Morgenthau's culture can be contrasted sharply with the inter-war theorists' conception of culture and the Arnoldian concept found dominating British scholarship. Plainly, I need to illustrate this distinction and will do so by discussing three aspects of Morgenthau's use of the term 'culture' in this section. First, Morgenthau's concept of culture will be demonstrated to be Boasian and, more importantly, essentialist. Second, I will briefly examine how his idea of culture fits in with the other aspects of his theory. This is the most awkward aspect of Morgenthau's work, but it is suggested, finally, that A.J. Murray's proposition that Morgenthau's theory is normatively driven offers a way of dealing with any difficulties, but it must be accepted, in finality, that culture remains an under theorised idea in his work.

5.1 – New Culture in IR

Hans Morgenthau clearly represents an intellectual departure from the pre-Second World War IR thinkers with respect to the concept of culture. This is perhaps not too surprising given Morgenthau's personal background and the intellectual climate in which he developed

8   Frank Ninkovitch, *ibid*, p.181
9   Frank Ninkovitch, *ibid*, p.140
10   See Francis Stonor Saunders (1999)

his ideas. Morgenthau, like Franz Boas some four decades before him, was a German-Jewish émigré to the United States, arriving there in 1937 via Geneva. Like Boas, Morgenthau was steeped in German *kultur*, but, unlike Boas, he settled in the United States in a very different intellectual and social climate; one that Boas and his students had very much influenced. Morgenthau made his debut in the nativist atmosphere that was permeating the American social sciences and was beginning to make itself felt in foreign policy circles. We can witness the evidence of the 'new' concept at work in his most famous volume, *Politics Among Nations*.

Politics Among Nations is counted among the classic Realist texts and is best remembered for the argument that international politics is better understood by way of "the concept of interest defined in terms of power," as well as detailing the 'six principles of political realism;' but it should also be considered as a landmark text in terms of the historical development of the concept of 'culture' in IR.[11] There are, in Morgenthau's view, perennial problems and persistent features in international politics, the most obvious are war and the balance of power. Morgenthau attempts to theorise these perennial features of international politics, although there is sufficient ambiguity in his approach for subsequent scholars to criticise and conclude that perhaps he did not achieve his theory of international politics to any great level of satisfaction.[12] *Politics Among Nations* stands as a comprehensive survey of the problems and ideas affecting the international system as perceived by a thinker writing at, more or less, the mid-century point in time. In these terms, the book offers the contextualist some interesting insights into the assumptions, perceptions, concerns, and thinking of the time. Among the usual subjects of diplomacy, law and, by now, the United Nations, Morgenthau also devotes a considerable portion of the book to discussing 'international politics as the struggle for power.' He discusses the various aspects of national power and its limitations, and the 'problem of peace' from different perspectives. Inevitably, in view of the time in which it was first written (1947), and revised (throughout the Cold War period), nationalism and ideology figure quite prominently. In many respects, this book represents the link between the issues coming out

---

[11]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.5 & Chapter 1 generally.
[12]   Kenneth Waltz is a foremost critic of Morgenthau, contending in his *Theory of International Relations* (Reading, Mass. Addison-Wesley, 1979) that Morgenthau did not develop a theory at all. Also see Peter Gellman (1988)

of the Second World War and those determining the Cold War. However, it is the frequent references to the term 'culture' throughout the work that are of most concern, for they are sufficient to make this, arguably, one of the key 'culture' texts in IR.[13]

What is immediately important from my point of view is that the idea of 'culture' Morgenthau relies upon in his work is Boasian. Unlike Alfred Zimmern whom we found dismissing parochial versions of culture, and especially that Continental version of culture that the Germans had propagated in the First World War period, Morgenthau is comfortable with a parochial conception of culture. Moreover, it is clear, from the outset, that Morgenthau conceives of culture in a manner that includes values. In Britain, Arnold Toynbee, for example, still felt compelled, in 1961, to discuss whether the culture concept should include values.[14] Morgenthau's idea of culture, on the other hand, encapsulates values in a relative and national way, which would have disappointed both Alfred Zimmern and Norman Angell. Early on in the text, Morgenthau tells us, "theory and policy alike run counter to two trends in our culture which are not able to reconcile themselves to the assumptions and results of a rational, objective theory of politics."[15] These two trends, which he despairs of, are, first, the disparagement of the role of power in society and second, the opposition to 'realist theory and the practice of politics.' This opposition to political realism, he says,

> stems from the very relationship that exists, and must exist, between the human mind and the political sphere... the human mind in its day-by-day operations cannot bear to look the truth of politics straight in the face.[16]

That the 'relationship between the human mind and the political sphere' is said to be a 'trend of our culture' is very revealing. This suggests that, for Morgenthau, 'culture' is more than the manifestation of artefacts or other products of intellectual and artistic achievement; it indicates that 'culture' is a matter of intellectual and social outlook itself. Aversion to 'the truth of politics' and being unable to look it 'straight in the face,' is fundamentally a more serious issue than writing a book and sending it abroad; it is indicative of a general social

---

[13]   Someone more sympathetic to the Boasian concept will read this text differently to the view expressed here.

[14]   See Arnold J. Toynbee (1961), Volume XII, pp.272-280. In this volume, where he reconsidered his work, Toynbee seems to accept Albert Kroeber's definition of culture, which included values, but needs to discuss this issue first.

[15]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), pp.14-15

attitude and the use of the term 'trends' more than supports this presumption. Of greater significance is Morgenthau's use of language. These are 'trends in *our* culture,' which suggests a possession of a very particular sort. To be able to distinguish between different types of culture (even to be able to ask the 'whose culture?' question and say that it is 'ours') represents a serious departure from the Arnoldian concept.

To speak of 'our' culture implies a certain measure of boundary and exclusivity that has not been detectable in IR theory, in cultural terms, until this point. Certainly, these qualities were detectable in the idea of civilisation, particularly where references to 'Western' civilisation and 'British' civilisation occur. Moreover, boundary and exclusivity were recognised in the form of racial and national differences as both Angell and Zimmern amply demonstrate. Yet, where these traits have been associated with the idea of civilisation in British scholarship, in Morgenthau they are expressed in terms of 'culture,' which indicates a major linguistic and epistemic shift in 'conventional standards.'[17] The culture of *Politics Among Nations* is relative, it is 'ours,' and it is social in a much broader sense. This kind of culture enables Morgenthau to speak of 'trends' and to go on to identify them. None of this seems strange to us today, but it marks a significant development in the use of the idea of culture and is, therefore, no small etymological change. It represents an altogether different epistemology and a marked conceptual shift from the terms employed by Zimmern, as well as an alternative frame of reference. 'Culture,' in this text, is fully realised in its noun sense, which I have identified here as the essentialist version of the Boasian concept of culture.

It is especially noticeable that there are several sub-sections in the text explicitly devoted to issues associated with culture in its Boasian guise. First, Morgenthau discusses 'Cultural Imperialism' as part of his chapter on imperialism generally.[18] The problem of

---

[16]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.15

[17]   Morgenthau does use the term civilisation but employs it, largely, in relation to Western civilisation. It is clear that culture is the concept that he relies upon more than civilisation. He does define civilisation: "What we call civilization is in a sense nothing but the automatic reactions of the members of a society to the rules of conduct by which that society endeavors to make its members conform to certain objective standards, to restrain their aspirations for power, and to domesticate and pacify them in all socially important respects." There is an air of artifice about this definition of civilisation (civilisation is something that happens to people); there is no mention of achievement or progression, which should not surprise us in view of Morgenthau's German heritage. Culture is the organic and more natural element in his thought. Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.231

[18]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, see pp.60/63

imperialism was, obviously, an ongoing and sensitive issue during the Cold War, particularly for de-colonising states, and Morgenthau's discussion of this subject is a good example of contextual influence in many respects. Second, there is a larger section on 'National Characteristics' comprising three sub-sections on 'Its Existence,' 'The Russian National Character,' which is, perhaps, not too surprising in view of actual international developments, and, finally, a sub-section on 'National Character and National Power.' That so much space is given over to the subject of 'national characteristics' tells us that this was an important and serious issue for Morgenthau. It is not simply that national characteristics were considered a salient feature of international politics, nor is it because this is the great hey-day for such interest as the work of many anthropologists confirms, but it is the manner in which Morgenthau discusses this subject that interests me most here. For Morgenthau, national characters are, plainly, an essential and cultural matter. Third, and, perhaps, of greater significance, is the substantial section he allocates to discussing 'The Cultural Approach' of UNESCO versus the 'The Functional Approach' of other international organisations and agencies. Morgenthau dissects the merits of each approach for its capacity to effect a peaceful transformation of the world community; naturally, the Cultural Approach is dismissed since this turns out to be Arnoldian culture and the stuff of interchange. Morgenthau is critical of the work of UNESCO, but this should not be mistaken for a rejection of the importance of 'culture' in his thinking generally, a point I return to below. Finally, there are a number of issues that might also be considered to be of 'cultural' significance, notably his discussion of 'world public opinion,' the sections on 'moral' questions, and the sub-section on 'propaganda,' obviously a subject of topical concern for those interested in promoting the "American way of life" during the Cold War.[19]

There are several general comments to be made with regard to the role of 'culture' in *Politics Among Nations* overall. First, 'culture' is a prevalent term throughout the text, and one requiring no special indexation, which tells us that this word is part of Morgenthau's everyday language. Second, the special attention that he pays to 'culture,' and the particular subjects that he discusses in relation with it, reveal the extent, and manner, to which he considered 'culture' to be a significant feature of international relations. For example and

---

[19]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid.* On 'moral' issues see Chapters 15 & 20; on 'propaganda' see Chapter 20, and on 'world public opinion' see Chapter 17.

crudely put, Morgenthau clearly believes that the 'culture' identified with UNESCO is ineffectual, while the 'culture' that gives rise to 'national characteristics' is unavoidable. Third, even through the various editions of, and additions to, the text, the notion of culture remains a persistent element of concern. Finally, the text seems to do two things; it offers us an expansion of ideas involving culture in IR (by, primarily, introducing the Boasian concept to the discipline) and it also supplies confirmation of the contextual significance of 'culture.' Given the nature of the substantive situation, the Cold War, none of this should surprise us I suppose, since the 'clash' between the American and Soviet 'ways of life' was an obviously topical issue for contemporaries. However, when viewed from the historiography of the discipline and the concerns expressed here, it does seem rather remarkable that the cultural aspect of Morgenthau's thesis has been obscured.

In his section on the 'Cultural Approach,' Morgenthau tells us that there are some "primitive peoples" who are "receptive to the influence of foreign cultures to the point of suicide."[20] This is obviously not a matter of cultural commonality but one of imposition, assimilation, and loss. Morgenthau is aware of the possibilities of this kind of cultural intrusion when he discusses the problem of 'Cultural Imperialism.'[21] Cultural imperialism is, for Morgenthau, the deliberate "displacement of one culture by another," and is potentially the more successful form of imperialism in view of its subtle and pernicious nature.[22] Imperialism aside, the use of the terms 'displacement' and 'suicide' are particularly forceful in this context, because they demonstrate the existence of one of the key assumptions of the Boasian idea of culture; namely, that indigenous culture (in an essentialist sense) can be lost or eroded away by 'foreign' influences. Such an assumption of cultural loss only serves to reinforce the belief that local culture is a highly significant determinant of people's lives. That he believes some communities are in danger of losing their 'culture' demonstrates his conceptual acceptance of the Boasian idea of culture and reveals, to us, where his normative instincts lie (i.e. losing 'culture' is a 'bad' thing). Elsewhere in the text, Morgenthau invokes the support of anthropologists directly.

Morgenthau's conviction that similar problems may occur with regularity and frequent patterning over time, lead him to refer such things as 'cultural patterning,' which

---

20   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.521
21   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, See pp.60-63

indicates the influence of Ruth Benedict's work at least. When he discusses national character, he tells us that,

> We are not concerned here with the question of what factors are responsible for the development of a national character. We are only interested in the fact - contested but (it seems to us) **incontestable**, especially in view of the **anthropological concept** of the "cultural pattern" - that certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in another.[23] (my emphasis)

The 'fact' of national character and its 'existence' (the subheading for the section) may be contested in some academic circles, but the obviousness of certain valued qualities, and therefore the 'incontestability' of national character, are reinforced by the anthropological concept of 'cultural patterning' for Morgenthau. Taken together, the empirical 'fact' of the matter and the weight of anthropological thinking, places the notion of national character beyond dispute. The most pertinent critical observation to make is that the 'fact' of national character and of 'cultural patterning' remain largely instinctive and highly contestable forms of knowledge, despite the 'fact' that most anthropologists would have agreed with Morgenthau at the time. However, the anthropologists' idea of culture clearly appears less controversial and contestable for someone raised in *kultur*, as is the appeal of Coleridge.

Morgenthau quotes from Coleridge in order to affirm that nations have 'invisible spirits' that 'breathe through a whole people' making them distinct from one another, and this alone would seem to provide sufficient proof for national distinctiveness.[24] Yet, when this is supported by the scientific enterprise of anthropology, culture becomes the undoubted source of differentiation and lends theoretical weight to the evidence of difference between national communities.[25] The differences Morgenthau cites between Immanuel Kant, René Descarte, Edmund Burke, and John Dewey, offer further testimony, in his view, to the "unmistakable distinctiveness" of each nation, and of its effects on 'intellectual qualities.'[26] Moreover, 'a nation is not an empirical thing,' he tells us, it is,

---

22   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.58 & p.60
23   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.126
24   Coleridge is cited by Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, pp.126/7
25   We are certainly made aware by Morgenthau that 'news' information can appear very differently in 'the New York Times, Pravda, and Hindustan Times,' because it means something different in each community. Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.265
26   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.127

an abstraction from a number of individuals who have certain characteristics in common, and it is these characteristics that make them members of the same nation.[27] When faced with this 'definition' of a nation, as a matter of abstracted commonality and one that insists members of a nation 'think, feel and act in that capacity,' one necessarily is inclined to link the characteristics that define a nation to culture. Moreover, this appears an irresistible proposition when culture is associated 'with that spirit that breathes through a people' and this is a heavily implied connection in this text. However, we do need to exercise some caution on this aspect of Morgenthau's work, as the relationship between culture, the nation and beyond this to international politics is, to a considerable extent, ambiguous and tendentious. Nonetheless, it is certain, by the manner in which Morgenthau employs the term, that 'culture' belongs to a particular 'community,' and is defined as a source of difference between communities, as commonality within a community, and, appears as an "incontestable" intellectual standard. In short, his is a Boasian conception of the essentialist configuration. Moreover, the author is writing at a time when the assumed distinctive 'essence' behind culture, 'the spirit that breathes through a people,' had acquired widespread intellectual respectability in America and had become an 'unspoken conventional standard.' The 'mysterious' nature of this essence would not have been entered into too deeply by academics and remained largely unchallenged, except in British social anthropological circles.

5.2 – *Culture and International Politics*

Morgenthau's idea of culture is confirmed as distinguishable from the cultural ideas of British scholars when he discusses what the study of international politics consists of. The political sphere is quite distinct, in his view, from other spheres of 'life' namely the economic, legal and religious.[28] All of these things may have an international aspect but they do not constitute part of the political sphere in Morgenthau's view, nor do they constitute what he has in mind for the disciplinary activity of international relations. Some difficulty arises, however, concerning the relationship of 'culture' to the political and, therefore, the international sphere, for Morgenthau does, at times, seem to point in two alternative

---

[27]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.101

directions in which the idea of culture could be developed. However, much of this confusion is easily dealt with if we draw out the distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian conceptualisations, and remind ourselves that the same word can be read/understood in two distinct ways. Morgenthau clearly employs both concepts but places a contrasting normative emphasis on each.

When discussing the sphere of international politics Morgenthau suggests that nations engage in other forms of international activity with one another but these forms of engagement are not necessarily, nor are they always, political. Crucially,

> a nation is not normally engaged in international politics when it... promotes the
> distribution of cultural achievements throughout the world.[29]

This stands in sharp contrast to the League era and those scholars who believed that 'promoting the distribution of cultural achievements' explicitly served an international political purpose. Here Morgenthau appears to be disassociating the idea of cultural interchange as envisaged by the League era thinkers from international politics itself. Indeed the distinction between Morgenthau and the supporters of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation (ICIC) for example, becomes most obvious when he discusses the possibilities for building a 'world community' via the 'cultural approach' as exemplified by UNESCO.[30] On this issue, Morgenthau demonstrates an opposition to 'international cultural relations' and the presumed effectiveness of the work of organisations like UNESCO in the same manner that fuelled C.K. Webster and Sidney Herbert's criticism of the poetry exchange organised by the ICIC (see Chapter 4 this thesis). Morgenthau argues,

> That an intellectual elite in the United States enjoys Russian music and literature and
> that Shakespeare has not been banned from the Russian stage has no relevance at all
> for the problem with which we are concerned.[31]

The problem that concerns him at this point in the text is the prospects for building a peaceful world community. Similar criticisms were expressed against the effectiveness of 'international cultural relations,' or cultural interchange, by other leading figures. According to Akira Iriye, Nicholas Spykman said, rather sarcastically, in 1942, "[i]f the cooperation of

28   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.14
29   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.28
30   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, see Chapter 30
31   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.522

our Latin neighbors is dependent on the popular appreciation of the rhumba in the United States, the future is indeed bright."[32] In a similar anti-international cultural relations vein, President Richard Nixon retorted in 1970, "some Americans think that we can rely on peace by sending a few Fulbright scholars abroad...but that doesn't bring peace. We can avoid war if we are realistic and not soft-headed."[33] What is interesting about these views is that they express quite neatly the lack of (Realist) support for the whole idea of international cultural relations, yet, ironically, both the Americans and the Soviets set some store by scoring 'cultural' points off their ideological opponent.[34] At first sight then, Morgenthau's view of cultural interchange, as having no relevance in international politics, appears to express comparable hard-headed and Realist sentiments to those of Spykman and Nixon.

Morgenthau is plainly hostile towards the idea of cultural interchange and not simply on the grounds of effectiveness. In the light of his pessimistic view of human nature, his criticisms would seem to have an ontological basis nullifying the usefulness of cultural exchange from the outset. However, there is more than a simple 'realistic' rejection of the effectiveness of cultural interchange at work here. In order to discern what Morgenthau intended by his objections to the 'cultural approach,' we need to separate out his political objections from his theoretical understanding. That is to say, we should not mistake the argument against the possibilities for creating a peaceful world community for an argument against the idea of culture itself, even though his objections are seemingly levelled against the value of culture and, especially, the international value of culture as something to be exchanged. For it is the Arnoldian concept of culture, as it has manifested itself in international relations, that he is rejecting and arguing against, while retaining a Boasian conceptualisation of culture to inform his theorising more generally.

In his Chapter on 'The World Community,' the humanist concept is instantly and easily detectable; here he writes

> of educational and cultural activities aiming at the interchange of the products of national cultures.[35]

---

[32]   Cited in Akira Iriye (1997), p.145
[33]   Cited in Akira Iriye, *ibid*, p.160
[34]   In the Cold War climate both sides perceived their cultural activities in terms of an ideological crusade and sought to export their 'way of life' and to 'win hearts and minds' via the culture medium.
[35]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), pp.521/2 and Chapter 30 generally.

It is important to note that this interchange involves the products not simply of peoples and/or nations but of national cultures. Zimmern would not have considered that nations had 'culture' in the same sense. Morgenthau rejects the idea of cultural interchange that derives from the Arnoldian concept in this section, and it is clear that he is sceptical of the argument that this will, somehow, lead to mutual benefit. He doubts the effectiveness of culture as an instrument for creating a 'world community' in the sense that fuelled the thinking of Zimmern, for example. However, it is the second idea of culture that, although less obvious in this chapter (but located throughout the text), is, I believe, fundamental to Morgenthau's thinking and marks the distinction between culture as a matter of 'achievement' from culture as 'a way of life,' or, 'our' culture as he refers to it. Indeed, his discussion of UNESCO focuses explicitly on the 'educational and intellectual' activities conducted by that organisation, not on any life-forming, or parochial, aspects. He wastes no energy in revealing and dismissing the assumptions upon which the work of that organisation is founded. The 'assumption that nations go to war because they do not know each other well enough,' and that increased contact will 'foster mutual understanding' and lead to a more peaceful world order, represent a 'congenital defect' in the philosophy that generates cultural and educational interchange, he argues.[36] Here Morgenthau not only questions the theoretical assumptions underpinning 'international cultural relations,' he rejects them outright.[37] In this respect, Morgenthau's view of culture and its role in international relations is precisely the opposite to that of Zimmern; he rejects any universal notion of culture in favour of that 'continental' version Zimmern so despised.

> Morgenthau takes a few examples, apparently at 'random,' to show that the quantity and quality of education and culture as such is obviously irrelevant to the issue of a world community. That issue hinges, not upon knowledge and the creation and appreciation of cultural values, but upon a moral and political transformation of unprecedented dimensions.[38]

---

[36]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.520
[37]   Charles Frankel raises similar concerns about contact and fostering mutual understanding, but fails to address the issue directly. Charles Frankel (1966) Chapter 6, especially pp.82/85
[38]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.521

The Germans, he argues, have been "highly educated and steeped in classical culture" but have been "nationalistic and warlike."[39] Note the interjection of the word 'classical' here, which is an explicit reference to the Arnoldian concept. Equally, the Chinese, for all of their 'culture, educational and intellectual achievement,' have been no less nationalistic. What is interesting about the above statement, as well as the examples that Morgenthau uses to support it, is that it illustrates the influence of both the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts of culture. The 'quality and quantity of education and culture' (the Arnoldian expression) are dismissed as 'irrelevant to the issue of a world community' from a Boasian point of view. That this is so is revealed by the notion (assumption) that there are 'cultural values' of which we could have 'knowledge and appreciation,' and which are, presumably, of 'local' relevance. In the above statement, one conception of culture is being relied upon to undermine and refute the other idea of culture. The use of the phrase 'cultural values' is particularly revealing in this respect; in Arnoldian terms culture is something to be valued and appreciated universally, it does not denote values of a specific 'cultural' type.[40] For Morgenthau, the 'cultural values' that matter and influence world politics are local and national, and are, therefore, quite specific.

An underlying acceptance of the importance of parochial 'cultural values' is further illustrated by his insistence that other 'frameworks' of "homogenous culture" have existed in international history.[41] Given that these international homogenous cultural moments were not peaceful, as was the case in 18th century Europe, is only part of his argument; although, this does provide important evidence, in his view, for the failure of a cultural approach to bring about a peaceful world order. It is, however, more relevant to my purpose that Morgenthau conceives of culture as a matter of homogeneity and consensus, which is precisely the Boasian conception. "Cultural uniformity," he claims, is one of the factors that makes "the national society an integrated whole set apart from other national societies."[42] 'The natives' are clearly distinguishable from 'the tourists' and '*other* natives.' It is not the case that the League era scholars envisaged cultural interchange creating an international

---

[39]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.521

[40]   Obviously, this is a matter open to debate – critics would claim that Arnoldian culture is as much an expression of a particular 'cultural' type as anything else, but I will avoid this discussion here, if only on the grounds that it allocates primacy to the Boasian concept.

[41]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.522

[42]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.38

homogeneity in the same sense; neither did they see cultural uniformity as the source of distinction between communities. What is being ruled out by Morgenthau, is not the influence of culture as such, or even the idea of culture, but the idea that there can be an international 'culture' or a world community which would be peaceful because it is homogenous and united in a meaningful sense. Without a 'moral and political transformation of unprecedented dimensions,' cultural interchange is not only ineffective, it is irrelevant in modern international affairs and this would appear to remain the case irrespective of the level of international homogeneity, although, it should be pointed out to the reader that elsewhere Morgenthau patently contradicts himself on this issue.[43]

In order to make better sense of Morgenthau's idea of culture we need to separate his argument against cultural interchange from those of peace. The source of this distinction derives from Morgenthau's political theory that human nature is the basis of all politics, and that this is likely to be conflictual in essence and to remain so. In contrast to the League era thinkers, peace is not indicative of a more civilised polity; on the contrary, war is counted by Morgenthau, (as it is for all 'Realists' to varying degrees of potentiality) as a perennial problem of international politics. Nothing, short of an 'unprecedented change' in human nature, and least of all cultural exchange, will drive the possibility of war from the world community of states. This is not to say that culture itself is an irrelevancy in international affairs, but it is to say that Morgenthau has a very different idea of culture in mind from that informing Alfred Zimmern and, consequently, comes to view its role in international politics very differently.

In Morgenthau's view, Arnoldian 'culture' is not an effective, reliable, or even useful, instrument of the state, or a conglomeration of states, capable of achieving political ends in his view; although, he is fully aware that states make full use of 'culture,' which he variously discusses as propaganda, ideology and nationalism.[44] Morgenthau is not interested in Arnoldian culture or its cosmopolitan possibilities. Culture is, for him, seriously a matter

---

[43]   This is most obvious in Chapter 14 where he 'evaluates the balance of power.' He seems to imply in this section that the 'intellectual and moral unity' of 18th century Europe and other moments of 'consensus' in international history were, politically, more effective and certainly more effective than anything that exists today. Potentially then, cultural unity might be politically more effective than he suggests in his discussions of UNESCO, world public opinion and world community. Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, especially pp.220/223

[44]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, see Chapters 7, 16, & 20

of local community values not the superficiality of quantity and quality of education found in UNESCO and deployed, by that organisation, for larger political purposes. In this way, culture plays an intrinsic role in national political life; it has no, effective, role in international life in terms of the deliberate and conscious deployment of certain artefacts or achievements deemed cultural. It should also be noted that Morgenthau's examples are always expressed in national terms, i.e. 'the Germans, the Chinese, the Russians' etc., indicating, therefore, that the most conspicuous level at which the most salient understanding of culture manifests itself, in his theory, is parochial not international. For Morgenthau, parochialism comes in the form of the nation-state, rather than any sub-national cultural-identity, which is, arguably, the most common association today.[45]

Morgenthau counts culture as one of the universal elements of human life, but fitting the community value of culture into a 'universal' theoretical framework is problematic. It is a major assumption of Morgenthau's that cultural differences divide us, that everyone has culture, and it makes us what we are, but unlike subsequent theorists who employ an essentialist version of the Boasian concept of culture, say Samuel Huntington for example, it is not clear how this notion of 'culture' manifests itself in international relations. At the basic level, Morgenthau clearly recognises that fundamental differences exist between communities and that these represent a serious difficulty in international relations.

> Even if the American, Russian, and Indian could speak to each other, they would speak with different tongues, and if they uttered the same words, those words would signify different objects, values, and aspirations to each of them.[46]

Furthermore, we are fundamentally shaped in our differences.

> The same item of information and the same idea mean something different to an American, a Russian, and an Indian; for that item of information and that idea are perceived by, assimilated to, and filtered through minds conditioned by different experiences and molded by different conceptions of what is true, good, and politically desirable and expedient.[47]

---

[45]   Cultural-identities are the most popular source of interest these days, rather than national culture, as was Morgenthau's concern.

[46]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.265

[47]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.265

National people are fundamentally incommensurable and culture is the driving force behind their differences. All of these differences in understanding, attachment and meaning affect the way we understand, perceive and do business with one another at the international level. Morgenthau frequently fills the void between these essential differences and the perennial political problems they generate with the 'blanket' idea of psychological forces. The psychological element in Morgenthau's work has been noted in IR and can be said to be indicative of the influence of Reinhold Nieburh on his thinking.[48] The presence of this 'psycho-sociological' strand in his work makes it all the more difficult to ascertain a precise role for culture in his theory generally, since some of these 'psycho-sociological' elements are conveyed in Morgenthau's work by his use of culture and seem to substitute, at times, for the language of culture.[49] Although it is clear that Morgenthau recognises differences as problematic in international relations and that these differences are a matter of culture, it is not certain how these two conceptions fit together.

The difficult question centres on how far Morgenthau envisaged culture affecting international politics, particularly in view of his argument that political realism affords a truthful insight into the world of international relations and its perennial problems. For although Morgenthau obviously believes that every national community has its own distinctive and valued culture, exemplified by differing national characters, it is the impact of this on international politics that remains far from being theoretically secured. It is not clear how culture relates to the other key components of his thought. Beyond the basic observations that can be made about 'culture' in Morgenthau's work (the term appears substantially and frequently in the text and it is, clearly, the Boasian concept that informs his thinking), the issue itself becomes more complex. The relationship of Morgenthau's conceptualisation of 'culture' to the national interest and nationalism, is ambiguous and not clearly stated, while acknowledging the role of culture in this text seems to problematise his view of international politics more generally. In addition, the appearance of Boasian culture in his work necessarily raises the difficult question of how far Morgenthau's theory is

---

[48]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, see for example p.50, pp.262/3, & p.344, and on 'propaganda as psychological warfare,' pp.338/9. On the 'psycho-sociological' element in Morgenthau see Chris Brown (1997) p.32

[49]   See especially Chapter 17 on 'World Public Opinion,' in which Morgenthau discusses the 'Psychological Unity of the World' while also acknowledging cultural variation and differences in

relativist, in spite of the much quoted assertions to the contrary.[50] Unfortunately for us it is largely the political effectiveness of culture at the international level and his arguments against 'cultural interchange' that concentrate his mind, rather than thinking through the relationship between the ideas he is using.

5.3 – Another Normative Dimension?

Within the first few pages of *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau tells us "the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the **political and cultural context** within which foreign policy is formulated"(my emphasis).[51] Moreover, he tells us,

> The same observations [noted above in respect of foreign policy] apply to the concept of power. Its content and the manner of its use are determined by the **political and cultural environment.**[52] (my emphasis.)

From the outset, Morgenthau allocates culture a significant and contingent role in his theory; both interests (formulated as foreign policy) and power are culturally determined in some way or other. This aspect of his theory has been overlooked, given, as we commonly are, to focusing on power and interest alone in this text, rather than the context in which these things operate and are formulated. Clearly, the context was a matter of great importance to Morgenthau and has considerable implication for the way in which we approach his work. In part, this may help to explain his complaint in the 'Preface to the Second Edition' that he was 'criticised for ideas he had never held, and he believed that he was being "misunderstood."[53]

The obvious question arises as to what this theory tells us about the nature of international politics, beyond any general observations, if we accept Morgenthau's argument that national interests, the foreign policy they spawn and the power to pursue interests are all culturally conditioned activities. That foreign policy may be construed as the product of

---

understanding and values. See also, Chapter 7 'The Ideological Element in International Policies,' which invokes the language of psychological rather than cultural forces.

[50] See Hans-Karl Pilcher (1998) for a discussion about Morgenthau's use of 'positivist' terms, such as 'truth' and 'objectivity.'

[51] Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.9

[52] Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.9

[53] Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.iv

a certain 'cultural context' as well as politics would seem to attribute to the formulation of policy a level of contingency and parochialism; but Morgenthau goes beyond this, and in a manner that appears to challenge political realism's basic maxim that it objectively finds its way via 'the concept of interest defined in terms of power.' It would seem to indicate the influence of culture in a relativist sense, perhaps accounting for his nationalist expression of it. Yet we know from Morgenthau's work that not only did he consider political realism capable of offering objective insights into the nature of politics, but that he also founded his approach on certain cosmopolitan and universal principles. A conception of culture that is parochial and has a particular impact on national power and foreign policy would seem to demand some flexibility from our reading of Morgenthau's Realism. What is more, considering the local (national) significance that he attributes to culture, this would also seem to contribute additional awkwardness with respect to his universal interests, in say, for example, moral values.

Culture appears to be significant in a number of ways in Morgenthau's work. First there is the role, or lack of, that cultural exchange can play at the international level, as discussed above. This is *the* 'culture' that Morgenthau is most critical of, and perhaps predictably so since this is the idea of culture (Arnoldian) most associated with the League era. Second, and more importantly, is the 'culture' that belongs to a community of people and the effect it has on that community's external relations; this is the Boasian concept. Most frequently, this notion of culture is expressed in the language of nations and raises some interesting questions concerning the nature of national interest and foreign policy formation, mentioned above, as well as the impact of the national character at the international level. Third, although Morgenthau asserts that culture is a universal phenomenon it is clear that culture serves as an important source of differences between communities of people and exerts a particular influence, which would appear to undermine some of his universal propositions. Again, this influence is most obvious in his interest in national characters, which implies more than a passing effect for culture on communities of individuals and their traits, and is very much in keeping with the prevailing assumptions of American social science at the time.[54] Each of these roles taken either individually or as a whole confirms Morgenthau's assumption that culture is an important and determining

---

[54] See Ruth Benedict (1946) & Margaret Mead (1942/1943)

feature of national life. Yet, Morgenthau plainly conceives of culture as the particular
expression of an unavoidable and necessary aspect of what it means to be human; as when
he tells us that,

> All human beings want to be free, and, hence, want to have those opportunities for
> self-expression and self-development which **their particular culture** considers to be
> desirable.[55] (my emphasis)

How this parochial and particular view of human beings constrains the universal aspects of
his theory is not entered into. Certainly, this would seem to alter our understanding of
political realism somewhat, especially when one considers that the political sphere, which is
supposed to constitute an autonomous sphere of action and academic study for Morgenthau,
turn out be culturally determined in a manner that might, eventually, undermine this
independent view of politics. This is especially problematic in view of the fact that
Morgenthau goes on to say,

> All human beings seek power, and hence, seek social distinctions, again varying with
> **the particular pattern of their culture**, that put them ahead of and above their
> fellow men.[56] (my emphasis)

Beyond generalities and caricature, and a basic recognition of behavioural differences, we
might wonder what Morgenthau has to offer IR here, but before we embark on this course
of thinking, something might be rescued by way of his intentions. In this respect, we are
required to move beyond describing the various roles that culture plays in Morgenthau's
realism through recovering their contextual significance, and need to begin to address the
issue of the relevancy of culture in his theory more generally. In order to approach this issue
we may need to view Morgenthau's realism from an alternative perspective to the usual
readings.

In finality, *Politics Among Nations* is an argument for prudentialism and sensitive
diplomatic activity. A.J.H. Murray has convincingly argued that Morgenthau's realism
should be approached as a 'dialectical process' entailing 'value-trade-offs' by states leaders,
rather than an absolutist and positivist directive. In Murray's view, Morgenthau's
prudentialism has "conventionally been interpreted as a nationalist, rather than cosmopolitan

---

[55]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.262
[56]   Hans Morgenthau, *ibid*, p.262

standard - as a Bismarckian *realpolitik* caution, rather than as a Burkean moral concern."[57] Murray notices Morgenthau's interest in 'universal morals' and argues that a normative approach rather than a positivist one characterises the scholar's work. By situating Morgenthau in the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, Murray argues that Morgenthau regarded moral questions as "central to his theory."[58] As with the presence of culture and other psychological factors mentioned above, moral principles underpin the universal nature of politics for Morgenthau and that should be taken as seriously as he intended. Moreover, Murray shows that Morgenthau believed that "[m]an possesses a "moral sense" by which "he is capable of making the right moral judgments, [and] knowing why he makes them"."[59] This is confirmed by Morgenthau in a his reply to a criticism by Martin Wight, where he said,

> I was trying to establish the point, in contrast to Hobbes's, that moral principles
> are universal and, hence, are not created by the state.[60]

The question clearly arises, if 'moral principles' are not created by the state to what extent are they "created" or coloured by culture, given that culture is itself a universal. Morgenthau may have been working with a Judeo-Christian outlook but there might be ample space for different 'value' articulations here.

The political sphere seems to consist of a number of contingent elements, of which culture would appear to play an extremely influential role. Given that the practice of politics is an unavoidable activity, since competition and the need to dominate are inherent features of human nature, the political and cultural context/environment would appear to be equally inextricable and inherent features of any human society. However, the difficulty lies not simply with the argument that the political sphere is autonomous, because quite obviously it is not so autonomous, it is subject to contingent elements and influential factors, therefore, the difficulty arises as to **how we should read such things**. In view of the 'fact' that both the 'content and manner' of interest and power turn out to be culturally conditioned, should we be studying these cultural and contingent factors in more detail?[61] Are we correct to

---

[57]   A.J.H. Murray (1996), p.100
[58]   A.J.H. Murray, *ibid*, p.83
[59]   A.J.H. Murray, *ibid*, p.93
[60]   Cited by Peter Gellman (1988), p.259
[61]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), p.5

approach Morgenthau's political realism in absolutist terms? Hans-Karl Pichler has argued that

> By isolating national self-preservation, and with it power maximization, as the supreme
> valued end (the national interest) of all state leaders in international politics,
> Morgenthau is able **to overcome the problem of the value-determinacy** of social
> and political science because all state-leaders cannot but pursue this one valued end...
> **The possible outcomes** of the struggle for power and self-preservation are **neither
> culturally relative** nor dependent on the interpretation of the social scientist. Only
> one of two options exists: either the state survives or it perishes.[62] (my emphasis)

This is a strong reading of Morgenthau's interest in power with its focus on self-
preservation and the bottom line of his analysis that states must preserve themselves or be
lost. However, if one takes Murray's argument that Morgenthau's predominant concerns
are normative, then the way is open to the introduction of an additional normative element in
his theory in terms of culture and the significance of local values.

Murray argues that misinterpretations of Morgenthau's work have been based on the
(mistaken) assumption "that within this theory, there is no possibility of human action."[63]
There is, on Pichler's reading, only one national imperative – to survive. However, this is
not necessarily the primary issue, even for Morgenthau.[64] Whether Morgenthau has
'overcome' the problems of 'value-determinacy' depends on how relevant a role one
assumes culture is playing in his theory. A more sensitive reading of Morgenthau, plus the
references to cultural and political contingency mentioned above, support Murray's
argument that in fact there is plenty of room for human action and in a variety of forms.
Political action is fraught with cultural elements that not only make a community what it is
but also seemingly contribute to the way in which that community chooses its values, and
manifests its interests in international politics. There is more in this text than survival and
loss. The presence of the idea of culture in Morgenthau's work would seem to point to
human variety at least and support Murray's comment that "positivist" readings (his term) or

---

[62]   Hans-Karl Pichler, (1998), p.192
[63]   A.J.H. Murray (1996), p.94
[64]   Hans Morgenthau (1948/1962), see Chapter 1. The 'first principle of Political Realism,' "believes
that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature,"
p.4. The 'third principle,' "does not endow its key concept of interest defined as power with a meaning that

more deterministic interpretations (mine) of Morgenthau, like Pichler's, are perhaps mistaken. "Ultimately," Murray says, "toleration and the acknowledgment of the right of the other to pursue an alternative conception of the good are asserted as fundamental moral necessities."[65] 'Alternative conceptions of the good' and other issues, including the content of foreign policy and power, find articulation in Morgenthau's work in the form of culture. So much so, that the presence of culture would seem to add another normative dimension to Morgenthau's theory of political realism, since an important role for culture is clearly stated in *Politics Among Nations*, and reinforces Morgenthau's conviction that culture is a fundamental and essential feature of human existence; one determining the particulars of politics.

If Morgenthau understands culture in the Boasian sense then the question arises as to the significance of this concept in his work and whether reading his work in normative terms discloses an overlooked (cultural) aspect in his theory. The best that can be said, under the current circumstances, I think, is that Morgenthau did not think some of his larger conceptual relationships through. He never clearly states how culture might influence national interests nor does he discuss how cultural diversity is psychologically universal in any detail. Although, Morgenthau plainly assumes that local values and universal traits contribute significantly to international life, a current student may wonder as to how the two co-exist in practice. We can certainly chastise him for ambiguity, but the inevitable question arises, especially over the fact that culture is clearly identified in a particular way by Morgenthau, as to why he did not clarify his position on this matter. It is clear that culture is an important concept in Morgenthau's thinking, but it is also clear that this is a concept that he takes for granted. That he did not consider the idea of culture in detail implies that he simply accepted its existence as a salient parochial feature in international politics and one that he assumed could be easily accommodated by his international theorising. The simple explanation and obvious contextual conclusion is that for Morgenthau culture readily appeared as an undisputed and important *human* issue, as it was for some of his contemporaries – the American cultural anthropologists. Therefore, given its obvious and taken-for-granted status in his contemporary context, his failure to adequately discuss, what

---

is fixed once and for all," p.8. The primary issue is to find the 'truth' of politics and to recognise this amid fluidity and change.

[65]   A.J.H. Murray (1996), p.101

now seem to be important issues in this text, reveals much about the intellectual force this concept enjoyed at the time. This might explain why Morgenthau spares no effort in attacking that 'international culture' attributable to UNESCO, because that organisation's idea of 'culture' does not accord with his own understanding of culture. Not only does 'international culture' need dismissing, it requires undermining for two reasons; first, it is not the culture that really matters in the world, and second, it is dangerously unrealistic and ineffective. In much the same way that we found Alfred Zimmern arguing against 'continental culture' from within the framework of his own 'conventional' understanding of 'culture' in the previous chapter, so we find Morgenthau engaging in a similar activity, but from the adverse perspective. The 'conventional' meaning of culture has changed for Morgenthau and his generation, while alternative 'factory conditions' have ensured, in turn, that the object of derision has been transformed. What is significant, is that for Morgenthau 'culture' is a very different taken-for-granted concept from any previously held by IR scholars. Although we find Morgenthau arguing against Arnoldian culture and attempting to close the door on this concept, *Politics Among Nations* also marks the beginning of a new trend in IR theory as far as the idea of culture is concerned. It evidences the birth of parochial applications of the Boasian culture concept in international relations.

Summary

Politics Among Nations stands as an interesting and important contrast to League era thinking on the subject of culture. What we can say about Morgenthau's conception of culture is that it is provides a crucial source of distinction between communities and marks the debut of the Boasian concept in IR. This is 'our' culture, while the differences between communities are indicative of 'theirs.' Culture is taken to be a universal phenomenon, manifesting itself in a multiplicity of forms. In theory, the local, yet universal, presence of culture (everyone has one) assumes a certain measure of 'equal validity,' which, in itself, stands in complete contrast to the idea of civilisation with its assumption of a hierarchy of attainment. There is no 'progress' here; all nations are 'equally cultured' paraphrasing George Stocking (see Chapter 1 this thesis). Under Morgenthau's thesis the artifice of Arnoldian culture is something to be viewed suspiciously in IR and ultimately dismissed as an irrelevancy; fundamentally speaking, this is not the culture that matters for this scholar.

The culture that matters may be universal but its particular manifestation are parochial possessions. Differences entail a 'way of life' and are fundamental to human existence. Culture is a complete communal entity/experience, which can be eroded under extreme circumstances, while in its purest expression it is discrete and exclusive. Morgenthau's understanding of culture exhibits all of the classic features of the Boasian concept. It belongs to a specific 'community;' is about *otherness*, invokes *meaning*, and depends upon a measure of environmental determinism; while national characters are accepted as the visible evidence of 'ethnographic trademarks.' Further, culture is spoken of in terms of consensus, homogeneity, unity, and continuity. The appropriate level of application for culture is parochial and for Morgenthau this is most frequently expressed at the level of the nation as national culture. Morgenthau is operating with a nationalised version of culture typical for his context. Where cultural commonality does not exist, as is the case within the modern states-system, it cannot be made to prevail.

All of this represents a fairly coherent and thorough appreciation of the main tenets of the Boasian concept of culture, and marks the beginnings of a new role for culture in IR theory. This said, beyond the basic observation that culture in its essentialist guise is a persistent feature in Morgenthau's thinking, there really is not much of substance for us to grasp here. Unlike Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis, Morgenthau gives us no real indication as to where this idea of culture ends up in international politics generally. In many ways, Morgenthau is an excellent example of an author who does not define his terms, as indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, and who leaves future generations of readers a legacy of confusion. We can establish the meaning of 'culture' in *Politics Among Nations*, but we are left wondering as to its theoretical purpose more generally beyond that of two key points. The first is that culture is obviously assumed to be an essential source of distinction between communities and way of thinking about *others*, while the second suggests that this is best read as playing a normative role in Morgenthau's work. Beyond these comments and behind the difficulties the idea of culture generates for Morgenthau's Realism, lie all of the problematic assumptions that inform the Boasian concept. In turn, this exposes him to all of the criticisms that derive from the problems inherent in the nature of the concept. Ultimately, we are forced to ask whether it was useful, for us, that he viewed the world through the prism of national culture.

Chapter Six

Martin Wight and Hedley Bull – From Arnold to Boas?

Martin Wight (1913-1972)[1]

Systems of States, papers written between 1964 and 1972

Western Values, written in 1961

Hedley Bull (1932-1985)[2]

The Anarchical Society, first published 1977

The Hagey Lecture papers, delivered 1983

Introduction

If we wonder where the League scholars' interest in cultural interchange ends up during the Cold War period, apart from the continued and growing practice of substantive international cultural relations, then we need to return to the realm of British IR and, more specifically, to 'international society theory.' International society theory, or the English School as it is sometimes called, is in fact a very promising place to look for the development of the idea of culture, since it is one of the few theories in IR known to allocate this term a prominent role. As Tim Dunne has recently pointed out, while some may claim 'the return of culture and identity to IR,' "for the English School, questions of culture and identity never quite went away."[3] This is obviously so in view of the fact that a 'common culture' is the distinguishing feature of international society, but, given the centrality of the concept in this theory, it is surprising that no one, not even International Society theorists themselves or their critics, has considered closely what 'culture' means.

---

[1]   Martin Wight (1977) and Herbert Butterfield & Martin Wight eds. (1966)

[2]   Hedley Bull (1977/1995) and (1983)

[3]   Tim Dunne (1998), p.189

There is a strange silence surrounding international society theory as far as the idea of culture is concerned, which places the idea open to unspoken assumptions, if not misinterpretation. In contextual terms, the lack of consideration of 'culture' is as revealing here as it is elsewhere, for it tells us that the idea of culture is sufficiently understood to be taken for granted in all of its essentials by this theory's scholars, their readers, and subsequent commentators. The question that concerns me here, of course, is whether this is the *same* idea of culture informing the theorising of its various scholars.

The immediate and important observation is that, in its early manifestations at least, international society theory makes for a nice contrast with Hans Morgenthau's work, discussed in the previous chapter. Whereas Morgenthau represents a sharp rupture with the Arnoldian idea of culture in IR, international society theory only progressively incorporated a clearly recognisable and strongly articulated version of the Boasian concept in its essentialist guise. No matter how we view the role of culture in this theory overall or even as it appears in the hands of individual theorists, the historiography of culture in this theory demonstrates quite neatly the contingent influence of the wider 'factory conditions' on IR. International society theory usefully illustrates the changing fortunes of the culture concept in Britain, which becomes apparent through the changing use of language and shift of emphasis in cultural interest in some of its leading scholars' work. I focus on Martin Wight and Hedley Bull here, since these two theorists are thought especially useful for charting the development of culture within the theory itself as well as offering confirmation of the changing meaning and role of 'culture,' as an idea, within IR. As the fundamental tenets of international society theory have remained largely unchanged, it becomes a matter of deep curiosity as to how Wight and Bull understood international society in cultural terms. Taken together, these two theorists illustrate the changing language and meaning of culture within IR. In short, they mark the epistemic shift from an Arnoldian to a Boasian conceptualisation of culture in British scholarship.

6.1 – Martin Wight: An Oasis of International Culture

International Society Theory stands as one of the few theories where 'culture' is allocated a specific place in international relations. More importantly, its theorists consider the idea of culture at the international level, similar to their League era predecessors. However, unlike the thinkers of the First World War period for whom the concept of culture might be said to play a peripheral role, if nonetheless significant one within the context of civilisation theorising, Martin Wight afforded the concept of culture a central and crucial role from the outset. For the League era scholars, the idea of culture played an international role, but one that was largely instrumental and narrowly stated. With international society theory the concept of culture is much broader and has a normative and social content. What is more, Martin Wight's understanding of international society offers the prospect of standing as an oasis for the idea of 'international culture' against an ever encroaching desert of cultural parochialism in IR. I focus on three issues here: first, there is an obvious need to discuss the culture of international society theory as Wight conceived of it; second, I examine his curious insistence that culture precedes society before, finally, examining another problematic issue, the question of international heterogeneity. These issues enable me to suggest that, in Wight's case, some caution needs to be exercised when reading the term 'culture' in international society theory, for this is not an obvious or straightforward Arnoldian, nor Boasian, matter in his work.

6.1.i – The culture of international society

Undoubtedly, it is the level of co-operation and commonality among states that serves as the central plank of international society theory, and it is in this respect that the concept of culture plays a significant role. International society has always been considered more than 'mere relations between states;' it entails relations that are "more or less permanent," 'reciprocal,' and 'systematic.'[4] When, in *Systems of States*, Martin Wight wrote,

> We must assume that a states-system will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members[5]

---

[4]   Martin Wight (1977), p.22
[5]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.33

179

it is clear that he has a very different conception of the nature of culture from that of the League thinkers. It is also plain that this is not the possessive sense of 'culture' that Morgenthau relied upon; this is not 'our' culture in the nationalised sense and stands in sharp contrast to the parochial understanding of culture informing American scholarship at this time. Wight is looking for commonality amid diversity and, crucially, seeking to locate it at the international level. In his thinking, 'culture' denotes unity at the international level and is much more than *the means* for fostering mutual understanding. The difficulty arises over ascertaining what kind of unity and how we should read the term 'culture' in the light of his description. In other respects however, international society, as Wight conceived of it, represents a continuation of the interests that determined the League era scholars' work. Their focus on interdependence and co-operation reappears in his work, but in terms that are more systematic. One of the most obvious elements in the international society approach is its appreciation of the differing elements that are considered to constitute international politics. This is best exemplified by Wight's own distinction between the three strands in international relations, the realist, the rationalist and the revolutionist approaches.[6] There is a systematic attempt to find space for the 'perennial' responses to the problems of international politics in his theory. Whatever the reservations and criticisms of the framework within which Wight's theory has been constructed, and there have been many, there is a serious effort here to analyse what elsewhere would be considered as the contingent elements in world affairs.[7] This theoretical approach has taken on board the criticisms that the League scholars did not take the issue of power seriously, but has also found space for the co-operative aspects of international relations that caught those theorists' attention. Furthermore, this theory exhibits a profound normative interest in community, interaction and differences.

Some of the normative concern over values and difference that we found lurking in Morgenthau's work permeate international society theory in an explicit manner. Whereas, 'culture' was found to be problematically informing the national interest in the previous chapter, in international society theory there appears to be less confusion over the role of

---

[6]   Herbert Butterfield & Martin Wight (1966). See also Gabriele Wight & Brian Porter eds. (1991/1994)

[7]   Critical commentaries on international society theory include, Murray Forsyth (1978); Roy E. Jones (1981); E.B.F. Midgeley (1979); Martin Shaw (1992); Ole Waever (1992)

culture in relation to international politics than was detectable in Morgenthau's work. As Wight made plain, international society was more than mere or regular contact between states, although it is usually thought that it required Hedley Bull to make this distinction famously clear, a point I shall return to below. The role of the concept of culture in signifying more complex and meaningful relations is what makes international society theory so distinct within IR. In addition, Wight's application of the idea of culture marks a significant departure from something to be exchanged between differing peoples; 'culture' is definitely something **states** are involved in. Yet, it is clear that states are not participating in 'culture' in the manner of the American "informationalists" that Frank Ninkovitch identified in the previous chapter. States, in international society theory, are not in the business of 'selling themselves to each other' in a crude, nationalist sense. Therefore, it is of considerable significance, not only here, but also within the history of the discipline itself, that international society theory has a place for the concept of culture within its thinking about international relations. The concept of culture informing this theory is international not parochial and it is meaningful at the international level in a way that goes beyond anything the inter-war theorists envisaged and Morgenthau rejected.

Subsequent theorists have largely left undisturbed the basic assumption that international society is secured through the concept of culture; yet, such an acceptance is not quite as unproblematic as it may seem at first sight. To the League era scholars, culture was the means for realising a more civilised and peaceful form of co-operation in international relations. Wight, unlike the League scholars, does not rule out the possibility of war, and therefore his idea of culture has little or no instrumental role in this capacity. As he pointed out elsewhere, "[t]here is cooperation in international affairs as well as conflict" and he was resigned to the presence of war within the international system.[8] Instead, Wight conceives of culture in terms that underpin international society in a broad sense. 'Culture' is no longer conceived as a tool in international politics and as the means for creating a more civilised polity; it provides the basis for, and evidence of, international commonality. 'Culture' is the foundation stone of society itself, which indicates an important theoretical expansion of its role beyond intellectual exchange. 'Culture' is not limited as one practical aspect of international politics among many; it occupies a purely

---

[8]   Martin Wight (1946/1978), p.105. See also Tim Dunne's discussion, (1998) p.53

international role in its own right and has something to tell us about the nature of international relations. In this respect, Wight takes, in my view, an innovative step with respect to the role of culture in IR and one that maintains a link with some of the ideas and aspirations of the League era. The idea that international politics is more than conflict and that it can be redefined through co-operation and consensus will cause subsequent English school theorists considerable difficulty, as we shall see below. Yet, as far as Wight is concerned the place of 'culture' in international relations seems clear enough; 'culture' is unity and commonality, and it is this that distinguishes society from mere contact between states.

However, in spite of the initial simplicity, there is abundant evidence of Wight employing both conceptions of culture in his work, as well as the civilisation concept, which would appear to confuse the reader. The fact that Wight employs each of these terms (civilisation, the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts of culture) in different settings seems to add complexity to our understanding of 'the culture' that supposedly underpins international society. There are very clear and obvious applications in Wight's work of the Boasian concept of culture. When he tells us that "Western men are perhaps more various in their range of beliefs than the men of any other culture," he obviously assumes that there are other 'cultures' and values to be aware of.[9] In *De systematibus civitatum* the three systems he considers "each arose within a single culture," which implies that he is able to individuate 'cultures' in Boasian terms.[10] His work reveals a number of other parochial references to culture when, for example, he writes of "other cultures," "cultural difference," "cultural grouping," as well as of the specific cultures of historical international societies.[11] There are also references to "high" culture, which again seems to suggest that the primary culture concept is Boasian since it is only possible to identify a 'high' culture where a more pervasive and 'mass' culture is at work.[12] However, some of these Boasian notions of culture are problematised by his need to identify the source of commonality at the international level. Wight cannot, simply, isolate the source of commonality at the local level and leave it as a matter of parochial expression (as Morgenthau does). Indeed,

---

9   Butterfield & Wight eds. (1966) p.89
10   Martin Wight (1977), p.33
11   Martin Wight, *ibid*, "other cultures," p.39; "cultural difference," p.84; "cultural grouping," p.128.
12   Martin Wight, *ibid*, pp.104/5

international society theory succeeds precisely because there is an 'international culture' that exists in spite of his recognition of other, local forms of 'culture.'

Inevitably, Wight's discussion of different states-systems draws boundaries around internal variation that elsewhere would be impossible to accept in Boasian 'cultural' terms. As with Norman Angell's idea of civilisation and Alfred Zimmern's idea of culture, a key proposition underpinning this theory is that international society cuts across other forms of difference.[13] The Boasian concept depends on aggregating similarities in quite restricted ways (even if these similarities carry across a wide geographic area they are still limited by specific criteria), whereas international society breaches the limitations of this kind of similarity and extends to include many forms of difference that the Boasian cannot recognise. That this is so, is apparent in the suggestion that international society has extended beyond Europe and spread across the globe; in which case, it becomes certain that Wight's idea of a states-system is not the same as Samuel Huntington's idea of areas of 'civilisation,' in spite of both scholar's reliance on the notion of a 'common culture.'[14] What counts as 'common culture' is defined by different criteria for each scholar.

When, for example, Wight enquires into 'how we can describe this international cultural community,' he raises certain questions,

> Does it consist essentially in a common morality and a common code, leading to agreed rules about warfare, hostages, diplomatic immunity, the right of asylum and so on? Does it require **common assumptions of a deeper kind**, religious or ideological?[15] (my emphasis)

That he asks these questions gives us some indication as to what the 'international cultural community' might (and might not) involve; but we should not draw the direct conclusion that 'international culture' does involve these things, for the international community may survive without them. A 'common morality and common code' are intended by Wight to be universally (within the states-system) accepted common goods, rather than a statement

---

[13] See, for example, Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.86, where he says the "cultural frontier... was not rigid, that the Greek language and Hellenic culture were inherently expansive... barbarians might be *converted into* Hellenes." Apart from the idea of conversion, culture is open to both interpretations - at once.

[14] The idea of cultural interdependence is especially problematic in this respect. "When two cultures and systems of power are as closely interdependent as the Hellenic states-system and the Persian Empire, their relations often appear, not as a conflict of civilized with barbarians, nor as a clash of civilizations, but as an ideological struggle within a single community." Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.105

[15] Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.34

of ethnocentricism. One may be able to accuse Wight of ethnocentrism, or as Hedley Bull did of eurocentrism, but Wight himself has his eyes on what might be common to the international system as a whole, as well as all human beings.[16] Further, that Wight can even raise the question as to whether common culture 'requires assumptions of a deeper kind' necessarily implies that the two might not belong together in his mind. Common assumptions of a deeper kind are taken-for-granted by the Boasian concept; it is taken as read that deeper kinds of assumptions and culture belong together. Indeed, the Boasian concept only succeeds because it is believed that 'culture' invokes and defines 'deeper assumptions' in a unique and meaningful sense for those people who have been identified as sharing 'the culture' in the first place. Wight is, clearly, still thinking about this association in the above statement, which suggests that he might not conceive of culture in the same way a Boasian does. Wight tells us that "Greek civilization made an assumption of its own unity and homogeneity..." based on blood and language, which would seem to add another layer of complexity since he is describing civilisation here in conjunction with culture.[17] Yet, at other times Wight speaks with a distinctly Arnoldian voice.

When Wight refers to "cultural interchange," "cultural interdependence," and medieval Europe's "unity of culture among intellectuals" it is clear that these are instances of 'culture' that cut across orthodox (and the Boasian definition of cultural) boundaries.[18] Moreover, 'cultural interchange, interdependence and the unity of intellectuals' are all reminiscent of the Arnoldian concept. The Greeks, he says, were aware of a "cultural debt to the great civilizations of the Middle East."[19] While the Saracens and Frankish Crusaders engaged in "fruitful cultural exchange" in Spain and the Levant.[20] Referring to the experience of the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire, he tells us that

---

[16]   See Martin Wight, *ibid*, pages 71/2, where he says, "I have wondered if it would be accurate to exemplify the greater richness and complexity of modern international thought by saying that, in the modern states-system, the notion of international public opinion comes close to meaning the spirit and purpose of mankind. Its connotation is multilateral; its objects are general and universal."

[17]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.46. In this volume, he also refers to "alien civilization," p.50; "other civilization," p.53

[18]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.26, 24; Butterfield & Wight eds. (1966), p.93, respectively.

[19]   Martin Wight (1977), p.85 Also on this page are references to "civilized peoples," "cultural arrogance" and "cultural difference."

[20]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.121, before this, on p.120, Wight writes of "the very similarity between the two cultures" of Christendom and Islam.

Their cultural interdependence was notable, and in the intervals of mortal struggle there were periods of high mutual esteem.[21]

Cultural interdependence means something other than a 'way of life' here, it probably refers to the exchange of artefacts, ideas, and other trade goods, which generated periods of 'high mutual esteem' or qualities that were mutually understood and respected.[22]

If, in a particular and substantive sense, Wight can be seen operating with both conceptions of culture at once, then, what does this tell us about the nature of the common culture at the international level? Despite the fact that Wight recognises the presence of local 'culture,' as in 'our culture' for instance, and acknowledges 'interchange and interdependence' among differing states-systems, it may be suspected that the culture of international society entails an altogether different conception. Since the common culture of international society has clearly been abstracted beyond a parochial conception in a manner that could be easily rejected by Hans Morgenthau and Samuel Huntington for example, then the presence of the two conceptualisations of culture would seem to confuse the nature of this international culture. This appears, to me, to be a good example where the reader's own assumptions need to be quietly removed. Indeed, Wight himself recognises this difficulty in his re-reading of Grotius in 1971. He noted that Grotius "does not relate…[the] variety of law that he glimpses to difference of culture."[23] Grotius, according to Wight, defines international law "'from the will of all nations, or of many'," this is not, as Wight recognises, "a multi-cultural or multi-civilizational international society."[24] In view of the importance of Grotius to Wight's thinking, this abstraction and distinction acquire considerable significance. It is not simply the case that we must decide if culture at the international level is an either/or issue in international society theory – as though it must be either Boasian or Arnoldian – for Martin Wight is too subtle a creature for that kind of approach I think. It is more the case that we need to establish the contextual limitations and grasp Wight's intentions sensitively, to establish what this international culture means in its *own* right. This concept of culture has its own unique qualities and

---

[21]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.24.
[22]   In 'Hellas and Persia,' he tells us "There was a great deal of mutual incomprehension between Greeks and Persians." He does not imply that this was a 'cultural clash.' Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.73
[23]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.127
[24]   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.127

mode of existence, above that of the concept of multi-culturalism as Wight clearly acknowledged.

Tim Dunne has suggested that "the essence of international society... exists in the activities of state leaders, and is reproduced in the treaties they sign, friendships they form, customs they observe, and laws they comply with."[25] Indeed, Wight's 'historical and sociological' interests very much focus on 'what states and their leaders, etc. have done.' The idea that 'the essence of international society' lies in *doing* is a suggestion that generates much excitement here, following the discussion of anti-essentialism in Chapter 2. It becomes a fascinating proposition, in my view, as to whether this theory could be read in anti-essentialist terms, say, for example, by employing Brian Street's argument that 'culture is a verb.' Although reading international society theory in anti-essentialist terms is not my immediate contextual concern, it is nonetheless highly significant that 'doing' provides, certainly in Wight's view, an important source of evidence of society itself. For it is through this 'essence' (of doing) that 'cultural unity' at the international level can be said to stand less as an idea rooted in the Boasian concept of culture, and certainly not any essentialist conception focused on being and, arguably, represents something with Arnoldian overtones. The idea of 'cultural unity' means something very different to the author of *Systems of States* from that understood by a Boasian, in my view. The Boasian concept of culture lays particular emphasis on parochial differences, whereas the Arnoldian concept is completely disinterested in this form of 'culture,' and frequently fails to recognise the condition, but, more importantly, at root the Arnoldian concept de-emphasises difference to stress commonality. Clearly, 'culture' at the international society level is something that is carried out between certain international individuals, diplomats for example, and bodies, states, military organisations, etc. and done in a particular way (with 'civility' perhaps?). This form of international 'culture' is engaged in with a greater degree of consciousness than any essentialist harbouring 'the way of life' concept could permit. Reminding the reader that the essentialist version of the Boasian concept rests upon the assumption that 'culture' operates in mysterious ways that participants are effortlessly engaged in and, often-times, blissfully unaware of. The 'culture' that diplomats are involved in, for example, does not seem to operate with the same measure of

---

[25]   Tim Dunne (1998), p.99

186

unconsciousness. There is an implicit suggestion of effort and awareness in this idea of culture; diplomats consciously engage in diplomacy and militarists in war, one may even deliberately choose the career in the first place. Whatever the 'cultural' activity is that is conducted at the international level it is clear that no participant was born to it in the essentialist sense. Moreover, it is of greater significance that the 'culture' of international society transcends any parochial conception of difference. That this is so, is confirmed when we examine two problematic issues in Wight's work; the first is his conviction that 'society presupposes culture' and the second concerns the heterogeneous nature of international relations.

6.1.ii – How Can Culture Precede Society?

Famously, Wight said,

> A states-system presupposes a common culture.[26]

His claim that international society presupposes a common culture is so well known that its obvious problematic content has been obscured by the familiarity of the statement. That Wight insisted upon this order of relationship between culture and society tells us something about his concept of culture.[27] R.J. Vincent commenting on Wight's suggestion 'that a states-system pre-supposes a common culture,' says that,

> He [Wight] surely intended that this idea should have a content of its own, and
>
> not be the mere summation of the ingredients of a States-system.[28]

Furthermore, Vincent tells us that he

> take[s] Martin Wight's emphasis on a States-system's presupposition of a common
>
> culture to be an underlining of the importance of this point: culture might be, in
>
> Parsonian language, a prerequisite and not a mere requisite, and thus fundamental.[29]

Whether Wight would have agreed with Parsons here is another matter, but it is clear that Vincent recognises the underlying importance of the idea of culture in Wight's work.[30] The

---

26   Martin Wight (1977), p.46

27   Tim Dunne informs us, however, "members of the British Committee were divided on the question of whether a common culture was a necessary condition for the existence of a states system." Tim Dunne (1998), pp.124/5

28   R.J. Vincent (1980), p.256

29   R.J. Vincent, *ibid*, p.259

187

difficulty is, how should we understand 'culture' as a prerequisite and as something that precedes society? It would be difficult to persuade a present-day reader that culture precedes society; indeed, it is difficult to imagine a cultural theorist advocating such a position. Viewed from a Boasian perspective Wight's view does not appear to make any sense, since it is difficult, in general theoretical terms, to imagine that people form 'culture' (as a 'way of life) prior to forming society; there is no reason to think international society is any different here, at least in principle. An essentialist might argue that 'culture' is the product of society or belongs to a community of people, whereas an anti-essentialist will posit that 'culture' is something a society of people do or create on an emergent basis. In any event, 'culture' is either a secondary issue, coming after society, or an issue of parity, constitutive of society and co-existing alongside it. The argument that people, or even states, form a culture before they form society is an odd one. Indeed, Butterfield's later contention that culture was accepted as "*a common sense of values and a pre-existing community of tradition and custom*" appears almost ludicrous, unless of course it does not mean a 'way of life' in the anthropological sense, but something much less discrete, deterministic and coherent; something like a "club."[31] If we wish to understand the relationship between 'culture' and society as Wight envisaged it, then, we need to grasp the author's 'illocutionary force' and temporal meanings.

How then might people or states form culture before they form society? We know that culture is defined by commonality; we also know the content of some of this commonality; it is law, diplomacy, treaties etc. These are large objects of commonality, even for international relations, and certainly, they appear, in Wight's work, as complete markers for culture, however it is being defined. International law presupposes a commitment to a certain form of legalism that in turn signifies a certain level of coherence in values. Yet, Wight does not take the conversation down to this level; he maintains culture as law, diplomacy and treaties, although he does toy with the idea of values and deeper forms of understanding. Overall, he does not convert international commonality into the language of 'ways of life' and ethnographic trademarks. Undeniably, some of the

---

[30]   Vincent's reference to Parsons here is significant in its own right. As Adam Kuper has, recently, detailed in his work, the influence of Parsons on American social science and especially cultural anthropology and its idea of culture were profound. Vincent appears to have absorbed this influence at this point in his work. See Adam Kuper (1999) Chapter 2.

[31]   Cited in Tim Dunne (1998), p.98

qualities that inform the Boasian concept, namely norms, values, ethos, habits, and traits, are detectable in his theory. However, simply because Hedley Bull, for example, decided that society included 'common values' in a holistic sense, does not directly lead us to assume that Wight thought along similar lines. The point is, it is possible to perceive the same object, for example international law, in a seemingly similar way, as the cultural evidence of international society, and even to use the same term, 'culture,' and yet, understand that object very differently as either the evidence of agreed values and a 'way of life,' or, simply as common practice. Even Wight's reference to a "common set of values" may not imply that these are the same values, in an integrated and holistic sense. Indeed, Wight clearly tells us that international society is neither 'homogeneous nor uniform,' as would be the principal assumption behind an essentialist Boasian conception of culture.[32] International society is, in Wight's view, a 'loose and incoherent' form of 'political organization.'[33]

Clearly, for Wight culture is what states commonly share in the sense of practice/artifice. States need to share a good deal before they can be said to form a society, but they need not share it in the same sense that a Boasian anticipates. Indeed, they might hold some practices in common, and not form a society at all, which is why the distinction between mere contact and a system is so important in this theory. What is commonly shared might be also be conflictual and Wight is, clearly, indifferent to this issue. It is significant that, up to 1972, we do not seem to find Wight employing the usual, contemporary, language of homogeneity, consensus or *otherness* with respect to international society itself, although he does recognise internal and external differentiation in cultural terms.[34] In the section that Wight devotes to 'Cultural Questions,' what attracts his attention are the differences to be found within and between systems; moreover it is fragmentation generally, and particularly the way differences and similarities cut across

---

[32]   Butterfield & Wight eds. (1966), p.113

[33]   Martin Wight (1977), p.149

[34]   In 'Triangles and Duels,' written in 1972, Wight says, "A states-system presupposes both regularity of diplomatic intercourse and **homogeneity of culture**: it is the political articulation of a macro-culture" (my emphasis). This is a clear example of Wight refining his ideas in the light of a changing context of culture thinking and marks a distinction from his earlier conceptions of international society. Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.175

state or cultural lines, that interests him the most.[35] What is important is that Wight resists homogeneity as a defining feature of international society, leaving that notion, in *Western Values*, to the revolutionists or Kantians. Moreover, it is highly significant, in my view, that he discusses homogeneity as a matter of politics not as a matter of culture in *De systematibus civitatum*. Of the Delphic Amphictyony in 'the states-system of Hellas,' he says,

> Transcending its local origins, it acquired a Panhellenic character, and became the only international organization which had a claim to be co-extensive with the states-system. Yet its primary function remained religious [not political.]...[36]

Transcending local origins and difference suggests that Wight's idea of culture might be closer in spirit to the League thinkers with their idea of cultural interchange than the anthropological 'way of life' concept rooted in difference. Indeed, Wight continues in this vein,

> If there is no sense of cultural interdependence or common interest between states that come into contact with one another, can they be said to form a system? If their contacts are continuous and regular, will they not give rise to a sense of interdependence and so to an international public opinion?...
>
> It is with the notion of international public opinion that the study of international relations comes closest to the general culture of the society of states.[37]

One would be hard pressed, I believe, to read Wight's idea of a common culture as a form of Geertzian idealism, although it can be easily mistaken for this.

Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic has reached a similar conclusion with respect to Wight's work and has rightly criticised Barry Buzan for 'essentializing' "the cultural view of society, seeing culture as monoculture, something primordial or original."[38] Whereas in her view

> Theoretically and empirically, Wight introduces a broad and complex spectrum of commonality encompassed in the word *culture*.[39] (italics in original)

---

35   Martin Wight, *ibid*, pp.33/40
36   Martin Wight, *ibid*, pp.52/3, see p.57 where he repeats the point about politics.
37   Martin Wight, *ibid*, p.67 & p.71
38   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997), p.95
39   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, *ibid*, p.95

I would agree with Pasic here. Certainly, the 'essence of this broad and complex spectrum' "cannot be captured by a mechanical understanding of shared language and religion," in her view, or reproduced as ethnographic monograph, in mine.[40] However, Pasic has her own understanding of culture to work with, which leads her to misunderstand Wight and Arnold Toynbee to some extent. I would disagree with her claim that,

> Neither Wight, who implied that systems are historical and culture-bound
> communities, nor Toynbee, the grand master of civilizational historians, manages to lay
> out systematically in theory his cultural conceptions of international systems.[41]

Her perception of a lack of clarity by Wight and Toynbee depends entirely on what kind of 'systematic cultural conception' she is looking for. She goes on to say,

> Both simply assume the association and proceed with the analysis of world politics
> understood as the encounter of cultures or civilizations.[42]

Wight and Toynbee may have assumed certain associations but it does not follow that they did not have a clear idea of what it was they were doing nor does it imply that they were working with some vague conceptual scheme that was beyond either scholar to explain. They may have taken some issues for granted, issues that have been lost to a late 20th century commentator, but for a contextual analysis, assumptions and ill-defined, taken-for-granted terms are extremely valuable sources of insight into an author's intended meanings. They provide important sign-posts for the theory that was written rather than the one that wasn't. That Wight did not detail culture in the terms Pasic would like to read is not my concern, but what he did have to say may indicate greater clarity than she presumes. In order to achieve some measure of understanding we need to draw upon the 'conventional standards' and the 'factory conditions' that Wight worked under, to establish what it was reasonably possible for him to have known.

To begin to be able to make sense of Wight's insistence that society presupposes culture, I suggest that it might be useful to think in humanist terms, as in 'civility' and 'gift-exchange' than under conditions seeking 'ethnographic trademarks.' In the same way that German and English readers were found exchanging Shakespeare for Goethe in Chapter 1, and sharing in culture, as literature and the best of everything that had been produced in

---

40   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, *ibid*, p.95
41   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, *ibid*, p.97
42   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, *ibid*, p.97

two distinct societies, so diverse states might form culture before society. In the above example, neither reader belonged to the same society (or Boasian culture), but nonetheless, both were involved in 'culture' and shared in the common practice of reading. In a similar way, states, through regular contact, might participate in 'common culture' that leads to the development of society. It might be stretching the Arnoldian point to suggest that when cast in this way, the international community might be deemed to possess its own artistic and literary achievements - the arts of diplomacy and war, and the literature of law - upon which society is constructed. Yet, from an Arnoldian perspective it is possible to participate in and share or exchange culture as commonality, without a homogenous outcome or in the absence of a homogenous starting position, and Pasic is right to be concerned with Buzan's (and Hedley Bull's) essentialism in this respect. We can have commonality without coherent uniformity under Arnoldian culture; the emphasis is on what states do, not what constitutes who they are. Trying to read international society in terms of homogenous being is a project doomed to failure from the outset – there is too much diversity for this to be meaningful in any shape, sense or form at the international level, and, as is recognised here, the local as well. With the Arnoldian concept, sharing is clearly based upon understanding, but, crucially, understanding is not the same thing as consensus or complete ideational agreement. Arnoldian culture enables an English reader to enjoy Goethe as the best that German society has produced without becoming German; while reading him is not only to participate in that culture but also to be affected by him (as culture) in a humanist way. It is an important distinction, and one that can be easily mistaken for the anthropological concept.

The reader may be less than convinced that Wight has Arnoldian tendencies in his understanding of culture, but three pieces of evidence lend further weight to the view that his is not an obvious or essentialist Boasian conception. The first comes via reference to the wider factory conditions. British scholars through the 1950s and 1960s appear to operate with a complex, some might say confusing, tri-partite arrangement of concepts. This is to say, some are still working with the civilisation concept in conjunction with Arnoldian culture. In addition there is some awareness of the anthropological concept and we find phrases like 'their culture' creeping into literature. The anthropological concept is having some impact on Wight's thinking. However, I suggest that British scholars could

not have fully internalised the implications of the Boasian concept despite a growing awareness of it. Arnold Toynbee was aware of Albert Kroeber and Ruth Benedict in 1961, yet he continued to employ the civilisation concept and felt the need to conduct a discussion as to whether culture should or should not include values.[43] If he had fully grasped the Boasian concept then the discussion would have been unnecessary. As late as 1975, the historian Norman Daniel was compelled to explain why the civilisation concept was no longer appropriate in his view, and why he had borrowed the term 'culture' from anthropology to discuss differences between communities of people.[44] Wight belongs to a generation of scholars working through the 1950s and 1960s, reminding the reader, that T.S. Eliot was struggling to define 'culture' in a qualitative form from a European perspective as late as 1948. More, importantly, although Eliot noted the anthropological concept, in *Notes Towards A Definition of Culture*, he considered it only fit for 'primitive' societies. This distinction was common practice in British scholarship as Raymond Williams, Arnold Toynbee and Norman Daniel indicate. It is quite likely that Wight would have been aware of this practice, at least through his association with Toynbee, but more commonly as a British 'conventional standard.' The context does not directly indicate that it is the Boasian concept informing Wight's work, although the influence of the concept is growing and awareness of it increasing.

The second piece of evidence comes from Wight directly and his use of language in his work. Significantly, Wight does not refer to anthropological sources, unlike his successors or Morgenthau before him. It is highly relevant, in my view that Wight does not 'speak' in anthropological terms, especially as he was a widely read scholar. When Wight does refer to shared commonality beyond functionality, and in normative terms, he

---

[43]   Arnold J. Toynbee (1961), Volume XII, pp.272/280.

[44]   Rather revealingly, Daniel says, "the old dictionary definition [of culture as], 'the intellectual side of civilisation' is no longer useful. We are not sure what is a civilisation, or what is intellectual; but we realise that the most characteristic art of any society is the way it lives, its 'manners and customs.' I cannot use 'culture' just to mean 'artistic and literary,' but equally, of course, that is included in the total definition." This is a good illustration of a point of intellectual transition in Britain, I think. Civilisation is no longer conceptually tenable - Daniel is not even certain as to what that term pertains to any more. Similarly, the old Arnoldian definition of culture is too limited in his view, whereas, the holistic anthropological definition of culture, as he quite rightly acknowledges, simply subsumes the old definition under its whole way of life approach. See Norman Daniel (1975), p.3 and Chapter 1 generally.

describes this as "sociology."[45] Arguably, British scholars throughout this whole period might be said to be operating with a unique combination of concepts that are not so easy to disentangle retrospectively. Adversely, they might be easily accused of a lack of conceptual clarity and coherence on these matters, which is Pasic's argument. However, what is certain, I think, is that the confusion itself tells us that they have not wholly subscribed to the parochial and relativist definition of culture permeating American social science at this time. We also need to remember that Kroeber and Parsons did not begin to formulate a more refined role for culture in social science until the 1950s, and that Kroeber and Kluckhohn did not publish their volume of definitions until 1952, which, as Adam Kuper indicates, marked the beginning of the revival of the idea in the United States.[46] This suggests that, in British scholarship, there is a good deal of retention of previous culture thinking resting alongside a newly acquired anthropological influence. The context and texts both indicate that Wight is best considered in this way, which may explain why the extent of homogeneity in international society was less of a concern for Wight than it became for Hedley Bull. The manner in which Wight deals with the issue of homogeneity provides a third piece of evidence against him holding an explicitly Boasian conception of culture.

6.1.iii – Heterogeneity versus Homogeneity

Wight recognises international society as a product of the European states system and one that has expanded to attain global status. This expansion has, undoubtedly, given it a heterogeneous character. However, in view of his criticism of those he calls the "apostles of homogeneity," Mazzini and Wilson, it does not seem to be the case that heterogeneity represents a weakening of society as such, as would be the subsequent interpretation of Hedley Bull (see below).[47] Wight frequently compares other forms of (historical) homogeneity in the international system, while recognising that they no longer exist today, but this discrepancy does not seem to undermine his presumption of a cultural unity. Indeed, he does say that the common ethos is less than it has been and that although

---

[45]   See Martin Wight (1977), p.33. Under the section 'Cultural Questions,' Wight asks, "Are we going to concern ourselves with what might be called the sociology of states-systems?"
[46]   Adam Kuper (1999), Chapter 2.
[47]   Martin Wight (1977), p.41

the tradition of an international community with a common standard of obligation and justice has faded, however, it has not altogether disappeared.[48]

That a 'common standard' has not 'altogether disappeared' is an important point, although just how important can be debated. It is not so much that Wight is an optimist when it comes to the extent of commonality in international relations; it is that he genuinely believes that this commonality can still be meaningful and sufficient for the theory to remain plausible. The obvious evidence of law, treaties, diplomacy, etc., is robust enough to inform the theory and therefore remain as evidence of commonality in the form of culture. Wight does recognise that the influence of commonality has been 'modified,' or diluted, and I acknowledge that what this substantively means in practice is never clearly detailed. The serious question is to what extent this so-called global society has retained European cultural assumptions. Alternatively stated, we need to ask how meaningful culture is in the international sense that Wight gives it, since this is the question that is going to bother Hedley Bull the most.

In his "single most important paper," according to Hedley Bull, on *Western Values*, it becomes apparent that Wight resists thinking in deterministic and homogenous terms.[49] The extreme and absolutist positions for and against the very idea of international society are carefully unpacked and criticised. Wight is looking for "a certain coherent pattern of ideas," but the "core of common standards and common custom" are, he says, "difficult to define."[50] Invoking Suarez, he says that

> Between the belief that the society of states is non-existent or at best a polite fiction, and the belief that it is the chrysalis for the community of mankind, **lies a more complex conception of international society**... Such a conception lacks intellectual conciseness and emotional appeal. The language in which it is stated is necessarily full of qualifications and imprecision.[51] (my emphasis)

A "certain unity" exists at the international level in spite of the differences between (at least Western) states.[52] Following Grotius's lead, he suggests that in any attempt to describe this

---

[48]   Martin Wight (1946/1978), p.291
[49]   Martin Wight (1977), p.7
[50]   Butterfield & Wight eds. (1966), p.90 & p.103 respectively.
[51]   Butterfield & Wight eds., *ibid*, p.95
[52]   Butterfield & Wight eds., *ibid*, p.95

unity, "there is a fruitful imprecision."[53] The unity that exists at the international level is a 'complex conception,' yet nonetheless, is still one that transcends difference in some way. Transcending difference in practice is a notion that is reminiscent of the League era where culture was not thought to be the source of difference between communities but the means of overcoming differences alternatively defined, reminding the reader that differences were not defined in cultural terms, but rather in national, civilisational and racial ones. Further, international society "can be properly described only in historical and sociological depth."[54] There is no suggestion that the culture of international society can be captured in a positivist sense and reproduced as an ethnographic monologue; it is too subtle and complex for this kind of thinking. What his historical discussions attempt to demonstrate, particularly in *Systems of States*, is that international societies have varied and developed over time and space, without, perhaps, injuring the underlying premises of his theory. International society, he says,

> is the habitual intercourse of independent communities, beginning in the Christendom
> of Western Europe and gradually extending throughout the world.[55]

Hedley Bull, among others, found this a difficult proposition to sustain in post-colonial international society, but Wight's successors, or the theory's critics, should not necessarily persuade us that Wight was inadequate on this matter. That subsequent theorists have considered the diminution of commonality within the international culture a pressing issue, or, as Fred Halliday has done, have read this commonality as 'homogeneity,' does not directly imply that it should also have been viewed by Wight in the same way, or indeed dealt with in those terms.[56] As the above statement indicates, international society is a matter of 'habitual intercourse between independent communities,' even if we think that these communities have their own culture there is no suggestion that international cultural unity amounts to the same level of homogeneity that Boasian readings of local, independent communities require – it is, as Wight indicates, simply a matter of habit. Interpreting 'habits' by the criteria of Boasian 'culture' is a late 20th century 'habit' in need of serious

---

[53]   Butterfield & Wight eds., *ibid*, p.102
[54]   Butterfield & Wight eds., *ibid*, p.96
[55]   Butterfield & Wight eds. , *ibid*, p.96
[56]   Fred Halliday (1992)

196

theoretical justification, as Chapter 2 indicated.[57] Moreover, Wight's suggestion that the modern system has been 'modified' and that international society itself is a 'fruitfully imprecise' idea, might prove a valuable insight in the long-term. The culture of International Society might provide for a 'more complex conception' than cultural essentialism allows.

Whether Martin Wight is primarily operating with an Arnoldian or Boasian concept of culture is certainly open to question, but it is not possible to read his idea of international culture by Boasian strictures alone. I suspect that Terry Eagleton's distinction of 'culture as civility' (discussed below) is a more appropriate way of understanding Wight's conception than anything essentialist criticism and doubt has, thus far, offered. Certainly, we can say that in comparison to the League era scholars, and his American contemporaries, Wight's application of the term is distinct, and it is distinct from his theoretical successors, Hedley Bull and R.J. Vincent for example. Reference to the wider context in which he worked, his curious insistence that culture precedes society and his theoretical resistance of the issue of international homogeneity, suggest that he was perhaps closer to the inter-war theorists and their ideas of mutuality, civility, and international practice, than anything that looks like essentialism at the international level of analysis. In short, it is doubtful that Wight's idea of a 'common culture' underpinning international society resembles anything like the 'ethnographic trademark' found informing Hans Morgenthau's or Samuel Huntington's theorising. If anything, it is arguable that Hedley Bull, Barry Buzan and Fred Halliday, for example, have interpreted Wight's idea of international culture in closer connection with their own 'cultural' assumptions than with those informing Wight's own 'illocutionary force.' In this respect, some measure of caution is needed when reading the term 'culture' in Wight's work, for it would be an easy mistake to read too much into this word and certainly more than Wight could have reasonably envisaged at the time, or even intended to be there.

---

[57]   Anyone viewing the world through the Boasian concept must justify why habits are 'cultural' as much as they need to justify what makes them think 'identities' are cultural or a 'way of life' is cultural, as discussed in Chapter 2. Habits are habits; there is no need for them to be 'cultural' in the Boasian sense, although in this theory they are taken as 'cultural' in some sense. The point is that the sense of culture in Wight's work is not Boasian or essentialist with reference to international society and its habits.

6.2 - Hedley Bull: From Common Culture to Solidarism

Compared to Martin Wight, it is much easier to extract Hedley Bull's concept of culture and to identify his position with respect to the overall development of culture in IR. The idea of culture that dominates Bull's thinking is overtly Boasian and essentialist and, like Hans Morgenthau's work, represents a further development in the historiography of culture in IR. In Bull's case, this development marks the end of the Arnoldian era and the complete ascendancy of the Boasian concept in the discipline. Whereas Morgenthau seemed to be a bit confused as to the relationship between culture, the nation, and international politics, as discussed in the last chapter, no such similar confusion pervades Hedley Bull's work. Indeed, Bull is refreshingly coherent with respect to culture and presents as an almost archetypal Boasian scholar. 'Culture' involves homogeneity, consensus, uniformity, *otherness*, *meaning*, and environmental determinism. Above all, 'culture' is most salient at the local level and as a matter of 'ethnographic trademark.' In this respect, Hedley Bull's work more than reflects the changes that are taking place in the wider 'factory conditions;' it confirms that those changes are manifesting themselves within IR in quite specific ways. Clearly, that this transformation has taken place in Bull's work requires detailing, which is the first concern in this section. I then discuss Bull's difficulties with the idea of international culture and how he dealt with this problem by focusing his attention, increasingly, on the idea of solidarism. Finally, Bull and Wight are compared and a way of comprehending their differences is suggested. The contrast between the two scholars confirms that change has taken place with respect to thinking about culture in both the discipline and international society theory; a development that completes the conceptual transition, in IR, from Arnold to Boas.

6.2.i – Essential Features of Common Culture

Hedley Bull's most famous work, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, like Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*, stands as a comprehensive survey of the things that the author considered relevant in respect of international politics. It begins by establishing the terms of analysis and moves on to discuss the 'bread and butter' topics in IR of diplomacy, war, great powers, law, and the balance of power. What

is significant is Bull's acknowledged lack of "major emphasis" on the international institutions such as the United Nations. As Bull explains,

> to find the basic causes of... order as exists in world politics, one must look not to the League of Nations, the United Nations and such bodies, but to institutions of international society that arose before these international organisations were established, and that would continue to operate...even if these organisations did not exist.[58]

This indicates that Bull is less concerned, from the outset, with the culture of 'international cultural relations' and its place in international affairs, and more concerned with an explicitly international definition of 'culture.'[59] In this text, Bull attempts to clarify some of the ambiguities in international society theory and his elucidation of the basic premise has proven an influential statement in IR.[60] In a much quoted passage, Bull wrote,

> A *system of states* (or international system) is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions to cause them to behave - at least in some measure - as parts of a whole.[61] (italics in original)

Whereas,

> A *society of states* (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.[62] (italics in original)

Referring to A.H.L. Heeren, Bull tells us that Heeren's definition of a states system involved "'the union of several contiguous states, resembling each other in their manners, religion and degree of social improvement, and cemented together by a reciprocity of interests'."[63] Bull interprets this states system "as involving common interests and

---

[58] Hedley Bull (1977/1995), pp. xvii–xviii
[59] International cultural relations for the inter-war period focused on the international exchange of cultural artefacts, by the time Bull is writing however, they have largely become an extension of foreign policy. A case of 'selling the nation to the world,' to borrow from Frank Ninkovitch (1981)
[60] Gerrit Gong (1984), Samuel Huntington (1996/1998) and Alexander Wendt (1999) all rely on Bull's distinction between a system and society.
[61] Hedley Bull (1977/1995), p.9
[62] Hedley Bull, *ibid*, p.13
[63] Hedley Bull, *ibid*, p.12

common values and as resting upon a common culture or civilisation."[64] We can take it as read from this point onward, that any reference to commonality in respect of a more meaningful states system is 'resting upon' the idea of a 'common culture or civilisation' in some form or other. However, Heeren's reference to 'manners, religion and social improvement,' is defined by the 18th century concept of culture, not the 19th century concept of civilisation or, even, the late 20th century concept of culture, and so it is Bull's interpretation of Heeren that concerns me most. Wight also relied on Heeren, but seemed to take his words in the spirit of common reciprocity they invoked, whereas, for the most part, Bull focuses on the issue of common interests and values as the means for undermining the notion of an 'international culture.'

In many ways, *The Anarchical Society* only confirms what was discussed in Part 1 of this thesis, that by 1977 the civilisation concept is falling out of intellectual and popular favour, and is being replaced with the idea of culture. It becomes apparent as the work unfolds that 'culture,' and the increased number of references to it in a variety of settings, is the term that predominately occupies Bull's interest. The distinction between a system and a society rests upon commonality, for which 'culture' is often the describing term. For Bull, 'culture' belongs to community, while the question that appears to bother him the most is whether that community can be international in the similarly meaningful sense that he obviously believes exists at the local level. Of course, even raising the question depends on how one has, initially, conceptualised the idea of culture. I think it fair to say that had Bull defined culture in anti-essentialist terms that he would have identified far more 'international culture' than he thought possible and might have approached the question of normative depth somewhat differently. As it is, Bull is working within the confines of an essentialist theoretical framework, and this generates certain difficulties that lead him to transform the terms of reference for international society theory, a point I will return to in a moment.

It seems clear that Bull subscribes to the idea of meaningful international society determined by common values, rules, institutions, and interests, distinguishable from mere contact between states, in much the same way as Wight. However, Bull is not merely clarifying the distinction between a system and society in *The Anarchical Society*, he is also

---

[64] Hedley Bull, *ibid*, p.12

contributing to the theory in terms of commonality. Wight also thought in terms of 'common values,' yet, the crucial question centres on how both Wight and Bull conceived of these 'common values' and what they imagined this entailed. In short, what meanings did each scholar attach to this phrase and intend to mean by it? Inevitably, recovering the meaning and assumptions attached to this phrase will affect our reading of each author's work. As suggested above, Wight's understanding of this was quite loosely conceived and allowed for transcendental relationships more in keeping with the Arnoldian concept of culture, while Bull's conception is much tighter and one explicitly drawn from the Boasian concept. This is made transparent when we examine the kinds of problems Bull confronted and the manner in which he discussed these problems and how he attempted to resolve them within the parameters of international society theory.

6.2.ii – Cultural Unity is Consensus

We can learn a great deal from the kinds of problems scholars identify and which seem to occupy their thoughts. For early IR scholars, the problem with the civilisation concept was that it was not civilised enough and from this we gleaned an instrumental role for culture, deliberately profiled to rectify the perceived difficulty. The problem with the 'culture' of international society, for Hedley Bull, is that it is not sufficiently common or profound to be meaningful. The extent of commonality and its meaningful depth in the post-colonial world concerns Bull enormously. Just how 'international' or 'common,' the 'international culture' of international society was in the post-colonial era, proved a prominent question in Bull's thinking. In the introductions he wrote to the edited volumes of Martin Wight's work, he repeatedly raises the same question, which he acknowledges Wight did not address.[65]

> The central question about the global states-system of our own times is perhaps whether - given the international fracture to which it is at present subject...- any sense of cultural unity can still be said to exist.[66]

---

[65]   In *Power Politics*, the question arises, in 'the Introduction,' as to "whether or not the global states-system of today is founded upon any common culture, and if not whether it has any prospect of survival." Martin Wight (1946/1978), p.13

[66]   Martin Wight (1977), p.18

For Wight, 'cultural unity,' was largely assumed to be self-evident if, and where, international society existed, but Bull has taken a step backwards and come to question its very existence. Elsewhere, he refers to 'the lack of consensus' in modern international society, to the limits of consensus, the "contraction of consensus," the "decline in consensus" and international society's "precarious foothold" in view of the fact that the "area of consensus has shrunk."[67] It would not be unreasonable to say that Bull was fairly obsessed with the notion of consensus, which makes one wonder what it was that he was searching for in international relations (complete coherence, agreement, something more than shared practice?). What is particularly noticeable, in my view, is the frame of reference within which the difficulties over consensus are discussed, for on the whole they are cultural. However, 'culture' and 'cultural unity,' in Bull's terms, is not the same 'culture' or 'unity' that it was in Martin Wight's understanding. For Wight unity was signified by historical and contemporary practice, for Bull it has become, thoroughly, a matter of *meaningful* consensus and this more than suggests that the Boasian concept, in its essentialist guise, is framing the scholar's terms of reference. Bull critically questions the idea of cultural unity, but in his own distinct way. Moreover, 'culture' becomes broken down into component parts that have a 'unity' and discretion all their own. This enables Bull to speak of culture in a multiplicity of ways, all of which seem to have their own saliency.

The most significant challenge to 'international culture,' in Bull's view, has come from local cultures, and especially from the differing concerns of the decolonised and/or Third World states, which formed the focal discussion point in the *Hagey Lectures*. In the first of these papers, Bull identifies five demands for justice; of the last demand, he says,

> Third World countries have put forward a demand for justice in matters of the spirit of the mind: they have asserted a right of **cultural liberation** and issued a protest against the intellectual or cultural ascendancy of the West...[68] (my emphasis)

That culture is now associated with 'matters of the spirit of the mind' more than confirms a shift of emphasis away from 'doing;' it tells us that culture now includes less tangible

---

[67]   Hedley Bull (1977/1995), "contraction of consensus," and "area of consensus...has shrunk," p.154; "decline in consensus," and "precarious foothold," p.248; "consensus has shrunk," p.303. The term 'consensus' appears all too frequently in the *Hagey Lecture papers*, Hedley Bull (1983).
[68]   Hedley Bull (1983), pp.4/5

qualities and is something that is manifested at the local (country) level. Further, the idea of 'cultural liberation' can only make sense in Boasian, 'way of life,' terms and terms that assume there is *a* culture to be liberated in the first place; clearly, and substantively speaking, under the terms of reference of this conceptual scheme some people have come a long way since Morgenthau feared their 'cultural suicide.' Although, this view of culture is strongly articulated in the *Hagey Lectures*, it is an issue that also appears in *The Anarchical Society*. In Bull's view, the problem is that in the past international society was predicated on a homogenous, European, culture, but as this developed across the globe, its homogeneity has been increasingly challenged. The initial presumption of European homogeneity is a strong one; eventually, Bull is forced to question whether, "the bonds of this society [were] stretched and ultimately broken as the system expanded and became world-wide?"[69] He is less convinced of the global acceptance of the original international society than Wight is, and his answer to this question is not completely affirmative, but close enough. Bull may hold out some hope that 'international culture' clings on but it is not as meaningful as it was, because it is not as cosmopolitan as it needs to be to solve some of the more difficult issues of world politics, notably justice claims.

In Bull's understanding of 'culture,' difference is, plainly, obstructive at the international level. What is certain is that for 'culture' to be both effective and meaningful it needs to be consensual and homogenous - or, in the words of Ruth Benedict, 'all of a piece.' That Bull conceives of culture as 'all of a piece' is betrayed by the way he expresses his interest in cultural unity. Under current conditions, and because of expansion, the 'bonds' that held international society together have become weakened. Wight acknowledged their dilution, but they still seemed to serve his theory sufficiently, but for Bull this difficulty raises a different set of questions and concerns.

> It is important to bear in mind, however, that if contemporary international society
> does have any cultural basis, this is not any genuinely global culture, but is rather the
> culture of so-called 'modernity.'[70]

The simple notion of 'common culture' is undermined in this statement by the fact that 'if' international society does have a cultural basis then 'this is not any genuinely global

---

[69]   Hedley Bull (1977/1995), p.39
[70]   Hedley Bull, *ibid*, p.37

culture.' Of course, what counts as 'global culture,' or is believed could count as 'genuinely global,' derives exclusively from one's initial conception of culture and does not depend on the evidence of global manifestations to confirm its absence or presence. Put more succinctly, if Bull can rule out the presence of a 'genuinely global culture,' then he must be working with a distinct view of what culture is, how it works etc., in order to tell us that it may not exist within international society. It is only in this way that he is able to draw the distinction with 'the culture of modernity.' Bull cannot say precisely what this culture of 'modernity' is, but it looks like "the culture of the dominant Western powers."[71] That Bull can doubt and dismiss the notion of 'global culture' more than implies that he is defining culture in seemingly differing terms from Wight. If international society does not have a 'genuinely global culture' other than the culture (or commonality) that modernity brings, then what kind of culture concept is this? Overtly stated, it is not that Bull is looking to add precision to an already incomprehensible idea, far from it, he is looking for quite specific qualities in 'culture' - qualities that he suspects are lacking or absent at the international level. In the quest for certain qualities and his confirmation of their absence, Bull is redefining the idea of culture in international society theory itself. He is not, I believe, carrying out this redefinition in a deliberate and self-conscious way, but rather, he is working with an alternative set of 'conventional standards' and under different 'factory conditions' that lead him to approach the whole subject of 'international culture' in terms unavailable to Wight.

In the *Hagey Lectures*, he tells "Western countries to stand firm in dealing with Third World demands for change... without being false to their own values and weakening their own integrity."[72] It almost goes without saying that the appeal to notions such as 'their own values' and 'their own integrity' conveys a message with a particularly potent force under the Boasian concept. Values and integrity must belong, and be identifiable as belonging, 'somewhere,' and to specific people. Like the cultural anthropologist, Bull can identify a seemingly endless array of cultures, so long as they appear coherent and discrete to the observer and can be identified in certain terms. In the space of two pages, towards the end of *The Anarchical Society*, we find references to 'cosmopolitan culture; common

---

[71]   Hedley Bull, *ibid*, p.37
[72]   Hedley Bull (1983), p.33

culture; common intellectual culture; diplomatic culture; international political culture; elite culture; a common moral culture; cultural particularisms and the dominant cultures of the West' - some of which appear more than once.[73] Apparently this demonstrates that the world of international culture has become much more heterogeneous than even Martin Wight could have imagined. Yet, it also illustrates just how complex the *academic* world of culture has become since Wight's time in terms of theoretical reasoning. We might call into question the multiplicity of culture and the value of the introduction of such a plethora of categories into IR theory. However, the main point to draw the reader's attention to at this stage is that all of these different culture categories are based on the same, unspoken, assumptions about the nature of culture. Ontologically this is all the same culture – Boasian - reconfigured under varying terms, some of which appear more creditable to Bull than others.

What is clear is that Bull may have acquired some measure of conceptual precision for 'culture as consensus,' but this is achieved at the expense of the original idea of an 'international culture.' Without consensus, 'international culture' can be doubted and even dismissed. 'Culture' is now a parochial matter, even if this manifests itself as the 'elite culture of international diplomats,' it is still only relative to certain groups of identifiable individuals. Bull's idea of culture seems to have lost its sense of the international. That Bull never questioned the concept of culture is quite important, especially in view of the fact that the only doubt he has about 'culture,' is from a substantive perspective, which, of course, proves nothing in cultural theory as the discussion in Chapter 2 of empirical evidence demonstrated.[74] He does not appear to have any concerns over the value of culture as a conceptual framework. In part, this can be accounted for by Bull's more functional approach to international society, as Barry Buzan has indicated, but it also reflects the 'factory conditions' under which he worked; the essentialist version of 'culture' is an accepted and acceptable 'conventional standard.' His reference to anthropological ideas is noticeable, in contrast to Wight, in this respect.[75]

In his discussion of 'order in primitive stateless societies,' the relative and Boasian aspects of culture become readily apparent. The politics of 'primitive' societies are

---

[73]   Hedley Bull (1977/1995) pp.304-305
[74]   Reminding the reader of the classic tautology in anthropology.
[75]   Barry Buzan, (1993) p.334

attractive for their possible comparison to international society in so far as they lack "government." The parallel between 'primitive' society and international society is one that can be traced back to the civilisation concept, and it is a connection meeting Bull's approval, since it is repeated in the *Hagey Lectures*.[76] In an especially revealing passage in *The Anarchical Society*, Bull tells us that,

> whereas modern international society, especially at the present time, is **culturally heterogeneous**, primitive stateless societies are marked by a high degree of **cultural homogeneity**. By a society's culture we mean its basic system of values, the premises from which its thought and action derive. All primitive societies appear to depend upon a common culture; stateless societies appear to depend upon it to a special degree. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard came to the tentative conclusion...that a high degree of common culture was a necessary condition of anarchical structures, while only a central authority could weld together peoples of heterogeneous culture. But the society of sovereign states - or, as it has sometimes been called, the inclusive society, today a political fabric that embraces the whole of mankind - *is par excellence* a society that is **culturally heterogeneous**.[77] (my emphasis, italics in original)

It is interesting to note that heterogeneity and homogeneity are explicit 'cultural' concerns in Bull's view. Compare this view to the early IR scholars for whom issues of homogeneity and heterogeneity were racial, national and civilisational, not cultural, and one begins to see the conceptual transformation within IR more clearly. What makes the heterogeneous nature of international society a cultural issue, and a problematic cultural issue, is never entered into. The presumption and 'taken-for-grantedness' of 'culture' speak volumes of the force of Boasian influence in this respect. More importantly, most, if not all, of the assumptions about culture in Bull's statement have been discredited, or at least questioned, by recent debate. 'A high degree of cultural homogeneity,' even among so-called 'primitives,' is recognised as something of a myth. R.J. Vincent committed a similar error when, in *Human Rights*, he described what anthropologists do,

---

76   Hedley Bull (1983), p.18 "international society is a primitive or embryonic society..."
77   Hedley Bull (1977/1995), p.61

The idea that conceptions of rights vary according to culture is an anthropological

commonplace. If it were not true, doing anthropology would lose much of its point.[78]

It is hardly worth the space pointing out to the reader that many British Social

Anthropologists and more than quite a few of today's anthropologists on both sides of the

Atlantic would have difficulty in recognising this description of their activities and many

would violently reject this description by Vincent of their work. Nevertheless, it is

interesting to note that Vincent seems to think, like Bull, that the whole anthropological

enterprise is concerned with exposing cultural differences. Bull, similarly, subscribes to the

view that culture invokes difference either within or between communities, which serves to

illustrate how far the idea of culture had travelled since the days when it was held to be the

'best of everything that was thought and said in the world.'

Today, of course, culture is conceived of (if it is accepted at all) in debated and

contested terms, and as a process rather than an identifiable and locatable 'common' entity.

The presumption that 'a' culture determines everything about a group of people, and is

something they 'depend' upon and from which all 'thought and action derive,' is highly

contested and easily refuted. Perhaps, more than any other international society theorist,

Bull conceives of culture as a discrete entity.[79] As he says in the above statement,

> By a society's culture we mean its basic system of values, the premises from which its
>
> thought and action derive.[80]

'Culture' has been reduced to a 'basic system of values,' or, in the words of Talal Asad, an

'integrated set of *a priori* meanings' and assumptions from which everything about a

people can be explained. The 'ethnographic trademark' of culture is an axiomatic principle

to Bull. Very few anthropologists would accept this epistemic outlook today, but more

importantly, it is also doubtful whether Wight would have shared in it either. In short, Bull

has separated local culture theory from international culture theory. The over-riding

problem that appears to present itself to Bull, is not conceptual or definitional, but that

culture is not detectable at the international level in the manner in which he believes it is

---

[78]   R.J. Vincent (1986/1995), p.48

[79]   It is interesting to note that R.J. Vincent who drew on anthropological theory more heavily than Bull
experienced considerable difficulties when applying their ideas at the international level. On page.3 of his
volume *Human Rights*, he recognised the "anthropologists' objection" to his project, while on page.48, he
noted the culture concept's lack of precision. R.J. Vincent (1986/1995)

[80]   Hedley Bull (1977/1995), p.61

discernible elsewhere under parochial criteria. No-where, are the difficulties he imagines more evident, I believe, than in the *Hagey Lectures*.

6.2.iii – Civility versus Solidarity

In the *Hagey Lectures*, Bull discussed different conceptions of justice, and, again, consensus was his pre-eminent concern. No-where in these papers does he mention the idea of 'international culture;' instead, he raises the issue of "world common good," and the extent of "consensus" at the international level.[81] These papers are written in the spirit of 'pluralism and solidarism,' terms that appear in both the *Hagey Lectures* and *The Anarchical Society* and are terms that acquire greater significance when considered contextually and in conjunction with Bull's 'intentions.' Nicholas Wheeler affirmed the significance of this language when he noted that "Bull's writings are characterised by a tension between pluralist and solidarist conceptions of international society."[82] The tension that Wheeler has commented on, as well as Bull's discernible growing preference for the ideas of 'solidarism and pluralism,' all seems to reflect his difficulties with the notion of 'international culture' and his diminishing references to it; all of which are especially noticeable in the *Hagey Lectures*. Arguably, this change of terminology and shift of emphasis from 'international culture' to 'pluralism and solidarism' would seem to both challenge Wight's conception of an international common culture and to confirm Bull's underlying suspicion that culture at the international level is, increasingly, a redundant concept.[83]

Bull is quite convinced that Third World countries have undergone something of a 'psychological and spiritual awakening,' to such an extent that they need to assert their culture rights.[84] Parochial culture rights and values plainly trump international common

---

[81]   Hedley Bull (1983), see p.13 for "world common good;" 'the lack of consensus' appears throughout the papers.

[82]   Nicholas Wheeler (1992), p.468. See also Nicholas Wheeler and Timothy Dunne (1996)

[83]   Wheeler and Dunne tell us that Bull "first used the terms 'pluralism' and 'solidarism' in his early British Committee papers, later published in *Diplomatic investigations*." I am less concerned here with the nature of these terms here, than the fact that they are a persistent element in his work and one that seems to supplant his interest in international culture. As international culture becomes more problematic in Bull's view, so his interest in pluralism and solidarism appears to become more pronounced. See Wheeler and Dunne (1996), p.94

[84]   Hedley Bull (1983), p.27

culture. If 'international culture' is to be doubted, where does the problem lie? Likewise, if local culture 'exists,' in what way does it exist? Seemingly, the answer to both lies in the pluralist nature of international society and his solidarist conception of meaningful (i.e. local) communities. That Bull views local communities in solidarist terms is self-evident; he sees nothing erroneous in the argument that Third World countries need to claim their right to 'cultural liberation,' which is a key idea in these papers. He even points to the importance held by these countries in "the attempt to preserve cultural identity and some element of continuity with traditional modes of life against the inroads made upon them" by the dramatic changes taking place in, for example, the global economy. To accept 'cultural liberation' as a salient issue and to be able to link culture to identity, let alone to believe in the preservation of cultural-identity in the first instance, clearly demonstrates the presence of an essentialist conception of culture underpinning a particular theory of community. Acceptance (or rejection) of Bull's views turns on the conceptual understanding of culture in his work.

Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, who has, similarly, recognised a number of 'essentialist' problems with Bull, suggests that they can be traced back to his interest in order.

> Hedley Bull's preoccupation with the question of order leads the study of systems and societies into overly behavioural or interaction-based directions.[85]

I think this is somewhat of a severe interpretation of Bull's work, but nonetheless one that Pasic requires enabling her to draw a distinction between Wight's "conceptualization of systems as cultural unities" and Bull's apparently order-based conception of international society. Pasic needs to 'rescue' Wight from narrow theoretical interpretations for her own 'cultural' purposes; the problem is that she conveniently overlooks the fact that Bull was not simply interested in order, but normative issues, and especially those normative issues that surrounded difference in the post-colonial world. I suggest that Pasic has drawn the wrong distinction here, primarily because she likes the idea of culture and wishes to reform it in IR.[86] Rather than tracing Bull's difficulties back to his 'preoccupation with order,' as she puts it, these problems ought to be, more properly, traced back to his conception of culture, and specifically the way in which the idea of culture contributes to his

---

[85]   Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic (1997), p.96

[86]   Culture 'rejectionists' have no qualms over saving dubious 'cultural' ideas.

understanding of what counts as meaningful community relations and his conception of difference. These issues are revealed in their essentialism by his employment, for example, of the notions of solidarism and cultural liberation. It is not the case that Wight offers a better cultural base for international relations theory than Bull, as Pasic argues (although, it is tempting to agree with her), it is that **he offers an alternative one**. Wight and Bull are operating with two different conceptions of culture, or at least two different accounts of what matters as culture and, crucially, at which level.

Recovering the meaning of culture from international society theory succinctly draws out the distinctions made in the Introduction to this thesis. At the beginning of this survey of the historical development of the concept of culture in IR, I indicated that the concept of culture a theorist operates with, usually as an unspoken assumption, determines the manner in which they then view international politics. In addition, the distinction between the two alternative levels at which the idea of culture can be considered to be most fruitfully applied, also impacts enormously on the kind of theory a scholar goes on to produce. In effect, the unspoken assumptions surrounding the idea of culture form the scholar's context; this is especially true of IR where the idea of culture has been imported rather than created afresh, while the author's chosen level of application, on the other hand, forms part of his/her 'illocutionary force,' or intentions. There are no pre-givens here; as I indicated in Chapter 2, the idea of 'culture' is not on a par with the idea of gravity.[87] There is plenty of choice available, but it is the configuration of these four things (the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts plus the parochial and international levels of saliency) that provide the theorist with a framework within which to construct his/her ideas. Obviously, it is within this framework that theoretical possibilities and problems emerge. The experience of the idea of culture in international society theory illuminates these points very well, I believe, especially when one compares the work of Martin Wight with that produced by Hedley Bull.

For Wight, culture is a complex Arnoldian concept and if it is partially considered Boasian then it is plainly less essentialist than Bull's conception. In addition, Wight considered the most appropriate level of application as international. For Bull, on the other

---

[87]   Gravity may be a similarly abstract idea but most people accept its 'existence' and its influence can be demonstrated. The evidence that is relied upon to demonstrate the existence of 'culture' is debatable, refutable and even suspect.

210

hand, culture is an explicitly essentialist Boasian matter and appropriately manifests itself in parochial ways.[88] As was pointed out with respect to Hans Morgenthau in the previous chapter, the same word, 'culture,' can be read and understood in two entirely different ways, each with its own disassociated set of meanings attached. Knowing this enables us to read the subtle differences that exist between Wight and Bull in a sensitive manner. One way of coming to terms with the difference between Bull and Wight is via Terry Eagleton's recent discussion of culture.[89] Eagleton discusses culture from the confines of literary criticism and cultural studies, but is principally concerned with the conflict between *Culture*, with a big 'C', and *culture*, in the lower case. For Eagleton, *Culture* in its humanist version versus *culture* as 'a way of life.' Eagleton identifies many different types and phases of culture, but eventually refines his argument down to two descriptive terms, which are very illuminating from my perspective. *Culture* (with a big C) is turned into 'culture as civility,' whereas *culture* as a 'way of life' becomes 'culture as solidarity,' which is the culture of ethnographic trademarks and integrated meanings. Inevitably, universal "Culture [as civility] is thrown into disarray by culture as solidarity," what is more, Eagleton suggests that "culture as civility and culture as solidarity are for the most part sworn enemies."[90] Partly, this is so because 'culture as civility' has universal pretensions whereas 'culture as solidarity' has particularist, or as I would say here, parochial ones. No two terms could identify the differences between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts from within international society theory better in my view.

If Wight conceives of 'culture as civility,' which is quite likely, then there may be less of it around these days, but nonetheless, sufficient civility persists in practice to make the notion of common culture creditable and international society theory viable despite its global expansion. If one conceives of 'culture as solidarism,' as Bull plainly does, then there really is not much ground for thinking about culture at the international level either in terms of practice or values, in spite of the author's struggle to remain 'hopeful.' The issue of shared values is a central and crucial concern to the Boasian, or solidarist, conception of culture, in a way that is not pertinent to the Arnoldian concept. The problems that

---

[88]   Pasic, incidentally, seems to want to adopt a Boasian version of culture at the international level and reads Wight in this way.

[89]   Terry Eagleton (2000). There is not much to recommend in Eagleton's volume apart from this distinction.

[90]   Terry Eagleton, *ibid*, p.71 and p.112 respectively

211

international relations create for Bull and the questions he confronts are generated, in at least one crucial respect, by his 'solidarist' or essentialist Boasian conception of culture. The problems of 'cultural clash,' incommensurability, and heterogeneity, may be 'real' and genuine normative concerns, but there is no escaping the point that they are only made visible by specific conceptual criteria. If one does not think about culture in its solidarist guise then the problems can be recast in other, more imaginative, ways and even eliminated completely. In effect, Wight, like Alfred Zimmern, offers a theory that is based on an idea of culture that is capable of surmounting difference and certainly that view of difference cast in Boasian terms. Wight's view of difference and the potential for under-playing its significance in favour of international interchange and a complex understanding of international politics, would hold regardless of whether Bull maintained his Boasian concept in essentialist/solidarist terms or anti-essentialist ones. Wight's idea of culture is not wholly determined by a parochial 'way of life;' the differences that matter are simply not cultural in this respect. The theoretical possibility of overcoming and underplaying difference has a long heritage even within IR and confirms the claim, made in this thesis, that culture does not exist as either an obvious or natural phenomenon in the way that current, popular, opinion dictates - or, indeed, as Bull imagined it existed.

Summary

There is clearly some ambiguity to be detected in Martin Wight's work involving the idea of culture. As time continues, however, what 'culture' means to international society theorists acquires a precision that begins to resemble some of the main assumptions underpinning cultural thinking that have become prominent elsewhere in the discipline, most notably in the post-Cold War period. These assumptions are essentially Boasian and essentialist in their Boasianism – people have 'culture,' it belongs to specific communities and meaningfully exists at the local level. There is very little confusion in Hedley Bull's work; instead, an essentialist version of the Boasian concept, with a parochial level of saliency, is easily evident. What is particularly interesting about Wight's and Bull's work is the concerns they have focused on within the parameters of the theory itself, for this tells us much about their conceptualisation of culture and sheds light on the changing nature of the British context. More importantly, international society theory enables us to make

some important theoretical points concerning the role of culture in IR theory more generally. The problem of heterogeneity and the whole question of the extent and nature of commonality, obviously depend on one's definition of culture, which in turn stems from one's conceptualisation of culture. Even to be able to raise the doubts over the nature of international commonality, as Bull does, and to be able to resist the issue, as Wight does, depends on one's conceptualisation of culture. Plainly stated, the epistemological and substantive content of international society is much more of an ontological issue than perhaps many of its scholars have recognised. For, as should be apparent to the reader here, the way a scholar assumes 'culture' exists is necessarily going to determine the kinds of questions that scholar asks of culture, and beyond that, thinks about international relations. If one is employing the classic Boasian concept then clearly issues like homogeneity and consensus are going to figure quite strongly. Alternatively, if one has a reformist or an Arnoldian view of culture then these things are either going to matter much less, or, will not even occur at all. Wight is less troubled by heterogeneity and conceives of culture as some sort of prerequisite to international society, which, it was suggested, works best from an Arnoldian standpoint. Bull doubts, if not the existence of international culture, then at least its saliency. Increasingly Bull was drawn to discuss these doubts in terms of 'solidarism and pluralism,' which seems to imply the abandonment, in terms of language at least, of 'international culture' as a meaningful idea. This operates best under the Boasian concept and essentialism, whereby one conceives of culture as a matter of homogeneity and consensus, and accounts for Bull's acknowledgment of local cultural claims as a serious issue in international politics. The differences between Wight and Bull are highly significant in my view, and usefully serve to illustrate a transitional moment in British IR theory.

Viewed from the standpoint of the historiography of the discipline, The *Anarchical Society* like Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* represents another major turning point in the place of culture in IR. After its publication, scholars on both sides of the Atlantic appear to speak the same or similar language of culture. This is the Boasian language of culture as a 'way of life' and of parochial difference; 'culture' becomes firmly fixed, in IR, as a matter of differentiation between communities and one largely unchallenged in the discipline. Outside of the discipline, the fortunes of the Boasian

concept of culture have been very different, as indicated in Chapter 2. Adam Kuper recently expressed an alternative anthropological view of culture. In finality, Kuper says,

> there is a moral objection to culture theory. It tends to draw attention away from what we have in common instead of encouraging us to communicate across national, ethnic, and religious boundaries, and to venture between them.[91]

The attraction of international society theory, in Wight's complex conception, might be said to reside in its ability to 'encourage us to venture' across the orthodox boundaries of international politics. The problem with culture theory, as Kuper indicates, is that it stands in the way of any such ventures, which, all things considered, could be said to typify Bull's experience. Culturally speaking, *The Anarchical Society* drew 'new forms of boundary' and 'attention away from what we have in common,' and, in doing so, signified the end of the Arnoldian concept of culture in IR.[92] This closure enabled the vogue for cultural differences and parochial 'culture' thinking to reach new heights in the post-Cold War period. No single scholar has more forcefully demonstrated and endorsed this trend than Samuel Huntington with his 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, and it is to Huntington's work, with Kuper's moral objections in mind and the critical points raised in Chapter 2, that the story, finally, turns.

---

[91]   Adam Kuper (1999), p.247

[92]   I am not suggesting that Hedley Bull is responsible for this closure in any way. The fact that he could, so easily, accept the Boasian concept, and take it for granted, merely reflects and confirms the changing context in which IR scholars worked. His work is indicative of the power that the Boasian concept was beginning to enjoy across the social sciences.

Chapter Seven

Samuel Huntington and 'Cultural Fundamentalism'

Samuel P. Huntington (1927 -)[1]

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order 1996, first published as 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.

Introduction

In the summer of 1993, *Foreign Affairs* published an article that generated an almost unprecedented level of discussion. The article concerned was Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* in which the author argued that 'world politics was entering a new phase' and that the future of international relations would be written by forces generated by cultural differences. The article was followed by the book, *The Clash of Civilizations And The Remaking of World Order*, in 1996, in which Huntington merely added more detail to the thesis of the article and proceeded to tell the history of the world in 321 pages. Rather pessimistically, Huntington portrayed a world fraught with potential conflicts along the colliding frontiers of civilisations, or "fault lines" as he called them. He was convinced that the "most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another."[2] What is significant about Huntington's work is that despite appearing to speak the language of 'civilisation' it actually relied on an essentialist version of Boasian culture and it was culture that provided the fundamental concept in his theorising, not civilisation.

---

[1]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996) & (1996/1998)

[2]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.3

215

Huntington identified seven or eight 'great divisions among humanity,' which he called 'civilizations.'[3] "The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict," he suggested, "will be cultural."[4] In this respect, Huntington's argument allocated to 'culture' an altogether more prominent and political role in international relations, perhaps at a level not seen since the activities of the League era scholars. Whereas Hans Morgenthau and Hedley Bull recognised that cultural differences could be problematic in world politics, Huntington has gone a step further and explicitly identified 'culture' as the source of serious, and potentially violent, confrontation. At a fundamental level, Huntington's 'cultures' are incommensurable, which has considerable implication for international politics. In this chapter I examine Huntington's thesis, expose his essentialist conception of culture, before, finally, discussing some of the fundamental difficulties associated with his application of the Boasian concept in IR theory in the light of the anthropological debates first encountered in Chapter 2.

7.1 – Culture not Civilisation

Samuel Huntington's thesis was a simple one,

> The central theme of this book is that culture and cultural identities, which at the
> broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion,
> disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world.[5]

The proposition was straightforward enough; indeed, he even claimed simplicity as a theoretical and paradigmatic virtue in itself. In responding to his critics in *If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World*, he argued that the Cold War paradigm, "as a simple model of global politics... accounted for more important phenomena than any of its rivals."[6] In presenting his 'clash of civilizations' thesis, Huntington posited an alternative model now that the old paradigm had collapsed. He was, he said, looking for the

---

[3]   According to Huntington, "These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization." Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.3.
Huntington's lack of precision is reminiscent of problems that R.J. Vincent noted (1986/1995 see p.48) in that Huntington relies upon four religions (Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, and Slavic-Orthodox), one country (Japan), two large geographic areas (Latin America and possibly Africa), and one abstract idea (the West).
[4]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.1
[5]   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998) p.20
[6]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996) p.57

'the best simple map of the post-Cold War world.' The argument appeared simple enough; however, demonstrating his point and convincing his readership have actually proven more difficult. Much of the criticism and debate that followed the publication of Huntington's initial paper, however, was concerned with the implications of his thesis and questioned his classification of certain cases.[7] No one, it seemed, felt it necessary to question the actual underlying concept of culture or the principle idea that these kinds of differences 'clash,' although some noted his failure to define 'civilisation' adequately and objected to his overly generalised view of the world.[8] Even Jeane Kirkpatrick, who found "Huntington's classification of contemporary civilizations... questionable," ended up supporting his basic assumption that the idea of civilisation was an "important" one.[9] Indeed, it would seem that even Huntington's critics had bought into his suggestion that culture and civilisation mattered, and were going to matter in the future in international relations. Even if Huntington could be criticised for stating these things in a crude and overly simplistic manner, as many of his critics demonstrated, he had certainly hit a nerve in IR theory.

In Huntington's view,

Our world is one of overlapping groupings of states brought together in varying degrees by history, culture, religion, language, location and institutions. At the broadest level these groupings are civilizations. To deny their existence is to deny the basic realities of human existence.[10]

Or so he would have us believe. Who would dare to question 'the basic realities of human existence,' or 'deny the existence' of the things that make up civilisations? Where as most of us would have little difficulty in acknowledging the 'existence' (albeit critically) of

---

[7]   See for example; *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1993; *Issues and Studies*, Vol.34, October 1998; Stephen Chan (1997); B.M. Russett, J.R. Oneal & M. Cox, 'Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence,' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.37, 2000.

[8]   Chris Brown, for example, noted, "Huntington's proposition that the next century will be dominated by a 'clash of civilisations' may be a little over-dramatic but it is closer to the truth than those who argue that 'globalisation' will smooth out all differences..." Chris Brown (2000), p.201. Stephen Chan attempted to be "unkind" to Huntington by objecting to his 'generalised view of the world;' but even Chan eventually suggests that "An enlightened (not an Enlightenment) international relations, requires not the business of sketching the Other so generally that it seems abnormal... but, the business of trying to understand the nature and ingredients of global plurality; of **other cultures**, and their fears and resistances within the periphery of modernity..." (my emphasis). Stephen Chan (1997), p.139

[9]   Having set out by casting doubt over Huntington's idea of civilisation, Kirpatrick finally states, "Without doubt, civilizations are important." See Jeane J. Kirpatrick in Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.50 & p.52

[10]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.63

history, religion, language, locations or institutions, the inclusion of culture in this list of 'basic realities' is highly contentious. As the discussion in Chapter 2 indicated, taking the existence of culture for granted is a stance likely to invite criticism. Nevertheless, it is a point of major contextual concern that 'culture' has been elevated to the status of an unquestionable 'reality' in the above statement and, in this respect, Huntington simply echoes views expressed elsewhere in the discipline.[11] In the post-Cold War world culture is not only considered an important element in international relations, but one that enjoys acceptance as 'a basic reality in human existence.' Culture's axiomatic presence is problematic, especially when the idea of culture never moves very far from the invocation of instinctive knowledge even for Huntington's alleged critics. Many of Huntington's basic epistemic assumptions have been left intact – namely, it is widely accepted that 'culture' is a reality to be taken seriously in IR and as a relevant category for thinking about *others* and difference.[12] However, what enabled Huntington to see the world in cultural terms, let alone provide the basis for a theory of world politics, is very much a matter of epistemological and ontological concern.

The "differences among civilizations are not only real, they are basic" he claims.[13] What is more, "the major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures."[14] This is a strong assertion to make, and one that seemingly attributes all differences, ultimately, to a cultural cause. "Human history is the history of civilizations," Huntington stated.[15] Moreover, it "is impossible to think of the development of humanity in any other terms," and he provides us with a list of "distinguished" scholars who have expressed similar interest in civilisation to support his case.[16] Huntington notes the rise of civilisation in the singular sense, but is only

---

[11]   From the work of Stephan Chan to interest in 'strategic culture,' the impact of the 'reality' of culture concerns a wide range of IR scholars these days.

[12]   Stephen Chan is a good example here, see footnote 8 above. Chan clearly accepts the existence of culture and its importance in international relations. Similarly, Yosef Lapid, who is equally critical of Huntington, accepts that the idea of culture (and identity) is "staging a dramatic comeback in social theory and practice at the end of the twentieth century." Yosef Lapid in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997), p.3

[13]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.4

[14]   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.29

[15]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.40

[16]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.40

interested in civilisation in the plural sense and as it first appeared in the 19th century.[17]

There is not the nuance, complex elucidation, or detailed history of the term that one finds in Norbert Elias or Gerrit Gong's historical surveys for example. Instead, Huntington tells us that it came to be recognised that there were many civilisations, "each of which was civilized in its own way."[18] Huntington would dispense with the singular notion of civilisation altogether but for the fact that it has, he claims, 'reappeared.' The reappearance of a singular conception of civilisation or a 'universal world order,' is an argument that, he believes, 'cannot be sustained,' but it proves useful for demonstrating his argument for a plurality of civilisations based on culture.[19] His dismissal of a singular conception of civilisation rests upon certain normative assumptions that are driven by his conception of culture, as will be demonstrated below. Despite aggregating 'cultures' under the umbrella term of 'civilization,' it is the presumption of the existence of something called 'culture' that provides his fundamental concept, **not** what is made to pass for civilisation. Although his thesis discusses the nature of international politics in terms of civilisations, it is clear that the idea of civilisation is hardly recognisable as the concept that had dominated the first half of the century in spite of Huntington's insistence that this is the idea of civilisation that attracts him the most. Huntington has cleansed the idea of civilisation of its technical, progressive, hierarchical and supremacist qualities, in order to make a basic claim that civilisations were not much more than a matter of regional differentiation.

Despite drawing on the work of Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler, Huntington's interest in civilisations was one oriented towards regionalism and meta-narrative thereof, and it is important to draw out the distinction between Toynbee's, Spengler's and Huntington's understanding of civilisation because it illustrates how marginal the concept of civilisation actually is in Huntington's hands. 'Civilisation' for Spengler and Toynbee was a matter of progression and organic growth even though they evaluated the development of civilisation in contrasting ways.[20] In Huntington, conversely, the old

---

[17]   His historical survey is very short for such a complex concept. How and why civilisation in the plural sense appeared is not explained. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, see Chapter 2, Part 1.
[18]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.41
[19]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, see Chapter 3, Part I
[20]   Oswald Spengler necessarily thought civilisation was the death or last phase of culture, whereas Arnold Toynbee considered, that Western civilisation at least, had the potential to continue growing and improving since it was the most universal of all known civilisations.

'organic' idea of civilisation is plainly a redundant issue; civilisation has been reduced to nothing more than a matter of identification based upon an alleged regional similarity. Repeatedly, Huntington makes the point that civilisation is nothing more than local culture writ large. Huntington's idea of civilisation amounts to little more than a sphere of identification, which stands in sharp contrast to Norman Angell's progressive and accumulative conceptualisation of civilisation that I explored in Chapter 3, for example. Whatever the dominant language of the text, it is clear that 'culture' was Huntington's fundamental concept and that civilisations were only, as he constantly reminded us, "the broadest level of cultural identity" and "the broadest cultural entity."[21]   Huntington did not enter into any substantive detail of the content or nature of this identification; the best that he offered were generalised and sweeping statements. Civilisation is the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have..."[22] Echoing Edward Tylor, Huntington argued, "[i]t is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people."[23] The problem is not one of repetition, but one of identifying the 'common objective elements' and then being able to situate them together with 'subjective self-identification,' since there is no guarantee that the two should or will coincide. This is an issue that cannot be resolved with reference to empirical evidence alone, neither can it be based on one's intuitive assumptions about the world; instead, it requires theoretical exploration and justification.

The manner in which Huntington conceives of identity is simplistic to say the least. Apparently,

> People have levels of identity: a resident of Rome may define himself with varying degrees of intensity as a Roman, an Italian, a Catholic, a Christian, a European, a Westerner.[24]

The observation that 'people have levels of identity,' rather than a multiplicity of identities, necessarily implies a nested view of identity. There was nothing new in this approach; T.S. Eliot had been nesting cultures in a matroushka doll fashion in the 1940s, which betrays an

---

21   See Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.3 & (1996/1998), p. 43 respectively.
22   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.43
23   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.43
24   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.3

underlying discrete basis for culture.[25] The problem with this kind of delineation, as Lila Abu-Lughod indicates, is that people who do not quite fit into the scheme, say "halfies" for example (which is how Abu-Lughod describes herself), present "special dilemmas" that strike at the heart of "cultural anthropology's assumption of a fundamental distinction between self and other."[26] Abu-Lughod's 'halfies' illustrate the 'problem starkly,' but the implication of her work extends beyond anthropology. 'Halfies' clearly do not fit into the matroushka doll scheme very neatly, but her example raises the more serious question of whether anyone does, and whether just because we choose to see the world in a discrete and neat way, that we are correct to do so. As she argues, the notion of culture operates within a discourse "to enforce separations that inevitable carry a sense of hierarchy," which is plainly Huntington's purpose.[27] That Huntington believes nesting 'cultures' is acceptable and accurate does not lend weight to his theory, it merely confirms his assumption that 'culture' can be portrayed in a 'coherent, timeless, discrete' and hierarchical form, to borrow from Abu-Lughod. It is only in this way that cultures can be stacked vertically to attain the broadest level of civilisation based on similarity. The question is, what are the perceived similarities that Huntington believes holds this scheme together and how tangible are they?

The key phrase, and some might say the obvious political phrase in the above statement from Huntington, is that people may 'define themselves with varying degrees of intensity.' The possibility that people might define themselves as any number of things was overlooked in order to list the key identities that Huntington believed, in this instance, any Roman could identify themselves "*as*," as opposed to 'with.' The possibility that a resident of Rome may on occasion and through altruism or empathy, identify her/himself globally with humanity, was not considered for reasons I shall discuss in more detail in a moment. The proposition that a person 'may define her/himself with varying degrees of intensity,' hints at a subjective element that becomes obscured by Huntington's essentialist view of a culture. That 'intensity' of identification varies suggests that reference to the context in which a subject is located might have some influence in the matter and introduces the possibility of more politicised elements, but the author largely neglected these. Nesting cultures in the way Huntington does, becomes a test of allegiance as well as of identification

---

[25]   T.S. Eliot (1948/1949)
[26]   Lila Abu-Lughod in Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.137

itself, but this line of thinking is only possible if one has an essentialist view of culture. That is to say that each level of culture has its own discrete, distinctive and homogenous traits that delineate it from the next level.[28] However, life, as we and the Norman Tebbits of this world all know, is "messy" (to borrow from Chris Brown); a resident of Rome might just as easily identify herself with relatives in Kashmir or religious leaders in the Punjab.[29] However, Huntington is not concerned with such real-life complications; on the contrary, his portrait of identification is at best an ideal abstraction, although, significantly, he did not claim this.[30] The question is how accurate is this portrait of people's choice of identifications? Beyond the question of accuracy comes the issue of relevance of these kinds of identification in international affairs. That Huntington believes this kind of identification to be relevant is only as good as the concepts upon which he built his theory, or, alternatively stated, only holds if we accept his basic epistemic outlook and the ontology in which it is grounded. It becomes necessary for the reader to agree with Huntington that culture *and* identification can be best accounted for in this way. As was noted with Hedley Bull in the last chapter, the connection between culture and identity is a problematic one, and one that Walter Benn Michaels has mercilessly exposed (see Chapter 2 this thesis).[31]

The most serious problems with Huntington's work (like that of Simon Murden's discussed in Chapter 2 this thesis) derive explicitly from his lack of meaningful illustration of the points upon which his thesis stems. Clichés, truisms, ancient stereo-typical images, sweeping generalisations, and out-right prejudice, literally fill the pages of his book with little or no attempt at explanation. We are told that "for the first time in history [really?], global politics has become multipolar *and* multicivilizational."[32] That, emphatically, "global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming

---

27   Lila Abu-Lughod, *ibid*, p.138
28   Huntington even writes of "true" identities. Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.142
29   Chris Brown makes the similar criticism in the conclusion of his paper on cultural diversity. Chris Brown (2000)
30   Huntington does consider real-life complications in terms of multiculturalism with respect to the United States. Should multiculturalism triumph, he claims America would not be America but the UN. This is complete nonsense. Whatever the future holds for America, it will merely be a different America from the one Huntington currently knows, but that America is going to disappear in any case, as did the one of the 1950s. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, pp.305/7
31   Walter Benn Michaels (1995)
32   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.21

apart."[33] Apparently "[w]hat is universalism to the West is imperialism to the rest," whoever the 'rest' are.[34] Islam allegedly accounts for the "failure of democracy" in the Muslim world; this is a highly contentious claim and deserving of thorough scrutiny, a problem discussed further below.[35] Moreover, "[i]ndigenization and the revival of religion are global phenomena."[36] That "cultural commonality" is a "prerequisite to meaningful economic integration," and that the "roots of economic cooperation are in cultural commonality."[37] "Throughout Africa tribal identities are pervasive and intense," in a manner that, one presumes, is not quite the same elsewhere. Fortunately though, "Africans," whoever they are, "are also increasingly developing a sense of African identity," whatever that is.[38] Each of these statements, and there are plenty more to be found in his work, is a political statement that only appears accurate because of the assumption of cultural difference in holistic and deterministic terms. Ultimately, these statements only succeed in convincing a reader who shares in a similar essentialist conception of culture. In short, this is the language of 'ethnographic trademarks.'

Where there are references to Asian values, or Islamic values, the detail of these 'values' is never entered into either. We are not told what any of these values actually consist of. On one of the few occasions when Huntington does provide his readers with more detail, he simply invokes generalities. Asian societies stress "the values of authority, hierarchy, the subordination of individual rights and interests, the importance of consensus, the avoidance of confrontation, "saving face" and, in general, the supremacy of the state over society..."[39] Confucianism, on the other hand, emphasises "thrift, family, work and discipline."[40] There is much here to disturb a student of IR. These stereo-typical images (myths even) really ought to be more critically engaged rather than perpetuated in an

---

[33]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.125

[34]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.184. What Huntington fails to consider is that for every Dr Mahathir there is an Anwar Ibrahim; whereas Dr Mahathir is mentioned several times (see pages 109, 132-3, 152-3, 308), Anwar Ibrahim does not appear at all.

[35]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.29

[36]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.102

[37]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.133 and p.135 respectively

[38]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.47

[39]   Asians need to save face apparently; of course, he does not explain how and in what manner 'the Asians' (whoever they are) 'save-face' in a way that Westerners do not or never feel the need to. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.225

[40]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.108

unthinking manner. It is only through the invocation of myths and images of this order that an essentialist conception of culture can be sustained. Huntington's thesis demands the language of 'ethnographic trademarks,' of culture 'rooted in community,' fetishism, and radical and *meaningful* otherness.

7.2 - Essentialist Culture

According to Huntington "culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people."[41] A more discerning scholar might have enquired into the conditions under which 'culture counts and cultural identity' becomes meaningful for most people and who is left out of the equation, but Huntington seems to take such things for granted. A generalised statement along these lines is only possible if the scholar is certain of the conceptual criteria upon which to base his/her claims. Huntington tells us that

> Civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the "values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance."[42]

What Huntington omits to say is that 'civilization is essentialist culture writ large.' Following Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein among others, Huntington accepts that civilisation is a 'cultural area' and one that involves certain cultural processes and/or creativity of a particular group of people.[43] It would seem particularly necessary to rigorously explicate the meaning of culture and its relationship to civilisation, especially in view of the 'fact' that, for Huntington, "civilizations are cultural not political entities."[44] Yet, nowhere does Huntington attempt to offer, what might be considered, an adequate account of 'culture;' a considerable achievement given the significance of the term in his work. On the surface, his use of 'culture' appears to be, at the very least, confused. Huntington conveniently slips into the realms of hyper-referentialism, which frequently leaves the reader disorientated and at a loss as to what 'culture' means beyond vague

---

[41]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.20
[42]   'Culture' is plainly conceived of here as idealist and continuous. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.41
[43]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.41
[44]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.44

gestures and grand categories. At times 'culture' is religion, at others language, in some places 'culture' appears to include values and elsewhere to exclude them in an almost Arnoldian sense.[45] That such an important concept remains overly generalised is problematic, since if one inspects these issues more closely it is hard to see, on the one hand, what benefit is to be gained from aggregating issues that might better stand on their own merit, say religion for example, under the banner of 'culture;' and on the other hand, knowing, as we do, that such 'culture' generalisations do not stand up to close interrogation, one wonders what benefit the idea of culture has to bring to IR, even in Huntington's theory. However, whatever confusing thoughts Huntington may hold, it is plain that he conceives of culture as a matter of commonality, and beyond this homogeneity and continuity. 'Culture' is about *otherness, meaning,* and environmental determinism. This is how civilisation can become the broadest expression of culture; it is the broadest expression of that which people share in common and in distinction from others, and have always done so in Huntington's view.[46]

Huntington is unwilling or unable to distinguish between culture and civilisation. Rather oddly, especially for an American scholar, he claims that past

> efforts to distinguish culture and civilization, however, have not caught on, and, outside Germany, there is overwhelming agreement with Braudel that it is "delusory to wish in the German way to separate *culture* from its foundation *civilization.*"[47] (italics in original)

The experience of American cultural anthropology clearly tells a very different story from the one Huntington suggests exists here. As the history of the development of the idea of culture shows, the German idea of culture (*kultur*) is very different from the French understanding of the term, and that the impact of the German idea has actually extended well

---

[45]   See for example page 68 where he writes of "The attitudes, values, knowledge, and culture of people..." that culture is added on at the end, implies that it is something other than 'attitudes, values, and knowledge.' On page 91, culture is linked to power, which reminds the reader of a Cultural Studies approach. Huntington says, "The distribution of cultures in the world reflects the distribution of power. Trade may or may not follow the flag, but culture almost always follows power." Expanding powers experience a flowering of culture that they impose on others. This almost suggests that culture is a matter of artifice, art, literature, intellectual and scientific and other achievements that Cultural Studies people might be interested in. Elsewhere, on page 253, he tells us that religion "is the principal defining characteristic of civilizations." Samuel Huntington, *ibid,* p.68, p.91 and on religion, p.253

[46]   Huntington frequently refers to homogeneity, claiming that civilisations are based on it. See Samuel Huntington, *ibid,* p.52

beyond its country of origin.[48] *Kultur* was not founded on civilisation, but developed in opposition to it. For Fernand Braudel, culture is a 'personal' affair, as he points out it is for all French people.[49] Braudel recognises the German concept and acknowledges its distinction from the French idea of culture, but he opts for the idea of civilisation as the basis of his thinking. Indeed, as the above quotation indicates, culture is rooted in civilisation and cannot be 'separated from its foundation' in this French scholar's thoughts. Huntington clearly reverses this approach, claiming, instead, that civilisations are rooted in culture. Braudel and Huntington are working with different understandings of the term 'culture,' which makes it all the more important that Huntington elucidate his idea of culture, particularly as this is *the* foundational concept in his thought. That an American social scientist accepts the word of a French historian on matters of culture and civilisation is a curiosity. It suggests to me that Huntington approached this subject via literature on civilisation with some 'home-grown' assumptions about 'culture' in tow, rather than from the literature on culture. Indeed there is a noticeable absence of reference to culture theory and an overt dependence on the civilisation theorists.[50] Beyond a couple of general comments, there are only a handful of passing references to anthropologists.[51] Intellectual dependency on civilisation theory is not wrong in itself, but considering that his idea of civilisation derives explicitly from the idea of culture, the lack of recognition of culture theory seems, to me at least, to be a major omission. In addition, Huntington's refusal to separate culture from civilisation requires some level of theoretical explanation since it is not possible to rely on both Braudel and Spengler as far as explaining the relationship between culture and civilisation is concerned.[52] Braudel and Spengler are at odds with one another on culture and civilisation; their differing views deriving from incommensurable ontologies.

---

[47]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.41

[48]   Norbert Elias (1939/1978) and Adam Kuper (1999) are particularly good on explaining the distinction. Braudel himself recognises the differences between the German and French ideas of culture but underplays the significance of German concept. He notes the anthropological development but like T.S. Eliot, assigns their idea of 'culture' to 'primitive society.' Fernand Braudel (1963/1995) Chapter 1

[49]   Fernand Braudel, *ibid*, p5-6

[50]   Principally, Huntington relies on Toynbee, Braudel and Spengler.

[51]   Huntington makes a few general references to anthropologists, but he never tells us which ones. See pages 41 & 57. In addition, Ernest Gellner is mentioned on p.113, A.L. Kroeber on p.40, Marcel Mauss on p.41, and Sidney Mintz on p.136. Clifford Geertz is not mentioned at all. Fernand Braudel, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee, all receive greater attention than the anthropologists. Samuel Huntington (1996/1998).

[52]   This matter only serves to demonstrate how confused Huntington's idea of civilisation is.

For Braudel, 'culture' is an inseparable element of 'civilisation,' while for Spengler, 'civilisation' is the death of 'culture.' Huntington seems to have missed this important conceptual difference.

Substantively, Huntington's theory derives from the presumption of commonality expressed variously as one of three things: culture, and/or identity and/or civilisation. According to Huntington,

> The philosophical assumptions, underlying values, social relations, customs, and overall outlooks on life differ significantly among civilizations.[53]

The source of these 'significant' differences is 'culture.' Despite acknowledging that "[c]ultures can change" and that their impact on politics and economics "can vary from one period to another," Huntington is in no doubt that "the major differences...among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures."[54] Yet, the lack of detailed interrogation into what people actually share was a serious and inexcusable flaw in the 1990s. Twenty years after *The Anarchical Society*, it has become more than an irritation, as well as glibly repetitive, to read that 'culture involves values, norms, and modes of thinking.' What a late twentieth century reader was entitled to know was the precise nature and content of any 'values, norms, and world-views.' Of course, it is abundantly obvious, to this commentator, that any enquiry along these lines is likely to lead directly to the cultural anthropologist's predicament - namely that the thing invoked cannot be proven to exist. Any attempt at investigating foundational sharing or commonality would most certainly have led Huntington into the age-old problems encountered by anthropologists, that actually specifying what people have in common merely reveals the inadequacy of the initial proposition. People vary too much and disagree to such an extent, that it is not plausible to speak of a group of people as though they have a distinctive 'ethnographic trademark,' as P.G. Wilson said of the Tsimihety, and certainly not of the order that Huntington's thesis most thoroughly depends. Ultimately, his reliance on clichés and truisms is not sufficient to justify his theory, especially when the debates over culture have attained a level of sophistication that Huntington appears oblivious to.

---

[53]   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.28
[54]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.29

Huntington commits the fundamental error, discussed in Chapter 2, that reference to empirical examples somehow proves the existence of culture.[55] Perhaps the best example of the importance Huntington attaches to empirical evidence is indicated by his list of events that occurred during a six-month period in 1993. Since this list appears in both the book and the article in which he replied to his critics, it can be seen as having considerable importance for the author.[56] According to Huntington, the list of events 'illustrate the relevance of the civilizational paradigm' and "might have been predicted from it."[57] There are several problems with the civilisational paradigm with respect to these events. First, the events themselves do not 'prove' the paradigm, and they certainly do not have to be accepted as evidence of culture or indeed culture clash. Raymond Cohen commits a similar error in his analysis of the difficulties encountered in negotiations.[58] Both Huntington and Cohen seem to believe that 'cultural' differences and difficulties speak for themselves, and do not require further interrogation or justification, which is a major unspoken assumption and one of a seriously flawed theoretical nature. Second, that the civilisation paradigm 'might have predicated' these events falls into the 'everything is cultural' trap, and therefore might not actually tell us very much about the world, or certainly nothing that is intellectually very useful. As Chris Brown has recently commented,

> whether 'civilizations' clash along particular fault-lines is going to depend on how the inhabitants of those key areas, and their neighbours, near and far, choose to define themselves or allow political entrepreneurs to define them, and this is a political process, not one that follows a cultural recipe book.[59]

Brown's comment points the way to what is, perhaps, the most disturbing aspect of Huntington's thesis; namely, the lack of political consideration. Sadly, for a political discipline, Huntington's paradigm relies on 'culture' playing a deterministic, historicist, and causal role in international life. 'Culture' is the hidden hand behind international events, especially or supposedly, it would seem, where conflict occurs. Now that all other 'paradigms' have failed, it is 'culture' that provides the foundation of international life and it

---

[55]   The obvious example in this respect is the conflict in Bosnia; according to Huntington, this "was a war of civilizations." Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.288
[56]   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), pp38-39 and (1993/1996), pp.58-59
[57]   Samuel Huntington (1993/1996), p.58
[58]   See Raymond Cohen (1991/1997)
[59]   Chris Brown (1999), p.57

is the threats from "culturally different" societies that provide the framework for thinking about international politics. Borrowing from Roy D'Andrade, 'culture has become a big thing that does big conflictual things in international relations.' Huntington's endless list of examples proves nothing and certainly nothing in cultural terms, although they provide good insight into how he imagines 'culture' works.

Huntington's essentialist conception of culture is evidenced throughout his work.[60] He writes of people's "belief in the superiority of...[their] own culture" and wanting to "trumpet" their "own" culture, as well as of the ability some groups have to "impose... [their] values, culture, and institutions" on others, which of course relies on ideas of homogeneity and cultural loss, as well as a strong case of exclusivity and belonging.[61] Elsewhere he tells us civilisations "were based on a cultural homogeneity," which he obviously considers under threat.[62] There is a "Western hegemony" that is a "major source of... resentment and hostility" and serves to "rally... [non-Western] publics to preserve the survival and integrity of their indigenous culture."[63] Huntington skirts around the politics of this anti-Western sentiment, because it does not suit his cultural explanations. One of the more curious and obvious examples of essentialism, however, concerns the manner in which he conceives of the diffusion of ideas and artefacts. He tells us that,

> China's absorption of Buddhism from India, scholars agree, failed to produce the
> "Indianization" of China. The Chinese adapted Buddhism to Chinese purposes and
> needs. Chinese culture remained Chinese.[64]

In much the same way that the introduction of the English language into India did not produce an English society, or that modernisation is not creating Westernisation (see below), so the absorption of Buddhism from India into China did not undermine the essential 'Chinese-ness' of the Chinese 'culture.'[65] This line of argument seems to echo Alfred Zimmern's view of 'English and French starch' discussed in Chapter 4; however, the crucial

---

[60]   At one point Huntington suggests that what counts for people are "blood and belief, faith and family," which reminds us of Walter Benn Michaels's argument that cultural-identity is about blood-tie. Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.126

[61]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.92 & p.129 respectively. See also p.78

[62]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.52 for homogeneity, and Chapter 12, Part V for threats to homogeneity and possible outcomes.

[63]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.59

[64]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.76

[65]   For the impact of the English language see Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.62

distinction lies in the fact that the cultural terms of reference, and therefore the theoretical implications of this, in both scholars' statements, are very different. It seems highly erroneous to assume the "Indianization" of China, even in theory, but the statement itself reveals a number of things. First, it shows that Huntington has a discrete view of 'cultures' as entities - there is a Chinese culture area of Chinese-ness, and an Indian culture area of Indian-ness, and no matter what is culturally exchanged, neither can undermine the integrity (or should that be geist?) of the other.[66] Second, it tells us that he believes that the 'core' elements or perhaps even characteristic traits of a culture remain undisturbed by 'foreign' imports. 'The tourists' will never be able to undermine the essential integrity of 'the natives.' At a later point he says, that while politicians

> can introduce elements of Western culture, they are unable permanently to suppress
>
> or to eliminate **the core elements** of their indigenous culture.[67] (my emphasis)

These "core elements" of culture become ahistorical and deterministic, and, needless to say, we are given no substantive evidence of their existence.[68] In the words of Talal Asad, they appear as 'an *a priori* set of integrated meanings or authentic standard of culture' against which everything can be explained. The reader is not offered a theoretical justification for, and explanation of, the nature and content of these 'core elements' - they are merely assumed, like geists, to be obvious. However, if cultural cores remain essentially the same in spite of obvious change, then this is a more 'traditionalist' and fixed conception of culture than even the most ardent cultural anthropologist could admit. Huntington's idea of culture is nativist – we adhere to our own culture.[69] There is no room for change here, even when change (i.e. the introduction of Buddhism) is clearly produced as evidence to demonstrate the point that the culture remains the same. The Chinese will always have 'Chinese' culture irrespective of the point in space or time one cares to consider. Finally, the counter-factual in Huntington's own argument (i.e. change results in no change) only serves to reinforce the point that he has an all or nothing account of culture and one that invokes a conception

---

[66]   Huntington tells us that "A civilization is the broadest cultural entity," in any case. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.43

[67]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.154

[68]   Elsewhere he suggests that "indigenous, historically rooted mores, languages, beliefs, and institutions" are reasserting themselves. Although, what these 'mores' are is not certain. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.91

[69]   According to Huntington, East Asians have 'adhered to their own culture' quite successfully. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.93

centred on essentialism, preservation, imposition and loss. That Huntington uses the failure of one 'culture' to become a carbon copy of another, or culturally otherwise, does not substantiate his argument that there is an essential core that cannot be displaced. It merely illustrates the inadequacy of his social theory and raises, in my view, some serious doubts about the way in which he persists in seeing the world.

It comes as no surprise then, to find Huntington citing Hedley Bull's work with respect to questions concerning 'international culture' and pursuing a similar line of enquiry to Bull based upon the perceived problem of a lack of international commonality in any meaningful sense.[70] Huntington reaches the same conclusion as Bull that international relations are too diverse and too various for a common or universal culture to be possible at the international or global level. Of course, this conclusion derives explicitly from the conception of culture that one has at hand and the level at which that conception is applied. In both Huntington's and Bull's view the most appropriate level of applying the idea of culture, in a meaningful manner, is parochial not international. We learn a good deal about Huntington's view of culture from the manner in which he dismisses 'international culture,' since where 'international culture' fails, local and civilisational 'culture' succeeds. According to Huntington, a universal culture 'implies'

> the cultural coming together of humanity and the increasing acceptance of common values, beliefs, orientations, practices, and institutions by peoples throughout the world.[71]

A 'coming' together of this order, is not happening at the international level in Huntington's view, as was Bull's conclusion before him. Worse, the opposite is taking place - "indigenization."[72] He criticises 'late twentieth century' inhabitants for "the widespread and parochial conceit that the European civilization of the West is now the universal civilization of the world."[73] Of course, Huntington commits himself to the same erroneous thinking as Bull. He mistakes commonality and a 'coming together' for uniformity, consensus, and homogeneity. He even dares to ask whether commonality means that societies will

---

[70]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.54, 58 & 83
[71]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.56
[72]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, see Part II, 'The Shifting Balance of Civilizations.'
[73]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.55

"necessarily merge into homogeneity?"[74] Huntington reasons that as homogeneity and consensus clearly do not exist at the global level, the idea of a universal culture can be easily rejected. The idea of global identification is not worth considering, as there are no 'meaningful' grounds for common identification. It is obvious that globally people do not agree on 'values, beliefs, orientations, and practices.' Yet, this argument against homogeneity at the international level is to all intents and purposes, utterly meaningless – Huntington and Bull expect too much from culture at *any* level.

The homogeneity argument is pursued along several lines as universal culture, modernisation and westernisation.[75] Although modernisation is clearly taking place across the globe, it is, obviously, not attended by westernisation.[76] We are told that,

> Only naive arrogance can lead Westerners to assume that non-Westerners will become "Westernized" by acquiring Western goods.[77]

One might wonder what kind of naivety leads a theorist to assume that 'Westernization' (and homogenisation) can occur so easily, or that this was a meaningful statement in the first instance. That Huntington is waiting for, a "significant convergence in attitudes and beliefs," betrays his essentialist conception of culture.[78] In addition, he tells us that

> the term "universal civilization" could be used to refer to what civilized societies have in common, such as cities and literacy, which distinguish them from primitive societies and barbarians. This is, of course, the eighteenth century singular meaning of the term, and in this sense a universal civilization is emerging, much to the horror of various anthropologists [who remain nameless] and others who view with dismay the disappearance of primitive peoples.[79]

From a contextual point of view, that Huntington believes he can draw a direct parallel with 18th century thinking is somewhat unsettling, especially as he seems to blame the 18th century concept of civilisation for the things that he normatively objects to.[80] What is more

---

[74]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.69
[75]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, see especially Chapter 3, Part I.
[76]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.78
[77]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.58
[78]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.59 He is critical elsewhere of what he calls the "common world culture" p.67
[79]   Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.57
[80]   Later he tells us "there is the assumption that increased interaction among peoples – trade, investment, tourism, media, electronic communication generally – is generating a common world culture."

disturbing is that he employs the language of 'primitives and barbarians,' which today invokes an entirely different set of normative responses to those of the 18th century. Furthermore, he believes anthropology still operates with a bell-jar mentality ('primitives' are to be preserved), little wonder then that many anthropologists, both reformists and rejectionists, have expressed serious concern over Huntington's obvious abuse and misunderstanding of their concept. While more than a few have been outraged by his work and have accused him of fetishising difference and of what Verena Stolcke identified as 'cultural fundamentalism.'[81]

7.3 - 'Fundamental' Objections

In a special issue of *Current Anthropology* Christophe Brumann, a German anthropologist, commented on Huntington's work.

> While far from controversial within his own discipline... Huntington's writings have certainly had a greater influence on the general public than any contemporary anthropological study can claim, extending to, for example, the German president Roman Herzog, who found Huntington's work a useful companion when visiting China.[82]

Huntington's wider public influence is disturbing to say the least, as Brumann (who is following Verena Stolcke's argument) goes on to explain,

> Huntington is an extreme representative of a more general figure of thought that is identified as culturalism or "cultural fundamentalism"... It posits the existence of a finite number of distinct cultural heritages in the world, each tied to a specific place of origin. Since these are taken to be ultimately antagonistic and incommensurable, they and the individuals associated with them are considered best kept separate, ideally in their respective homelands or, if that fails, in ethnically defined quarters... Cultural

---

His deployment of the word culture here has no relationship to the 18th century meaning of the word and it merely adds confusion to his understanding of what constitutes civilisation in the singular sense. Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.67

[81]   Verena Stolcke (1995)

[82]   Christophe Brumann in *Current Anthropology*, Vol.40, February 1999, p.10

fundamentalism, therefore, will not serve as ideological buttressing for new colonialisms, but for fuelling xenophobic tendencies...[83]

Brumann is a reformist who supports the culture concept, but even he finds Huntington's thesis unpalatable, not simply for its essentialist outlook on the world but also for its political implications.[84] In my view, Brumann is right to be concerned about the political implications of a theory based on 'cultural fundamentalism.'

It is not just the future of international relations that is at stake here, but also the basic political implications of Huntington's theory for day-to-day politics, and this is, for me, one of the most disturbing aspects of his thesis. When 'culture' is invoked as the basis of politics then everything that was once political and read in those terms, becomes cultural and approached/accepted on that basis. 'Culture' has been elevated to the status of 'gravity,' whose role in life has become unquestionable. For example, Huntington claims that

> China's Confucian heritage, with its emphasis on authority, order, hierarchy, and the supremacy of the collectivity over the individual, **creates obstacles** to democratization.[85] (my emphasis)

This line of argument uncomfortably echoes the views of the Chinese government itself. As the Chinese dissident Fang Lizhi pointed out in 1989, this view amounts to a 'law of conservation of democracy.'[86] The implication is that societies, or cultures, as is more likely to be the expression these days, that do not have a heritage, or, cultural history, of democracy do not have the 'cultural' disposition for one in the future. As Fang Lizhi pointed out the Chinese authorities frequently claimed,

> Chinese culture lacks a tradition of democracy, and thus cannot accommodate a democratic system. The common people are not interested in democracy; they would not know how to use it; they lack the ability to support it; etc.[87]

---

[83]   Christophe Brumann, *ibid*, p.10

[84]   In this paper, Brumann is following Verena Stolcke's argument that 'culture has supplanted the idea of race in Europe and is forming 'new rhetoric's of exclusion'.' Stolcke limits her discussion to developments within Europe; she does not consider the idea of culture more generally and in its theoretical aspect. See Verena Stolcke (1995)

[85]   Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.238

[86]   This law "holds that a society's total capacity for democracy is fixed. If there was no democracy to start with, there also will be none later. Nobody, of course, has set out to prove this law, because the counter-examples are too numerous." Fang Lizhi, *The Independent*, 18.1.89

[87]   Fang Lizhi, *ibid*,

234

If 'culture' does create obstacles to democratisation then we need to know the precise nature of these obstacles, and in what way they operate. Although Huntington goes on to speculate over the future of Chinese politics, the suspicion is that culture, especially in the form of 'core elements', will endure.[88] For which we can read that democracy is a cultural improbability/impossibility as far as China, and Islam (see above), are concerned.

It is not simply the substantive implications of Huntington's thesis that disturb; the theoretical premise, which is the source of all difficulty, reveals some problems that go to the heart of the contemporary culture concept. Huntington's viewpoint is based on the assumption of homogeneity and coherence in a meaningful sense.

> The central elements of any culture or civilization are language and religion. If a universal civilization is emerging, there should be tendencies toward the emergence of a universal language and a universal religion.[89]

The confusion between 'culture' and 'civilisation' that permeates his work, is quite annoying a century after Tylor. Perhaps, of greater irritation though is that the 'central elements' of 'language and religion' are too large to hold as the central components of either concept, culture or civilisation, in view of the potential extent of variation each contains. The British and Americans might be said to speak a similar language, but they would not be thought to have the same 'culture' in Boasian terms. Aggregating them, ultimately, under the umbrella of Christianity so that they might be said to share the same civilisation obscures important differences. Where such aggregation leaves Buddhists and Muslims etc. within the same geographic area is open to question. This is, surely, *the* crucial stumbling point from an IR perspective. Some of the most interesting questions that face us in the post-Cold War era centre explicitly on the question of accommodating difference, be these different religions, different denominations, different dialects, different languages even (consider the rise of Spanish in the US) within a shared geographical area. These differences, not unique in the discipline, seem to pass Huntington by, or appear only relevant as far as they pose a threat to perceived homogeneity and singularity.[90]

---

[88] It is not until page 261 that Huntington acknowledges that "politics" can be a cause of strife. See Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), p.261

[89] Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, p.59

[90] Samuel Huntington, *ibid*, see his discussion of the "clash between the multiculturalists and the defenders of Western civilization" in the United States, pp.304/8

It is not just that the underlying theoretical outlook is highly contestable in itself, but of greater concern is that the approach appears unable to perform the theoretical task that Huntington demands of it. As Abu-Lughod has remarked while reflecting on Edward Said's notion of Orientalism,

> In the twentieth century, cultural difference, not race, has been the basic subject of Orientalist scholarship devoted now to interpreting the "culture" phenomena (primarily religion and language) to which basic differences in development, economic performance, government, character, and so forth are attributed.[91]

In this sense, Huntington has contributed nothing new here; he has merely reflected orthodox thinking or contemporary 'conventional standards.' It is largely in the absence of anything that he recognises as a 'global civilisation' that processes of "indigenization" are held to be convincing. Yet, what are the theoretical terms under which 'global or universal civilisation' can be rejected? The notion of indigenization and the 'resistance' by 'other cultures' to the West plays a crucial evidential role in Huntington's work. It is not so much that the evidence itself is problematic but it is the way he reads this evidence that is very much open to debate. Huntington does not read the evidence of indigenization as evidence of politics but as proof of the power of 'culture.' Yet, as Abu-Lughod has pointed out, even those articulating 'culture' in this way (and upon whom Huntington relies) are merely reinforcing the epistemological structure of difference that on the surface they appear to challenge and refute.

> A Gandhian appeal to the greater spirituality of a Hindu Indian, compared with the materialism and violence of the West, and an Islamicist appeal to a greater faith in God, compared with the immorality and corruption of the West, both accept the essentialist terms of Orientalist constructions ['that maps and fixes differences in innate terms']. While turning them on their heads, they preserve the rigid sense of difference based on culture.[92]

Huntington's theoretical stance is therefore fundamentally flawed. He thinks that through citing evidence of indigenization he can demonstrate widespread opposition to a dominant mode of thought, and therefore, refute the argument for a 'global culture,' whereas he has

---

[91]   Lila Abu-Lughod in Richard Fox ed. (1991), p.144
[92]   Lila Abu-Lughod, *ibid*, p.144

merely succeeded in locating examples of people who think in exactly the same terms as he does.[93] This only serves to demonstrate the global acceptance of 'culture' as a specific form of idea. Far from providing substantive evidence of difference, it actually provides theoretical evidence of international epistemic conformity.

What is more, I find little, or no, substantive evidence of common and homogeneous 'culture' at the local level in the manner that Huntington looks for at the international level (in spite of what local leaders claim), which must cast further doubt over the epistemic outlook that informs his theory. It would be more appropriate, I suggest, to recognise that a similarly heterogeneous and debated condition exists at both levels. We might forgive Hedley Bull for approaching the idea of 'international culture' in essentialist terms since this was a 'conventional standard' determining the 'factory conditions' under which he worked, but no such sympathy can be afforded to Huntington since the debates surrounding the concept of culture have been sufficient and public enough to render Huntington's ignorance of them virtually unforgivable. What is more, it is possible to acknowledge the existence of an international culture even under an essentialist conception of culture as Alexander Wendt's recent publication easily demonstrates. It is important to note that Wendt, in his *Social Theory of International Politics*, attempts to theoretically transcend Huntington, but he does not refute him.[94] Wendt draws on an ideational conception of culture and argues that 'cultures of anarchy' operate at the international level, although it should be noted that Wendt still seems to define culture in singular and homogenous terms, just like Huntington.[95] In short, Wendt applies his imagination at the international level in a manner that Huntington seems to think is impossible due to his parochial outlook. Comparing Wendt's idea of culture to Huntington's serves as an excellent example of the range of

---

[93]   Islam and China are mounting cultural challenges to the West, while America clashes with Asia. Samuel Huntington (1996/1998), see pages 185 & 225. Chapter 10, Part IV on 'fault line wars.'

[94]   Alexander Wendt (1999). On page 257, Wendt suggests, "that even if states' domestic cultures have little in common, as in Huntington's "clash of civilizations,"... the states *system* could still have one culture that affected the behaviour of its elements." Wendt is not challenging Huntington's thesis as such, nor is he denying the relevance of local culture; it is rather, that through focusing on the international level Wendt can argue that an international 'collective identity formation' is not only possible but also acts to reduce "the rationale for egoistic identities" at the local level. It is these local 'egoistic identities,' as Wendt describes them, that provide the basis of Huntington's parochial work, whereas Wendt has an alternative level of analysis in mind. Wendt (1999), p.354

[95]   In Wendt's thesis there appears to be only ever one culture of anarchy dominating the system at one time and it exists because of commonly shared ideas and agreed assumptions about the world. I only draw

choice available to scholars in applying the concept of culture in IR theory. Yet, it is also possible to conceive of an international culture that does not rely on homogeneity and meaningful commonality as John Boli and George Thomas, who define culture very differently from the Boasians with their 'way of life' concept, amply demonstrate.[96] For Boli and Thomas, culture is a structural issue not an ideational one; 'culture' is defined by shared, but not necessarily agreed, practice not by a 'set of integrated meanings.' Huntington's dismissal of 'international culture,' therefore, only serves to remind the reader of the point made in the Introduction to the thesis, that an essentialist version of culture can be applied at a parochial level only because the author has decided that this should be so.

Abu-Lughod, a well-known culture critic, has been forthright in her criticisms of Huntington.

> The fact that...[culture] is such a "successful" and popular concept should be cause for suspicion, not self-congratulation. That the concept lends itself to usages so apparently corrupting of the anthropological ones as the pernicious theses of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations is, for me, serious. Huntington's glorification of Western superiority and gross simplification and reification of cultures and cultural difference resonate with popular sentiment and racist politics. It seems to me that our role [as anthropologists] is not to use our expertise in "culture" to correct him (by showing that his cultural units are too big or too incommensurate, too homogenized or too crude) but to criticise the very notion of setting up groups of people defined by shared cultures as hostile and opposed.[97]

Crucially she goes on to say,

> If civilizations are extensions of cultures and cultures depend on culture and we do not question the notion of culture, then we are not in a position to mount this critique.[98]

---

attention to Wendt's work here to demonstrate that an international application of the Boasian concept is possible, the reader should not take from this any suggestion that I approve of Wendt's work in this respect.
[96]   John Boli and George M. Thomas's volume serves to demonstrate the importance of a theorist's initial conceptual premises. Boli and Thomas begin their inquiry into global culture with a different set of propositions to Huntington, Wendt and Bull; they and the contributors to their volume define culture in terms of structural and empirical similarity through an examination of the growth of 'international nongovernmental organisations since 1875.' In adopting this approach they are able to demonstrate the abundance of global culture. John Boli and George M. Thomas (1999) For additional alternative conceptions of culture in IR, see Jutta Weldes (1999) and Akira Iriye (1997)
[97]   Lila Abu-Lughod in *Current Anthropology*, Vol.40, February 1999, p.14
[98]   Lila Abu-Lughod, *ibid*, p.14

Sadly, it has to be said that the kind of critique Abu-Lughod has in mind has yet to be entertained within IR. Even Yosef Lapid who notes that Huntington simply recreates a form of state centrism as a "reified world of pregiven cultural agents" fails to 'mount the kind of critique' Abu-Lughod advocated.[99] Lapid seems to believe that the 'problem' with culture is 'definitional' and that Huntington's failure to "move away from categorical, essentialist, and unitary understandings of these concepts" of culture and identity, only results in the serious problem of reification.[100] As Lapid points out,

> Far from being the rare exception, Huntington's failure [to move towards an anti-essentialist definition] simply confirms that "reification is an epistemological problem not easily vanquished, for it pervades the rhetorical and conceptual apparatus of our scientific world-view"(Handle, 1994:27).[101]

Yet, following my discussion of essentialism in Chapter 2, Lapid can be seen as missing the point somewhat here. It is not so much that reification or essentialism is the problematic issue; it is, as Abu-Lughod indicates, more a question of whether Huntington was correct in 'setting up groups of people defined by shared cultures as hostile and opposed' in the first instance. Rather ironically, at the level of ontology Lapid has more in common with Huntington than he realises.

In the second chapter, the problems of reification and essentialism were briefly discussed in respect of anthropological debate. As D'Andrade said, "[t]here is nothing wrong with reification and essentialization if what one reifies and essentializes has strong causal properties,"[102] or, one might add from an IR point view, that it can be shown to make sense and is fruitfully justifiable in some way. IR arguably relies on a good deal of reification and essentialism with respect to its subject matter that, although not above criticism, are, plainly, not as problematic as the idea of culture. When we speak of 'states,' 'governments,' and even 'transnational organisations,' we are reifying and essentialising people and their activities to a considerable extent. None of these reified and essentialised terms is beyond criticism, but on the whole IR scholars have found these short-hand terms relatively useful and to have some disciplinary saliency. In many instances, it must be

---

[99]   Yosef Lapid in Yosef Lapid & Friedrich Kratochwil eds. (1997), p8
[100]   Yosef Lapid, *ibid*, p8
[101]   Yosef Lapid, *ibid*, p8
[102]   Roy D'Andrade in *Current Anthropology*, Vol.40, February 1999, p.17

accepted that some measure of essentialism and reification are unavoidable no matter how 'reflexive' the scholar. The serious question, as D'Andrade has pointed out, and reminding the reader of what was discussed in Chapter 2, is whether we are right to think of culture in similar terms. "Can we say that *culture is a big thing that does things?*" D'Andrade asked. In this respect Lapid and Huntington would seem to have at least one thing in common, they do both seem to accept that 'culture is a big thing that does things,' even though they may disagree, epistemically, over definitions and the kinds of things 'culture' potentially does.

Crude forms of cultural essentialism, like that found in Huntington's work, should certainly be objected to and criticised at every turn, unless of course like Ruth Benedict's work they are purporting to stand as 'ideal-types,' in which case the nature of the criticism is transformed somewhat. The problem is, of course, that Huntington was not claiming to be describing 'ideal-types' but 'cultures' in a meaningful and positivist sense. Even scholars noted for their post-positivist stance, for example Yosef Lapid and R.B.J. Walker, seem to accept the 'existence' of culture in similarly uncritical terms, which is a curious situation since the conceptual propositions that the Boasian idea of culture supposedly invoke have hardly been established beyond dispute. We may debate the relevance of 'the state' in IR, but we can accept, at least, its existence; unfortunately, the same cannot be said of 'culture.' The theoretical problem with 'culture' is not epistemological it is ontological. The questions remain the same for IR theorists as they do for cultural anthropologists – does culture exist, and if so, in what way does it exist? What kind of 'reality' does this idea convey? The underlying problem confronting both Lapid and Huntington is this; can we plausibly aggregate certain aspects of social life under the banner of 'culture' in order to theorise about international relations? A reflexive and critical stance should at least begin by acknowledging the constructed and problematic nature of this concept and then proceed to theorise on that basis. Buying into the idea of culture as an 'unquestionable reality in human existence' as Huntington does, only confirms culture's theoretical presence in IR in taken-for-granted terms.

Summary

Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis was both provocative and pessimistic in its appraisal of the role of culture in international relations life. Critics may object to his

crude application of the idea of culture and disapprove of his analysis of international relations, but few would go so far as to doubt the importance of the concept of culture in the discipline overall. In many ways, Huntington spoke for late 20th century thinking, when he expressed the widespread belief that 'culture' exists everywhere and affects everything. Even Stephen Chan, who picked up on Huntington's 'fundamentalism' in his critical review of the book, argued that "[a]n enlightened (not an Enlightenment) international relations" should accommodate and try to understand "other cultures."[103] The raw nerves that Huntington tweaked were nothing more than the 'conventional standards' attending the term 'culture.' In all fairness to him, and far from rubbishing his work entirely, his theory of 'clash' provides us with an excellent example of precisely where the Boasian concept ends up when applied at the parochial level to international politics. Anthropologists have been outraged to discover that their 'nice' egalitarian concept could result in 'pernicious' politics. However, whatever the complaints, and all other difficulties and confusions aside, it is the essentialist version of culture that requires investigating, not so much where Huntington has taken this idea. Huntington has done us all a good turn here, I believe. If we do not approve of his theory or like what he has to say about international relations, then we need to examine the theoretical foundations very carefully. Lila Abu-Lughod is correct to point out that since 'civilisations rest upon cultures, and cultures upon the idea of culture' then it is the fundamental idea of culture that requires rigorous interrogation, not whether Huntington has incorrectly aggregated people together, mis-interpreted certain events or reified the world of international politics. The central problem remains, and remains the same – is this, the Boasian concept of culture, worth employing? The idea of culture is the keystone concept upon which Huntington's whole theoretical edifice depends and the point at which the theory is fundamentally flawed. Huntington's obvious weakness was to draw attention to something called 'civilization' in a dramatic way, and in a manner that was easily objectionable, but the real value of interrogating Huntington's work lies in the ability to generate alternative thoughts on community, difference and inter-sociality in the light of all the obvious complaints. There is no doubt that Huntington's work invokes some important examples of difference and the problems differences generate in international relations, but, as this brief survey of the history of the discipline shows, recognising difference as

---

[103]   Stephen Chan (1997), p.139

241

something problematic in world politics is hardly new to IR. It is not the recognition of difference that matters, but the scholar's conceptual framework for visualising and dealing with such things. The real question is whether Huntington has provided us with an appropriate and useful theoretical framework with which to consider the world of difference. If we are to avoid the three problems mentioned in Chapter 2 that employing the Boasian concept entails, namely the problems of essentialism, functional equivalence with race theory and confusing relationships with other concepts, then Huntington's work actually provides a useful starting point with which to begin discussing the culture concept and its future role in IR.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

If we had been discussing the subject of 'culture' in 1900 as opposed to 2000, or 1920 compared to 1980, or even 1950s Britain in contrast with 1950s America, it would be very clear that we would not have been speaking about the same thing. We would not have been employing the same or even remotely similar language *of* culture despite referring to the same word. The images conjured by the word, the 'reality' it would be considered to denote, the 'things' we might expect it to do, would all differ profoundly at these given points in time. Moreover, at the time of the founding of the League of Nations we would have thought about 'culture' in conjunction with the concept of civilisation, while by the end of the Cold War we had unequivocally associated the idea of culture with identity. The transformation from thinking about 'culture in conjunction with civilisation' to thinking about 'culture in conjunction with identity' marks a profound epistemic shift and one that reflects the changing ontology informing our understanding of the term 'culture' itself. This shift was considerable not only in view of the terms of reference, i.e. identifying who 'the civilised' and 'the cultured' are, but also in respect of the meanings associated with these terms in the form of their attending conceptual 'conventional standards.' It was the meanings that scholars have attached to the word 'culture' across the lifetime of the discipline of international relations and the kinds of associations they have drawn with it, that focused my attention here.

I suggested that there is abundant evidence of the word 'culture' in IR literature and instances can easily be located in work taken from across the discipline's lifetime; but this only becomes visible once we know what to look for and how to understand what we have found. Therefore, it was a key concern in the narrative that the reader should recognise that it was not the same idea of 'culture' that has endured throughout the history of IR. Moreover, it has been interesting to note that although many of the discipline's scholars have recognised the significance of, and expressed an interest in, similar subject matter, say states and communities for example, the place of 'culture' in their thinking has varied

enormously. Differing scholars have recognised the existence of communities and have been concerned with the nature of the interaction that occurs between them. These scholars have also acknowledged that there are profound differences between communities and have noted that these can be problematic and difficult obstacles when placed in the path of social interaction. What scholars in IR have not always agreed upon, or indeed, even understood, is the assumption that there is a direct association between these things and the idea of 'culture.' Challenging this assumption and the widely held view that there is a synthesis between community, difference and 'culture,' was one of the principal aims of this historical survey of the development of 'culture.' Reviewing some of the work IR scholars have produced in the light of the 'factory conditions' of their day was considered to be a useful way of illustrating the underlying point that people have thought very differently about 'culture' and have interpreted the word 'culture' in alternative ways to those determined by today's 'conventional standards.' By way of conclusion, I shall focus on three issues that were considered significant to the narrative to reinforce this point. First, I shall review the distinctions that were necessary to enable me to detail the history of the development of culture overall. Second, some comments will be made concerning the importance of the context and its role in assisting our understanding of the nature of the concept of culture. Finally, I shall mention some of the implications that, I believe, the conceptual transformation reveals from a general disciplinary point of view before bringing the narrative to a close.

8.1 - Distinguishing between 'cultures'

The story of the historical development of the word 'culture' and its attending concepts that has been told here was based on a number of distinctions that were drawn in the introduction to this thesis. First, it was pointed out that there are two concepts of culture, the older humanist conception of culture and the 'modern' 20th century anthropological conceptual construct; referred to as the 'Arnoldian' and 'Boasian' concepts respectively. This distinction was based on the historical development of the word 'culture' generally, from its etymological roots in the idea of cultivation to its role in the establishment of American cultural anthropology. Second, a distinction between the levels of analysis to which the idea of culture can be fruitfully applied was identified; these were labelled 'the

parochial' and 'the international' levels of application. This distinction was considered unique to the discipline of international relations and to be further indicative of the kind of understanding scholars attached to the word 'culture.' The level at which scholars have sought to discuss the significance of 'culture' reinforced the importance of the first distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts, since it revealed much about the author's understanding of the term and where they meaningfully located 'culture.' Finally, drawing on recent debates in anthropology, an additional distinction was made within the Boasian concept itself between the essentialist and anti-essentialist configurations of the idea. The distinction between the essentialist and anti-essentialist versions of the Boasian concept was only considered useful in so far as it enabled me to identify the nature of the concept of culture informing some scholars work; notably, Hans Morgenthau, Hedley Bull and Samuel Huntington. Beyond this observation, the actual distinction between essentialism and anti-essentialism itself, although interesting enough, was largely a redundant issue. There is not much evidence of anti-essentialism in IR in my view, since the main purpose of the Boasian idea of culture is still, largely, one of separating 'the natives' from 'the tourists.' The assumption that 'the natives' share something in distinction from 'the tourists' was considered to be both an indication of essentialism (even if in a covert form) and one of the most problematic notions that the Boasian idea of culture entails. Anti-essentialist approaches conversely, are thought to present interesting challenges to the way in which a scholar selects the subject matter and draws a closure upon it, in cultural terms; although this issue was not discussed in any detail here. Nevertheless, all three forms of distinction were considered useful for providing me with a framework within which to begin situating and discussing the appearance of the word 'culture' in IR theorists work.

Many commentators and scholars outside of the discipline of International Relations, and one or two within, recognise two different sorts of culture. Adam Kuper and George Stocking have identified a humanist and a 'scientific' or cultural anthropologists' concept; Terry Eagleton writes of 'culture as civility' and 'culture as solidarity;' and Frank Ninkovitch of cultural 'informationalists' and 'fundamentalists.' Alfred Zimmern wrote approvingly of 'culture' in its civilising capacity and despised a 'Continental' version of the idea. Hans Morgenthau, conversely, dismissed the 'cultural' approach of UNESCO, but

accepted the idea of culture that defines a people and their national characteristics. With some reservation, I characterised these two distinct conceptualisations as the *Arnoldian* and *Boasian* concepts of culture. It should not be thought that these represent two new categories for thought; it is simply that I considered the terms 'Arnoldian' and 'Boasian' the most appropriate for accessing the basic distinction from an IR point of view. Neither should it be thought that these two categorisations represent different interpretations of the same thing. They were 'mutually exclusive,' in Ninkovitch's word and 'sworn enemies,' in Eagleton's, and ought to regarded as the separate and incommensurable concepts they, fundamentally, are. A reader needs to be prepared to have two pairs of shoes to stand in when discerning the meaning of the word 'culture' in a scholar's work.

The need to maintain a separate sense of these two concepts of culture was held to be crucial here, since it not only aids in understanding what an author was trying to achieve at a given point in time and therefore avoids the possibility of mis-interpreting or re-interpreting a text, but also opened up new vistas on the history of the discipline overall. The primary distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts enabled me to distinguish between a limited number of theorists, based on their conceptualisation of culture. Alfred Zimmern was identified as working with the Arnoldian concept in Chapter 4; while Martin Wight was similarly thought to working within the Arnoldian remit in Chapter 6, albeit with some qualification. Recognising the presence of the Boasian concept in Wight's work complicates our reading of him, but ultimately it is believed that his view of culture was somewhat different from that of his successor Hedley Bull. It is particularly noticeable that Wight had less difficulty in promoting the argument that culture had an international level of saliency and appeared to be less concerned with the issue of heterogeneity than Bull. Conversely, Hans Morgenthau in Chapter 5, Hedley Bull in Chapter 6 and Samuel Huntington in Chapter 7, were all found to be working with the Boasian concept of culture, and with an essentialist version of that concept to varying degrees of intensity. Huntington, who has arguably taken the idea of culture much further in international relations thinking than the other scholars I considered, was identified as the most essentialist of the three.

The primary distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts of culture (an argument made, largely, in Chapter 1) was refined with the recognition of differing levels

247

of analysis, or appropriate levels at which the idea of culture was considered to be most fruitfully applied. Two levels of application were identified here – 'the international' and 'the parochial.' This enabled an additional form of conceptual distinction to be identified in the theorists' work. Alfred Zimmern and Martin Wight were found to have little, or no difficulty in recognising culture at the international level; whereas, for Hedley Bull the idea of an 'international culture' seemed to be an increasingly problematic and questionable proposition in his work. Hans Morgenthau and Samuel Huntington, on the other hand, had no difficulty in dismissing the international level in their assessment of culture. For these two scholars, the 'culture' that mattered in international relations was found to be parochial, although the terms of parochial expression were noted to be somewhat different for each scholar. For Morgenthau, 'culture' was largely a national issue, whereas for Huntington, it provided the basis for larger aggregates that drew upon (an alleged) regional similarity, or what he preferred to call 'civilizations.'

All of these distinctions were introduced at the beginning of the thesis and provided the main thread of discussion throughout. I began, in Part 1, by briefly sketching the origins of the idea of culture from its roots in the idea of cultivation, which contained the dual notions of 'spirit' and 'people,' and continued to detail its development in Germany, Britain and France before indicating where this duality ended-up, so to speak. In Britain, the humanist strand that stressed the spiritual qualities inherent in the idea of cultivation resulted, eventually, in the discipline of Cultural Studies. The element of community, on the other hand, attained its final configuration in American Cultural Anthropology. The historical background to the word 'culture' was the focus of Chapter 1, while the problematic content of the modern concept was discussed in some detail in Chapter 2. It was thought that an appreciation of the overall development of 'culture' would be most useful for identifying the 'conventional standards' that dominated a particular period of time, which in turn would provide a useful background for the positioning of certain authors and their texts in Part 2. Discussing the difficulties that the 'modern' or Boasian concept entails was considered a useful reminder of the constructed and contingent nature of the 'modern' Boasian idea. Having some sense of where the idea of culture came from, how it developed and why, was held to be particularly useful for demonstrating the point that it is not so obvious that 'people have culture' or that 'culture makes us what we are.'

The critical discussion in Chapter 2 provided important strands in the argument and effort of convincing the reader that a diversity of thinking based on 'culture' has existed in IR. In short, it was hoped that some appreciation of the key complaints levelled against the Boasian idea of culture would problematise its current 'taken for granted' status, to borrow a phrase from Joel Kahn. This was considered especially important for confronting the assumption that 'culture' (intuitively) belongs 'somewhere' – i.e. to a particular community in a less than specified sense.

The most problematic issues surrounding the Boasian idea of culture were noted as involving assumptions of *otherness* and *meaning* upon which additional problematic assumptions, especially those of exclusivity, authenticity and continuity, most thoroughly depend. Although, much of the original criticism of this concept of culture stemmed from the contradictory nature of empirical evidence and the tendency of ethnographers to paint homogenous, singular and consensual portraits of societies, it was noted that most anthropologists these days recognise these problems as 'essentialist' and seek to avoid such totalising images of people and their communities. However, despite the fact that most anthropologists would recognise the debated and diverse nature of culture, and the need to portray 'culture' as a process rather than an entity, it was pointed out that some latent essentialist assumptions remain. These enable scholars to delineate 'the natives' from 'the tourists' and to continue to speak as if, in the words of Roy D'Andrade, 'culture is a big thing that does things.' It was argued that a lack of conceptual clarity, in terms of how scholars think this concept works and what work they expect it to do, is the most serious difficulty that gives rise to the suspicion that latent essentialist assumptions must be present to allow the covert deployment of delineation in old, noun based, ways. To be able to continue to isolate the 'somewhere' of culture as a self-evident matter is the source of the greatest cause for concern, in my view. Essentialist thinking was associated with the noun version of the word here, and was considered to be inherently problematic because of its close theoretical affinity with race theory as well as the tendency to be confused with other concepts, notably identity.

Many of the problems identified in Chapter 2 were directly discussed in association with Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis in Chapter 7. Although, some of the most serious and obvious theoretical problems that the Boasian concept entails were

detected in Huntington's work, I made it clear that I did not believe essentialism and reification as such, to be the most serious problems with his work. At the end of the day, I would agree with Lila Abu-Lughod who insists that since the 'clash of civilizations' thesis depends on the concept of culture, it is within this concept that the fundamental difficulties can be found to reside. The question confronting Huntington, but by no means Huntington alone in IR, is whether there is anything in the 'cultural' sense, out-there, to be essentialised and reified. Is the reality of life such that we can distinguish so thoroughly between 'the natives' and 'the tourists,' or is it that we need to approach the subject matter of communities and differences via other conceptual means? The fact that previous scholars have not thought about culture in the terms that Huntington so obviously 'takes for granted' raises questions about both the content of this concept and the nature of the context within which it was constructed and became a 'conventional standard.' As Part 1 attempted to show, the construction of the concepts of culture took place outside of the realms of IR, largely as a consequence of developments in Germany surrounding the notion of *kultur* and, subsequently, as a result of debates and developments within anthropology, especially those surrounding evolutionary thinking. IR scholars were found incorporating the idea of culture in their work as a 'conventional standard,' they were not detected constructing the idea for themselves. Some scholars took this idea as a 'conventional standard' from society at large, as is arguably the case with Alfred Zimmern, whereas others have imported the idea more specifically and on occasion, from American anthropology itself, as was evidenced in Hans Morgenthau's work for example. The context or 'factory conditions' under which the scholars have worked and the 'conventional standards' they drew upon, confirmed the different understandings they attached to the word 'culture' and provided disciplinary evidence of a conceptual transformation associated with that word.

8.2 - *The context of 'culture'*

Adopting a modest contextual methodology enabled me to evidence and confirm the distinctions that were drawn in the Introduction and Part 1 of the thesis, in certain IR texts. Alfred Zimmern was found advocating an Arnoldian idea of 'culture' as the means for "obliterating differences" that stand between communities at the international level; while Martin Wight was interested in the "common culture" that he believed underpinned

international society. Hans Morgenthau wrote of "our culture" and pointed to national characteristics as evidence of this, whereas Samuel Huntington relied on the Boasian concept as proof of "indigenization" in international politics. Understanding the context in which these authors wrote and the 'conventional standards' they drew upon to develop their ideas was one of the important means for demonstrating the range of different ideas of culture as they have appeared in IR. Comparing a specific example of the use of 'culture' in one author's text with another's was a useful way of reinforcing the argument that there has been a rich diversity of culture thinking in IR. Appreciating the context in which the term 'culture' appeared enabled me to read individual texts in accordance with the author's original intentions and to disclose elements of thinking that might otherwise be seen as unimportant. The contextual approach revealed some aspects of the disciplinary history that have been under appreciated over the years. These hidden 'histories' were thought to operate at the individual level, as the discovery of 'culture' in *Politics Among Nations* indicated for example, and at the disciplinary level. In this latter respect, Norman Angell's work was considered highly significant since it told us several things about the early context of the discipline. First, *The Great Illusion* demonstrated just how widely held and prevalent the ideas derived from evolutionary theory were, extending even to the realm of international politics. This issue, of evolutionary thinking, had some implication for the origins of the discipline, although it was a subject not much discussed within it subsequently. Second, Angell demonstrated how important the concept of civilisation was for his generation. Later IR scholars shared his concerns for the future development of civilisation, although the inter-war theorists expressed greater doubt over the presumed endurance of civilisation, their enthusiasm for the basic concept was no less than Angell's. It was a minor observation, but nonetheless a significant one in my view, that the preoccupation with the concept of civilisation and the debates over its future progress have more to tell us about the founding of the discipline than anything implicated by the term 'idealism.' However within the remit of this thesis, what Angell's work indicates, and Chapter 3 attempted to show, is that the debate over the future of 'civilisation' and what it meant to be 'civilised' contributed to a process that eventually made the idea of culture possible and viable in IR.

Angell's central concerns with evolutionary theory, or more accurately biological determinism, coupled with his understanding of civilisation, laid the fertile foundations out which the idea of culture could grow. The significance of the debates surrounding the civilisation concept and the need to rescue the idea from the hands of biological determinists cannot be over emphasised in my view. Angell may have been one critical voice among many, but his was an important contribution to the ongoing nature-nurture debate more generally. He was employed here to specifically illustrate the point that criticisms of evolutionary theory were not limited to the natural sciences or, indeed, some disciplines of the social science. The fact that these criticisms manifested themselves in international politics served to underscore the significance of biological thinking as a 'conventional standard' in the pre-First World War era, while recovering the idea of civilisation from the determinists, as Angell insisted, appears as an all the more important achievement when considered against this context. I suggested that it was important to acknowledge the significance of the idea of civilisation and the debates surrounding it, to ground the appearance of the idea of culture in the discipline and to remind ourselves of the unique set of circumstances that eventually led to an international role for culture in the 1920s. It would be a mistake, in my view, to think that because of the catastrophic experience of the First World War, people would naturally and inevitably embrace the suggestion that 'culture' could be exchanged to foster mutual understanding and create a more civilised world order, let alone propagate the idea through the institutions of the League of Nations or written work. The range of theoretical possibilities that existed around the time of the First World War, including the significance of evolutionary and race theory, makes it all the more important that we understand what happened during the early twentieth century and what it was that enabled scholars like Alfred Zimmern to advocate a very different view of culture from that being advanced elsewhere in the world. Angell's participation in the debate against biological determinism and his insistence that a 'new' civilised world order had been created but all that was lagging behind were the mindsets of most Westerners, made a political role for the idea of culture both sensible and possible.

Without an understanding of the reconfiguration of the idea of civilisation, the idea of deploying 'culture' in its Arnoldian sense as a tool for 'fostering mutual understanding' and therefore as part of the means that will create a more civilised world order, does not

252

make sense. The valued contribution of the work of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation and the importance that its supporters and many commentators in IR attributed to this kind of interchange, can be easily rejected as sentimental drivel in the absence of any such understanding. What a contextual approach indicates is that this notion of cultural interchange was taken seriously by a number of inter-war theorists, of whom Zimmern was taken as representative of here, and therefore, forms a not inconsiderable element in the history of the discipline overall. The contextual approach then enables us to see connections and understand arguments whose relevancy have been 'lost' to contemporary readers. Without an understanding of the significance of the Arnoldian idea of culture in its international capacity during the inter-war period, Morgenthau's dismissal of an international level of application for 'culture' in favour of a parochial, or national based, approach can pass by unnoticed. As was noted in Chapter 5, the word 'culture' features regularly and prominently in Morgenthau's theory of international politics. It was clear that, for Morgenthau, 'culture' was predominantly a national issue and a significant one playing a contingent role determining the nature of power and foreign policy. The part that 'culture' plays in Morgenthau's theory was thought to be indeterminate here, certainly the presence of the word 'culture' appears to complicate our understanding of the other elements of his theory overall; although, it was suggested that this is perhaps best approached as another normative dimension in his thinking.

Beyond the distinction between inter-war and post-Second World War thinking about culture, the contextual approach also draws attention to the differences between American and British scholarship more generally. Without an appreciation of the role the idea of culture plays in Morgenthau's work, it would be difficult to draw the contrast between American and British scholarship over the concept of culture. Certainly, in comparison with the inter-war theorists it was obvious that Morgenthau employed a very different understanding of the term 'culture' and one that was suggested marks the debut of the Boasian concept in IR. The appearance of the term 'culture' in its Boasian conceptual guise attributes greater significance to *Politics Among Nations* than, perhaps, has been recognised and certainly recognised on this subject. Moreover, it was only by considering Morgenthau's concept of culture that it became possible to suggest that Martin Wight's conception of an international 'culture' was distinct from the parochial and nationalised

version of culture articulated by Morgenthau. It only becomes possible to draw a distinction between Wight's understanding of the term 'culture' and Hedley Bull's configuration of the concept once the content of Wight's idea of culture, or in this case, the limited range of conceptual possibilities has been identified. It was argued that Wight's conception of culture was similar in content to the Arnoldian concept of culture found in inter-war scholarship rather than anything that looks like an 'ethnographic trademark' in American cultural anthropology. Terry Eagleton's distinctions were considered useful for drawing out the differences between Wight and Bull. If Wight understands the idea of culture that underpins international society as a matter of habit and as something akin to 'civility,' then Bull clearly interprets the idea of culture as a matter of 'solidarity.' Bull's Boasian and essentialist conception of culture led him to believe that the most salient manifestation of 'culture as solidarity' was at the national or parochial level rather than anything that he could detect existing, in a meaningful sense, at the international level. However, it was pointed out, that Bull's difficulties and complaints against the paucity of culture at the international society level stem entirely from his initial conceptualisation of culture. The same difficulties were found to pervade Samuel Huntington's work in Chapter 7. Although, theoretical sympathy was thin on the ground in this discussion, Huntington's work does tell us much about the current context that the idea of 'culture' operates under. It was especially noticeable that Huntington had no difficulty in accepting the assumption that 'culture' could be elevated to the status of an unquestionable reality in human existence despite the fact that criticisms of this (essentialist) idea of culture are easily accessible these days. The fact that Huntington offered very little empirical evidence to substantiate his thesis was seen as one of the obvious points of critical departure in any debate over the idea of culture. Furthermore, the theoretical difficulties inherent in the Boasian concept of culture, and especially essentialist versions of it, were found to be abundant in Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

Overall the contextual method reminds us of the need to take scholars work as seriously as they intended, although not uncritically so as Chapter 7 indicated. The method can reveal 'lost histories' and challenge the orthodox story of the discipline to some extent, and was thought here to indicate that a number of issues have plainly been overlooked in some scholars work. The role of evolutionary theory in Angell's thinking has not been

much commented on in the discipline. The presence of 'culture' in Morgenthau's theory seems to have been overlooked entirely. What culture means to international society theory, and how it may have differed in one scholars' understanding to another, is a question that has not been entered into. I am certain that 'culture' means something very different, and something with Arnoldian overtones, to Wight compared to what 'culture' means to Bull, who clearly operates with the Boasian conception. Furthermore, a contextual approach can assist us in understanding why authors thought the way they did, why they constructed arguments in a particular manner, and can help us to identify some of the issues that mattered most at their time of writing. No attempt was made here to enquire more deeply into any of the scholars' personal influences or motives behind their work. The modest contextual approach deployed here simply sketched the parameters of possibility to indicate that the circumstances the scholars found themselves working in exercised some influence on their thinking as far as the idea of culture was concerned. This is to say, that the scholars discussed here have been recognised as the 'victims of the conventional standards of their day' to a considerable extent. Furthermore, those 'conventional standards' were seen to have changed dramatically over the course of the 20th century and this transformation was witnessed in IR.

8.3 - *The significance of the transformation*

The survey of the development of the idea of culture sought to demonstrate several things, some specifically related to IR and others were more general. In a specific way, I wanted to challenge the 'myth' that IR has only recently demonstrated an interest in the idea of 'culture;' even interest in the anthropological concept can be traced all the way back to Morgenthau's work. Overall, our disciplinary heritage amply demonstrates the presence of the word 'culture' and a wide range of interest in the subject. Although, as was pointed out early on, this has not always been the same idea of culture that we are currently familiar with, which was why it was important to draw the distinction between the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts in Chapter 1. More importantly, I attempted to show that IR began its life with one concept of culture, the Arnoldian, and gradually moved towards embracing the Boasian concept, which was the purpose of Part 2 of the thesis overall. Without doubt, the Boasian concept has eclipsed the Arnoldian concept over the course of the 20th century.

This was a process that began in the United States before it reached British scholarship and it was suggested that Hans Morgenthau's work marks the beginnings of this conceptual transformation in IR in Chapter 5, while Hedley Bull's work, discussed in Chapter 6, confirmed the completion of that transformation. I suggested that *The Anarchical Society* marked the synthesis between American and British scholarship over the idea of culture. Lastly, and with specific reference to IR, I suggested that not only has the discipline moved from one concept of culture to the other, but that it has been the essentialist version of the Boasian concept that has predominantly manifested itself in the later scholars' work. It was necessary to discuss the flaws inherent in the Boasian concept in Chapter 2, which led to the identification of essentialism in anthropological critique, to demonstrate that Samuel Huntington is probably the 'best' example of an IR scholar working with an essentialist version of the Boasian concept of culture in Chapter 7. The Boasian idea of culture has exercised an extraordinary influence across many disciplines; in IR, the anthropological notion of culture has replaced the civilisation concept as the framework for situating and thinking about *others* and ourselves. The very presence of this change in IR was noted to represent a considerable epistemic and ontological shift.

Considering the overall development of the two concepts and their actual experience in IR literature, it was hoped that both Parts of the thesis would demonstrate two general points. First, the Boasian idea of culture may be a popular and taken-for-granted notion these days but it certainly does not have to be accepted as a 'fact of life.' The criticisms that the Boasian idea of culture has generated indicate that this is a problematic notion that harbours some serious theoretical flaws. Moreover, the history of the discipline indicates that this idea of culture was not a 'fact of life' for Norman Angell or Alfred Zimmern. It is debateable, also, as to whether it was the same 'fact of life' for Martin Wight as it clearly came to be for Hedley Bull. Second, the divergent development of the concepts coupled with the experience of the term in IR confirms my suggestion that a scholar has a choice over the way s/he conceives of culture in the first instance and decides to employ that idea in their work. It is neither necessary to restrict the idea of culture to a parochial level of application, nor is it obvious that 'culture' pertains to a specific community of people and their 'way of life.' Indeed, the experience of this term within the

literature more than demonstrates the rich variety of ways in which the same word can be understood and utilised in the study of international relations.

Norman Angell thought in terms of the civilisation concept, which was the conventional standard for his day, although, the assumptions surrounding this concept provided Angell with a major source of criticism in his work. Similarly, Alfred Zimmern operated within the parameters of the civilisation concept, although the substantive setting had changed considerably from Angell's time and led Zimmern to structure his thinking around the possibility that civilisation might collapse altogether. Since, the inter-war generation recognised that civilisation was a more fragile structure than had previously been accepted this led that generation to reflect upon, not only those things that might sustain civilisation but in addition, those things that might make it better in the future. This is how the idea of culture comes to be so important in Zimmern's view and why it was important to propagate culture at the international level. It would be easy to scoff at the idea of poetry sessions and the exchange of books as having some impact on international relations, but it is an old idea and one that still harbours some utility I believe. Set against the conditions of its time, however, this idea of culture makes excellent sense for those keen to 'foster mutual understanding' in a world under threat from the politics of nationalised differences.

By the time Hans Morgenthau publishes his work, the world has divided into two blocks that make the idea of global interchange a nonsense – the only interchange that matters under these circumstances is the possibility of a nuclear one between the Superpowers. During the Cold War, national and ideological differences are held to be profound; much more so than they were for Zimmern. Under these conditions, the culture that matters and is important in Morgenthau's view is national. Given the development of anthropology in the United States it is not surprising that this seems a credible way to view the differences that so obviously expressed themselves in the Cold War world. From the European perspective and in a country with a very different past experience of the idea of 'culture,' Martin Wight is not as convinced as Morgenthau that the only culture that matters is parochial. In Wight's view, there is sufficient commonality at the international level to make it worth thinking in terms of an international culture, although whether Wight would have continued to think in these terms is a matter of debate. The problem is the

'conventional standards' are changing in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s as far as the idea of culture is concerned. Clifford Geertz's ideas, and those of some of his colleagues, are beginning to make an impact on British thinking, while the whole project of 'culture' has been reinvigorated in the United States as Adam Kuper has pointed out. Hedley Bull lives in a world that has witnessed the decolonisation of states and the emergence of *other* forms of demand. Newly independent peoples have something else to celebrate – their 'culture.' Bull recognises their claims and begins to doubt the saliency of international culture altogether. Finally, by the time Samuel Huntington begins to put his thoughts together, 'culture' is accepted as the undisputed concept that captures 'the whole way of life' of particular people. Huntington's work provides us with a neat picture of some of the assumptions that surround the way we thought about the world in the late 20th century. Huntington may have projected these assumptions in a pessimistic way but nonetheless he recognised that the differences that mattered belong to a community and that these differences are profound in their distinction and ought to be respected, or at least acknowledged, for their fundamental distinctiveness.

Tracing this contextual history and its effect on certain authors and their texts, raises the possibility of reconsidering some of that work in many ways. The experience of the early authors indicates that other issues, notably the civilisation concept, evolutionary thought and race theory, ought to be considered more closely when examining their work. In addition, understanding the 'factory conditions' that Zimmern laboured under demands that one approach his work with a more serious frame of mind than the epithet of 'idealism' would imply. Discovering the idea of 'culture' in Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* displaces the assumption that this is largely a text about 'power and national interest,' clearly this is not simply the case. Some idea of culture has always been the centrepiece of international society theory, and the discussion conducted here has not done anything to disturb this 'fact.' However, if the differences I have identified between Wight and Bull hold, then there are some grounds for enquiring more deeply into the nature of this theory as its various adherents have interpreted, and subsequently applied, it. Finally, the complaints I levelled against Huntington's work, should, as I suggested, lead us to think more carefully about the nature of the culture concept overall. The implication was that the

criticisms laid at Huntington's door could also be applied to more than one scholar currently employing the idea of culture in IR.

We can glean some important lessons from the discipline and its ideas overall from this historical survey and the obvious epistemic transformation that has taken place over the meaning of the word 'culture.' An underlying theme of this research has been to demonstrate that the synthesis between identifiable communities, their differences and 'culture' is not as natural, real or indeed, in my view, as desirable as might be imagined. As was pointed out, for early scholars, or least up to the Second World War, the concepts of civilisation and race provided the main framework for considering communities and differences, while the idea of culture occupied a very different position. Recognising the existence of these alternative conceptual frameworks was in no way to advocate a return to them; they were simply employed to illustrate the fact that it is possible to think about people and their differences in ways that do not involve the idea of culture in its Boasian 'way of life' form. There has been plenty of evidence of 'culture' in the discipline, yet not all of this has been concerned with 'fetishising' the differences between communities. How we came to accept the Boasian concept of culture as a 'conventional,' if not a vague and intuitive, standard for thinking about *others* and ourselves is another question and one that has not been entertained here. However, whether the epistemic transformation over the meaning of the word 'culture' has been a good, or even a useful development, plainly remains an unasked question in IR. What is significant, I believe, certainly with respect to the current 'conventional standard' is that a greater number of theoretical possibilities are available within the discipline. These theoretical possibilities include both the existing Arnoldian and Boasian concepts as they have manifested themselves in IR; reconfiguring the humanist concept; the prospect of anti-essentialist interpretations of international relations, along the lines of Andrew Vayda's 'intelligible connections' or Brian Street's 'processes of meaning making,' for example; the growth of the Cultural Studies approach; new forms of international and local levels of analysis, such as one finds in Alexander Wendt or George Thomas and John Boli's work; while, finally, the possibility exists of rejecting the notion of culture altogether, which, given the level of confusion this word invites, appears, in my view, an increasingly attractive proposition.

Finally

The fundamental purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate the intellectual transformation that has occurred within the discipline concerning the term 'culture.' It has been suggested that the discipline began its life with one form of conceptualising 'culture' and at some point during the 1970s ended up with an entirely different conceptualisation. Two kinds of synthesis have occurred over the course of the discipline's history. First, scholars on both sides of the Atlantic came to speak the same language of culture and to share the same idea. Second, this idea itself entailed a quite specific synthesis and one that had not existed previously; namely, a synthesis between the notions of community, difference and culture. Until the first synthesis occurred, the second was open to doubt if not dispute. What this survey hoped to achieve was that a more considered and open deployment of the concept of culture is not only possible but, in view of the complaints levelled against the Boasian concept, increasingly desirable. It is not simply that the discipline's scholars are predominately taken with the Boasian concept of culture; it is that they are also predominately taken with the essentialist version of it. Whether they approve of this categorisation or not, the sad fact is there is not much evidence of anti-essentialist culture theory in IR, or even outright rejection of the concept. It is no longer acceptable, in my view, to say that 'culture' is a matter of shared ideas, values, norms, and ethos, or to link culture to identity in a manner that is believed to be self-evident. If anything has been gained from this survey, it is hoped that the current 'conventional standard' of the idea of culture has been demonstrated to be most thoroughly a conceptual and theoretical issue, and one in much need of debate.

Few people would doubt the significance of the idea of culture today as it relates to a particular community of people and everything that is unique and different about them. A certain idea of 'culture' has come to replace the idea of civilisation for situating the way we think about *others* and ourselves. However, what our disciplinary predecessors have to teach us is that it is not only possible to employ the same word 'culture' and understand it in terms very different from those that dominate our framework for thinking about *others* today, but that we can consider the similar issues of community and difference under alternative conceptual frameworks. Conceptual frameworks that, moreover, enabled our predecessors to play down the role of difference in international affairs and to stress what

was common to all. The ability to do without the concept of culture that belongs specifically to community and to be able to transcend differences in theory are, in my view, two of the most valuable lessons that our disciplinary history holds. There is no need, in my view, to respect the current concept of culture in the manner that one might respect the idea of gravity; indeed, this is an idea that lends itself to an debate as much any other in IR. What is wrong with the Boasian concept, in my view, is not our inability to define or to demonstrate its presence but the lack of conceptual clarification that seems to surround this concept. I am not convinced by those who suggest that 'culture' is a difficult subject, 'frustratingly vague' to define, too nebulous to capture, and yet, is 'something' we are all expected to instinctively accept. There comes a point when one ought to ask why this subject is so difficult to define because it may turn out that it is the concept itself that is at fault, not our inability to specify what it is. This is to say, that we need to think about what kind of 'reality' the Boasian concept of culture attempts to convey and to question whether or not it makes sense to divide 'the natives' from 'the tourists,' even intuitively.

Challenging the Boasian concept of culture does not challenge the nature or existence of community, difference, or intersociality; on the contrary, it merely presents important questions about the way we currently view such things. The arguments discussed in this thesis give rise to an underlying curiosity as to whether we are 'correct' to think about the nature of our 'world' in a 'cultural' way. It is my hope that surveying the historical development of the word 'culture' and its attending conceptualisations in IR will have revealed the need for closer scrutiny of the discipline's heritage as well as a more critical approach to the idea of culture itself. At the heart of both the Arnoldian and Boasian concepts of culture lies a range of issues central to IR and its subject matter. These issues concern the nature of community, how we perceive the differences between *others* and ourselves, and how we imagine interaction takes place among us. In this respect, the experience of the discipline demonstrates that the idea of culture has merely provided the language by way of which issues of this order have been articulated. Careful contextual analysis of culture in certain authors' texts reveals much about the way they have viewed the world, what they considered was significant in it and, on that basis, what they thought the future held. Sometimes the concept of culture played the part of a tool for overcoming differences at the international level and in this capacity was found being determined by

261

other conceptual schemes, notably the civilisation concept, as was the case with the early history of the discipline. The framework for thinking about *others* and ourselves was located elsewhere during the inter-war period, while culture's role was allocated and restricted by terms laid down under a scheme that envisaged a whole community of humanity. This theoretical outlook took the view that humanity's achievements were held in common and that interaction was, by itself, inevitably progressive. At other times, the concept of culture has been the prism through which scholars have viewed the world, but again the manner in which this has manifested itself tells us much about the underlying epistemic assumptions authors hold about the nature of world and human relations within it. Surveying the historical development of 'culture' from an IR perspective has revealed the extent of conceptual and normative choice a scholar has at his/her disposal. One can celebrate difference or understate its significance; an argument can be pitched at a parochial or international level depending entirely on what one thinks is important. One can stress the differences between communities or stress the points of commonality between them. One can see the destruction of difference as a 'bad' thing, or alternatively, even as a 'good' thing. In one way or another, these things have all been pointed out before, but in this survey they have all been centred on the meaning and use of one word – culture. The capacity for thinking in cultural terms is more diverse than, perhaps, we are accustomed to recognising and presents a number of interesting 'cultural' alternatives to the discipline, which offers welcome relief to cultural reformers and rejectionists alike. If all the known 'somewheres' of 'culture' disintegrate under the gaze of anti-essentialism or can be 'obliterated' by humanist 'gift-sharing' then these are the conceptual forms of the word 'culture' that are, ultimately, worth celebrating in my view.

Bibliography

Angell, Norman. *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power in Nations to their Economic and Social Advantage.* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc. 1972) First published in 1911

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*, Samuel Lipman ed., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1994) First published 1869

Asad, Talal. 'Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology,' *Man*, Vol.14, 1979

Bailey, Thomas A. *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace*, (Chicago: Encounter Paperbacks. 1963) First published 1944

Barnard, F.M. (ed.). *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1969)

Bayliss, John and Steve Smith (eds.). *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1998) First published 1997

Beattie, John. *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology*, (London: Routledge. 1993) First published 1964

Benedict, Ruth. *Patterns of Culture*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1952) First published 1935

Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflen Company. 1946)

Boli, John and George M. Thomas (eds.). *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations Since 1875*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 1999)

Booth, Ken. 'Security in anarchy: utopian realism in theory and practice,' *International Affairs*, Vol.67, No.3, 1991

Borofsky, Robert (ed.). *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 1994)

Braudel, Fernand. *A History of Civilizations*, (New York: Penguin Books. 1995) First published 1963

Brightman, Robert. 'Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification,' *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.10, No.4, 1995

Brown, Chris. *Understanding International Relations*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1997)

Brown, Chris. 'History Ends, Worlds Collide,' *Review of International Studies – Special Issue*, Vol.25. 1999

Brown, Chris. 'Cultural diversity and international political theory: from the *Requirement* to 'Mutual Respect'? *Review of International Studies*, Vol.26. 2000

Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Second Edition, (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1995) First published 1977

Bull, Hedley. 'Justice in International Relations,' *The Hagey Lectures*, (Ontario: University of Waterloo. 1983)

Butterfield, Herbert and Martin Wight (eds.). *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1966)

Buzan, Barry. 'From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English school,' *International Organization*, Vol.47, No.3, Summer 1993

Carr, E.H. *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, (London: Papermac. 1995) First published 1939

Carr, E.H. *Nationalism and After*, (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd. 1945)

Carrithers, Michael. *Why Humans Have Cultures: Explaining Anthropology and Diversity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992)

Cecil, Viscount. (et al.). *Challenge to Death*, (London: Constable & Co. Ltd. 1934)

Chan, Stephen. 'Too Neat and Under-Thought A World Order: Huntington and Civilisations,' *Millennium*, Vol.26, 1997

Chay, Jongsuk (ed.). *Culture and International Relations*, (New York: Praeger. 1990)

Clark Jr., Robert T. *Herder: His Life and Thought*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1955)

Clark, Romy J. 'Developing Practices of Resistance: Critical reading for students of politics' in *Language and Culture*, David Graddol, Linda Thompson and Mike Byram eds. (Clevedon, Avon: British Association of Applied Linguistics in association with Multilingual Matters Ltd. 1993)

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 1994) First published 1988

Clifford, James & George E. Marcus eds. *Writing Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1986)

Cohen, Raymond. *Negotiating across cultures: International communication in an interdependent world*, (Revised edition), (Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press. 1997) First published 1991

Coombs, Philip H. *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs*, (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row. 1964)

Current Anthropology – Special Issue, Vol.40, Supplement, February 1999

Daniel, Norman. *The Cultural Barrier: Problems in the Exchange of Ideas*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1975)

Dunne, Tim. *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School*, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford. 1998)

Eagleton, Terry. *The Idea of Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2000)

Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners, Volume 1*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1978) First published in Switzerland 1939

Eliot, T.S. *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited. 1949) First published 1948

Forsyth, Murray. 'The Classical Theory of International Relations,' *Political Studies*, Vol.XXVI, No.3, 1978

Fox, Richard (ed.). *Recapturing Anthropology*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press. 1991)

Frankel, Charles. *The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs*, (Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institute. 1966)

Freeman, Derek. *Margaret Mead and the Heretic: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*, (Ringwood, Australia: Penguin Books. 1996) First published 1983

Gamble, Ray. 'International Management of Whales and Whaling: An Historical Review of the Regulation of Commercial and Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling,' *Artic*, Vol.46, No.2, June 1993

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (London: Fontana Press. 1993) First published 1973

Gellman, Peter. 'Hans J. Morgenthau and the legacy of political realism,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14, 1988

Gillies, A. *Herder*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1945)

Gong, Gerrit. W. *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1984)

Gray, Colin.S. 'Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, 1999

Groom, A.J.R. & Margot Light. *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory*, (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd. 1994)

Halliday, Fred. 'International Society as Homogeneity: Burke, Marx, Fukuyama,' *Millennium*, Vol.21, No.3, 1992

Hannaford, Ivan. *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, (Washington D.C: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1996)

Hatch, Elvin. *Theories of Man and Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press. 1973)

Hill, Christopher. '1939: the origins of liberal realism,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15, No.4, 1989

Holsti, K.J. *International Politics: A framework for analysis*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1972) First published 1967

Howard-Ellis, C. *The origin, structure and working of the League of Nations*, (London: George Allen and Unwin. 1928)

http://conbio.rice.edu/nae/docs/makahplan.html

http://elfnet1a.elfi.com/csicaptivity.html#MakahHunt

http://www.makah.com/whales.htm

http://www.safepassing.org/

Huntington, Samuel P. (et al.). 'Samuel P. Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilisations? The Debate,' (New York: Foreign Affairs. 1996) First published 1993

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (London: Touchstone Books. 1998) First published 1996

Huntington, Samuel P. 'The Clash of Civilizations' – A Response,' *Millennium*, Vol.26, 1997

The Independent, 8th October 1997. 'Anger as Tebbit questions loyalties of 'two-nation' immigrants.'

Iriye, Akira. *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press. 1997)

Jahn, Beate. 'IR and the state of nature: the cultural origins of a ruling ideology,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.3, 1999

Jones, Roy. E. 'The English school of international relations: a case for closure,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.7, No.1, 1981

Kahn, Joel. 'Culture: Demise or Resurrection?' *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol.9, No.2, 1989

Keesing, Roger M. 'Theories of Culture,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.3, 1974

Kroeber, A.L. and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, (New York: Vintage Books. 1952)

Kuper, Adam. *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion*, (London: Routledge. 1988)

Kuper, Adam. 'Culture, Identity and the Project of a Cosmopolitan Anthropology', Man, Vol.29, September 1994

Kuper, Adam. *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School*, (London: Routledge. 1996)
Kuper, Adam. *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1999)

Lapid, Yosef and Friedrich Kratochwil eds. *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers Inc. 1997)

Lawson, Stephanie. 'Dogmas of Difference: Culture and Nationalism in Theories of International Politics, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol.1, No.4, 1998

Leavis, F.R. *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, (Cambridge: The Minority Press. 1930)

Little, Richard and Michael Smith (eds.). *Perspectives on World Politics* – Second Edition, (London and New York: Routledge. 1994) First published 1991.

Lizhi, Fang. 'Long march to democracy,' *The Independent*, 18.1.89

Long, David and Peter Wilson (eds.). *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1995)

McMurry, Ruth Emily and Muna Lee. *The Cultural Approach: Another Way in International Relations*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1947)

Mair, Lucy. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* - Second Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1983) First published 1965

Marcus, George E. & Michael M.J. Fischer. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1986)

Markwell, D.J. 'Sir Alfred Zimmern revisited: fifty years on,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.12, No.4, 1986

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, (London: Routledge. 1997) First published in France 1950

Mead, Margaret. *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*, (New York: William Morrow & Company. 1943) First published 1942

Michaels, Walter Benn. 'Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Cultural Identity,' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.18, Summer 1992

Michaels, Walter Benn. *Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press. 1995)

Midgley, E.B.F. 'Natural law and the 'Anglo-Saxons' - some reflections in response to Hedley Bull,' *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol.5, No.3, October 1979

Millennium Special Issue on Culture, Winter 1993, Vol.22, No.3

Mitchell, J.M. *International Cultural Relations*, (London: Allen and Unwin. 1986)

Morgenthau, Hans J. *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1962) First published 1946

Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd Edition, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1962) First published 1948

Murdock, G.P. 'British Social Anthropology,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol.53, No.4, Part 1, October-December 1951

Murray, A.J.H. 'The Moral Politics of Hans Morgenthau,' *The Review of Politics*, Vol.58, No.1, Winter 1996

Murray, Gilbert. *From the League to the U.N.*, (London: Oxford University Press. 1948)

Navari, Cornelia. 'The great illusion revisited: the international theory of Norman Angell,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15, No.4, 1989

Ninkovich, Frank A. *The diplomacy of ideas: U.S. foreign policy and cultural relations, 1938-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981)

Noel-Baker, Philip. *The Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes*, (London: P.S. King & Son Ltd. 1925)

Olson, William C. & A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations Then & Now: Origins and Trends in Interpretation*, (London: Harper Collins Academic. 1991)

Ortner, Sherry B. 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.26, 1984

Oxford English Dictionary, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994)

Pilcher, Hans-Karl. 'The godfathers of 'truth': Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau's theory of power politics,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.24, No.2, 1998

Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, (London: Routledge. 1993) First published 1989

Rosaldo, Renato. 'Whose Cultural Studies?' *American Anthropologist*, Vol.96, No.3, September 1994

Schmidt, Brian C. *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations*, (Albany: State University of New York Press. 1998)

Shaw, Martin. 'Global Society and Global Responsibility: The Theoretical, Historical and Political Limits of 'International Society,' *Millennium*, Vol.21, No.3, 1992

Sils, David. L. (ed.). *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, (London: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press. 1968)
Smith, Philip (ed.). *The New American Cultural Sociology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998)

Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1939) Volume One first published 1926, Volume Two first published 1928

Stocking Jr., George W. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1982) First published 1968

Stocking Jr., George W. (ed.). *The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader*, (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1974)

Stocking Jr., George W. (ed.). *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press. 1995)

Stocking Jr., George W. (ed.) *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic. Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press. 1996)

Stolcke, Verena. 'Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe,' *Current Anthropology*, Vol.36, No.1, 1995

Stonor Saunders, Francis. *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, (London: Granta Books. 1999)

Storey, John (ed.). *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*, (London: Arnold. 1996)

Street, Brian V. 'Culture is a Verb: Anthropological aspects of language and cultural process,' in *Language and Culture*, David Graddol, Linda Thompson and Mike Byram, eds. (Clevedon, Avon: British Association of Applied Linguistics in association with Multilingual Matters Ltd. 1993)

Thomas, Nicholas. 'Cold Fusion,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol.98, No.1, March 1996

Thompson, Kenneth and Robert J. Myers (eds.). *Truth and Tragedy: A Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau*, (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books. 1984)

Toynbee, Arnold J. *A Study of History - Volume 8*, (London: Oxford University Press. 1954)

Toynbee, Arnold J. *A Study of History - Volume 9*, (London: Oxford University Press. 1954)

Toynbee, Arnold J. *A Study of History - Volume 12, Reconsiderations*, (London: Oxford University Press. 1961)
Toynbee, Arnold J. *Civilization on Trial*, (London. Oxford University Press. 1949) First published 1947

Tully, James (ed.). *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, (Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell. 1988)
Tully, James. *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an age of diversity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995)

Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom. Volume One*, (London: John Murray. 1903) First published 1871

Tylor, Edward B. *Anthropology: An introduction to the study of man and civilization*, (London: MacMillan and Co. 1881)

University of Wales, Aberystwyth, *Council Minute*, 13th December 1918.

University of Wales, Aberystwyth, *Report on the Wilson Chair of International Politics - submitted by the Special Committee Appointed by Council on 9th December, 1949*, (Aberystwyth: The Cambrian News. 1950)

Vayda, Andrew.P. 'Actions, Variations, and Change: The Emerging Anti-Essentialist View in Anthropology,' in Borofsky, Robert (ed.). *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 1994)

Vincent, R.J. 'The Factor of Culture in the Global International Order,' *Yearbook of World Affairs*, Vol.34, 1980

Vincent, R.J. 'Race in International Relations,' *International Affairs*, Vol.58, No.4, Autumn 1982

Vincent, R.J. *Human Rights and International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with The Royal Institute of International Affairs. 1995) First published 1986

Vincent, R.J. 'Western conceptions of a universal moral order,' *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol.4, No.1, April 1978

Visweswaran, Kamala. 'Race and the Culture of Anthropology,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol.100, No.1, March 1998

Waever, Ole. 'International Society - Theoretical Promises Unfulfilled?' *Co-operation and Conflict*, Vol.27, No.1, 1992

R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/outside: international relations as political theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1993)

Webster, C.K. and Sidney Herbert, *The League of Nations in Theory and Practice*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1933)

Weldes, Jutta. 'Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action and Popular Culture,' *Millennium*, Vol.28, No.1, 1999

Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999)

Wheeler, Nicholas J. 'Pluralist or Solidarist Conceptions of International Society: Bull and Vincent on Humanitarian Intervention,' *Millennium*, Vol.21, No.3, 1992

Wheeler, Nicholas J. and Timothy Dunne, 'Hedley Bull's pluralism of the intellect and solidarism of the will,' *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No.1, January 1996

Wight, Gabriele. and Brian Porter eds. *International Theory: The Three Traditions - Martin Wight*, (London: Leicester University Press. 1994) First published 1991

Wight, Martin. (Hedley Bull ed.) *System of States*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press in association with The London School of Economic and Political Science. 1977)

Wight, Martin. (Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad eds.) *Power Politics*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press. 1978) First published 1946

Williams, Elgin. 'Anthropology for the Common Man,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol.49, 1947

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*, (London: The Hogarth Press. 1993) First published 1958

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, (London: Fontana Press. 1988) First published 1976

Williams, Raymond. *Culture*, (London: Fontana Press. 1989) First published 1981

Wolf, Eric R. *Europe and The People Without History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997) First published 1982

Wolf, Eric R. 'Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People,' *Current Anthropology*, Vol.35, No.1, 1994

Woolf, L.S. *International Government*, (London: The Fabian Society and George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1916)

Wright, Susan. 'The politicization of 'culture',' *Anthropology Today*, Vol.14, No.1, February 1998

Zimmern, Alfred E. *Europe in Convalescence*, (London: Mills & Boon Ltd. 1922)

Zimmern, Alfred E. *The Prospects of Democracy and Other Essays*, (London: Chatto & Windus. 1929)

Zimmern, Alfred E. *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law 1918 - 1935*, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1936)

Zimmern, Alfred E. (ed.). *Modern Political Doctrines*, (London: Oxford University Press. 1939)