1 GEBSER AND CULTURE

Eric Mark Kramer

He who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What vary’d being peoples every star,
May tell why Heaven has made us as we are.
But of this frame, the bearing and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look’d thro? Or can a part contain the whole?

Alexander Pope

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The attempt to write about culture is always a risky endeavor. This effort, like all others, is necessarily perspectival. This means that what is written here about culture is from a particular cultural point of view, in a particular language and analytic style that are specifically Western and post-Renaissance (modern). In other words, it is highly unlikely to find any examples of non-Western European or non-Westernized analyses of this phenomenon called “culture.” For instance, the attempted transliterations of the term into Chinese and Japanese are very recent concoctions (only in the past 150 years).1

The reflexive nature of thinking analytically about “culture”—that is inventing or “thematizing” or “problematizing” culture—is a distinctly Western European vocation particularly characteristic of classical times.
and again after the rebirth of the classic philosophical attitude around the
year 1400. It is simply the case that in many “cultures,” neither “culture”
as an analytic theme nor the critical attitude necessary for its inception as
an issue for reflection exists. “Social science” is inherently Western
European.

Just as Jean Gebser (1905–1973) was exceedingly careful to acknowl-
edge the dangers of writing about non-Western and premodern European
phenomena, so we too must recognize the specific situatedness of this
process and be wide awake to our own limited horizons. This is not so
much a surrender to nihilistic relativity, but an acknowledgment of the
hermeneutic imperative, the apparent paradox of the
human.

The ironic thing in writing about “culture” is that this task presupposes
a cultural context that initiates and values such reflection. Thus we
acknowledge the peculiar hermeneutic problem of Wirkungsgeschichtliches
Bewusstsein, an almost untranslatable phrase that means historically,
culturally, and linguistically situated writing on history and culture.2 This
problem, of which Gebser (Ger. 1949/Eng. 1985) like all good hermeneu-
tic culturalists, was aware, embodies the brutally honest admission that
humans are not gods. Put bluntly, the ambition of realizing a transcenden-
tial science of culture is in fact the compulsion of a particular culture. A good
example is Leslie A. White’s call for the new science of “culturology.”3

In the spirit of Auguste Comte, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Claude
Lévi-Strauss before him, White has written, “Culturology is the scientific
study and interpretation of cultural phenomena per se” (1964: 174–175).

An interesting thing about modern writing about culture is that it insists
on its being able to do so meaningfully, while at the same time and with
equal conviction arguing for cultural relativity. Here is the ancient paradox
of claiming to have absolute knowledge that one cannot have absolute
knowledge. This is the quagmire all cultural relativists must confront or
be charged with a sort of dumb hypocrisy.

To be able to write about culture presumes the sometimes enabling, yet
for many writers, blind prejudice of living the analytic attitude, which is
nothing more than a cultural prejudice. In short, writing about “culture”
happens only in a certain culture that nurtures a particularly critical
attitude. Therefore, no naive claims to transcendental truth are to be found
in this paper, except a nod to the paradoxical law of hermeneutics, that all
explanations are essentially perspectival, including this acknowledgment
itself.

The discussion of “culture” that follows is thus unavoidably culturally
biased. Indeed, it is argued that the very possibility of raising the issue of

“culture” at all is, to a large extent, culturally (including historically)
determined. So does this mean that one should stop reading because there
is no “truth” to be found here? Allow this author to humbly suggest that
what one might find of value herein is not the definitive answer to some
“problem,” but rather some ideas that may enrich an understanding of
“culture” and the culture that invented the term.

The following analysis functions on several levels. One level is a
straightforward historical exegesis of the origin of the idea of “culture.”
Another is an analytic discussion of the nature of the requisite attitude (or
“consciousness structure” in Gebser’s terms) necessary for the genesis of
such an idea; why it (the term) emerged when and where it did. On another
level, it follows that if we understand the analytic attitude that compelled
Western Europeans to think this grand thought, “culture,” then this under-
standing might well indicate something fundamental about the meaning
of the term itself, its value, uses, and motivation. Yet another level is an
essay about the culture that incubates the compulsion to problematize
“things” like “society,” “history,” and “culture.”

A BRIEF HERMENEUTIC

Before evaluating Gebser’s contribution to the sense of the term “cul-
ture,” it is important that we investigate the domain this term has defined
and continues to articulate. Raymond Williams, perhaps the foremost
English scholar regarding the origin and usage of the term “culture,” has
argued that it is “... one of the two or three most complicated words in the
English language” (1958: 5). He has distinguished it from “civilization,”
explaining that “civilization,” unlike “culture,” is a derivative of an
actual social condition, that of being a “citizen” (Latin, civis). The word
“culture,” by contrast, is a metaphorical term derived from the preparation
of land for cultivation (Latin, cultura, from colere to till). The term “cult”
emerged as an emphasis on the magic dimension that the word “culture”
complements. The term “worship” is also encountered as a connotative
field or adjunct sense. The issues of the separation from and confronta-
tion with nature, including the attempt to subjugate or domesticate natural
forces, which is essential to the process of culture, are explicated below.
But first other renderings of the sense of the word are presented.

According to Williams the word “civilization” has been simpler to
define than “culture” because “civilization,” from its origin, has always
been posited as a straight contrast to “barbarism,” another social condition
ascribed to the life of “foreign” peoples (1967: 273). Socrates chose to
drink the hemlock, in preference to being banished to the non-Greek-
speaking world, because he could not accept living literally without, or outside of, the walls of Athens (civilization) among the barbarians. The word "culture" lacks such a simple binary opposite, which has led to much confusion, especially with regard to "nature." Both terms are often used as scales for ethical judgment, as for instance when "scientific" culture stakes the claim of being more "advanced" than nonscientific savagery or when others claim that something is "unnatural," like interracial marriage or certain sexual preferences.

In his many studies concerning culture, Walter Ong has demonstrated that the expansion of empire as a form of communication is the proto-process of enculturation. A similar argument has been made by Harold Innis (1972) in his Empire and Communication. The ancient Romans' concern with behaviors, beliefs, and legalities and their obsession with things Greek indicate a prototypical understanding of history and culture that emerges with the awareness of difference discovered through contact with other peoples. In a less generous way, proselytizing, as the dissemination of religious dogma, has invented the word "propaganda" to denote a process of communication and enculturation. This profound sense of difference is the cradle of the Occidental sense of culture, both in its elitist form and as a way of signifying an entire way of life or "spirit" of a people.

Concerning the significative horizon of the term "culture," many difficult concepts that often appear as synonyms become entangled. A few examples include "mind," "spirit," "civilization," "society," and "language." More recent rationalized articulations include "system," "structure," "code," "ideology," "grammar," "logic," "epistemology," "archiecrature," "formulation," and so on. Not only are such conceptual thickets evident in the German term "Geist," which completely in-forms the invention and vision of a science of human affairs, the Geisteswissenschaften in that linguistic community, but a fusion of conceptual domains also occurs with the usage of the French word "esprit."

For example, in her book The Greek Way, Edith Hamilton (1930) compared the "spirit," the "esprit de corps," or the unique way of life of the ancient Greeks with that of the ancient Egyptians, noting that while the Egyptians were preoccupied with death, making their landscape a world of tombs and pyramids, the Greeks were a world apart, embracing individual perfection of the mind and body, here and now. The not insignificant consequence was that the latter attitude spawned democratic modes of discourse (forensic, epideictic, and deliberative), including philosophy, science, institutions, and sport, while the former instituted imperial priests and divine rulers. One spirit or orientation embraced a vitality that has lived on, animating institutions, dramatic arts, architecture, poetry, philosophy, science, and language itself, while the other has left only remnants as material artifacts.

From early in its existence, the semantic field defined by the distinctly modern word "culture" has meant the cultivation of the mind. The cultivation metaphor exerts semantic force across a great many discourses, as demonstrated by the description of certain individuals as being "cultivated" or "cultured," meaning literate—"civilized." Hence, the relationship between ideas of "mind" and "culture" is one wherein each is intertwined with the other from the very origin of the term. This realization explains why so many scholars, including Wilhelm von Humboldt, Ernst Cassirer, Lévi-Strauss, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Bronislaw Malinowski, Clifford Geertz, and others, have seen fit to discuss this relationship. Inherent in this dualism is the conflict between nature (modern psychophysiology) and nurture (sociology and anthropology), which is succinctly expressed by the phrase "the soil is good but the culture is not." Gebser too, as will be seen, developed a theory of the integral reciprocity of the two concepts.

The early sense of the term "culture," which is still evoked by it, connoted a process of becoming rather than a condition of being cultured. The fundamental shift from process to condition, which reflects a change in attitude, occurred between the late eighteenth and the late nineteenth centuries. Williams noted that as early as John Milton (1608–1674), the term "culture" could be read either way (1967: 273). The same ambivalence is evident in many of Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) writings. By the late eighteenth century, however, in both English and German, the term was used in four basic senses that still inform its signification. First, "culture" came to mean a state or, following David Hume (1711–1776), a habit of mind; this sense was related to the broader Western teleology of human perfection. Second, "culture" came to denote a more general state of intellectual and moral achievement by a social group as a whole. Third, it took on the sense of meaning the sum, or "body," of a group's intellectual and artistic work. Finally, the word "culture" came to mean the whole way of life of a given society. Meanwhile, the term "civilization" came to be synonymous with being "human," in ethical terms.

According to Williams (1967), this complex of significations was the consequence of rapid change and a reaction to the industrialization then occurring. This change was paralleled in the Orient by the shift in the sense of 文化 from a moral to a technical emphasis on material convenience (after the "openings" of China and Japan). "Culture" was thus a reaction against the then dominant mechanical metaphors of progress. In this respect, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), distinguished between the calculation of progress based on external things and the cultivation of
humanity. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), and R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) also championed this distinction. The metaphor of “culture,” derived as it is from biology, was pitted against the mechanistic, fragmentary sense of the world already emergent from Newtonian physics. The contrast between “natural” and “mechanical” domains was often expressed at this time by those in the romantic movement.

The German term “Kultur,” though not exactly equivalent to the English “culture,” has been a multifaceted concept since the eighteenth century. This is especially the case since it overlaps the concept of “Zivilisation.” In German, “Kultur” can be traced back at least to Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and it signifies a whole way of life, including rituals, practices, institutions, and artifacts. Indeed, this sense of the term appeared in German ethnology at least a generation before it did in Britain. There the usage first appeared in Edward Burnett Tylor’s famous text *Primitive Culture*, wherein he wrote, “Culture or Civilization . . . that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1871:7).

Those who disagree with Tylor’s legacy of confusing the two terms have argued that each society has both a culture and a civilization. But with the advent of social Darwinism, the idea of social evolution (known as “development” today) came to define “civilization,” which originally meant life as it is lived in cities, as merely a stage in the development of culture. An example of this is the still popular idea of an economic “take-off stage” conceived by Walt Whitman Rostow (1952). Most contemporary theories about the economic progress of “less developed” nations, assume that “less developed” means materially poor, not highly technologized, by the criteria of modern industrialization, urbanization. Once again, the classical idea of civilization as urban—an idea which motivated Socrates’ suicide—has taken precedent.

This Western bias in favor of abstract and rationalized urban life (what Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887, called *gesellschaft*) has spread throughout the world, causing great difficulties for cities like Los Angeles, São Paulo, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo-Yokahama, Cairo, and Bombay, to name only a few instances of rural populations crowding into already overpopulated urban centers in a desperate search for modernity—convenience. To be cultured is to be modern, Western, urban; not a person who cultivates land. The dichotomy between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* is a Western conceptualization that manifests and at the same time accurately reflects the modern attitude. “Society,” as *gesellschaft* culture, is pitted against “community,” as *gemeinschaft* culture. The dualism could not be analytically drawn until the difference emerged in the Renaissance.

The colonial period exposed Europeans to distant and distinctively different civilizations, with the consequence that such societies as China and India were seen as either inferior or as fundamentally different “shapings of the human mind that could not easily be assimilated into a simple, unilinear idea of civilization” (Williams, 1967:273). Thus, the category “civilization” gave way to a multiplicity of cultures. Concurrently, connections between class structures and comparative styles and assumptions about intellectual and material productivity came to be expressed with the spatial/hierarchical word “sub-culture.” The emergence of the term “culture” indicates an attempt to redefine the nature of society and civilization.

In terms of Tylor’s imported and influential conceptualization, it is noteworthy that his usage makes “culture” synonymous with “civilization.” And yet, Tylor’s usage has remained a standard in English cultural studies. For Tylor, as for Emile Durkheim, Lewis H. Morgan, and Herbert Spencer, entire societies developed through a sequence of stages. This Western prejudice for developmentalism was powerfully articulated with the appearance of Oswald Spengler’s *Untergang des Abendlandes* in 1923 (translated as *The Decline of the West*), in which the word “destiny” was used repeatedly to express a mystical inner phenomenon—the fate of the spiritual and artistic potentialities of the soul. This prejudiced view that saw sequential “growth” and “development” fragmented into stages in all histories, was rejected by Gebser.

The fact that “nature” should be considered an essential component of the original sense of “culture” is instructive, for as Gebser demonstrated with many other Urwortes (primal words) and Ursymbols (primal symbols), the combination of polar opposites within a single expression is not uncommon. I argue that the separation of “culture” from “nature” emerged earlier in history and that this separation is the foundation for material (technological) progress. The emergence of the Western dichotomization of culture from nature is traced below. This cosmic bifurcation enabled the modern mechanization of the phenomenon of culture itself. At the same time the term “culture” was broken down into measurable components according to variable analytics; the machining of language and the world via operationalization. As Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) demonstrated, measurement became the preeminent value after Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) instituted the modern mathematizing ontology. Under the sway of the modern mathematical metaphysic, being true came to mean being
expressable in numbers and numbers have taken on a rhetorical force that is very persuasive and mystifying.

In contrast to the mathematical worldview, Williams has contended that an important romantic contribution to the contemporary sense of "culture" was the high valuation of folk life and national tradition which is now manifest across such diverse discourses as ethnmethodology in the social sciences and nationalistic literature in politics. "Culture" has thus come to designate "national culture": the particular customs and arts of different peoples, as compared with a more general notion of "civilization."

This perspective was pioneered in the United States with the publication of William Graham Sumner's *Folkways* (1920), which stimulated interest in the "diffusion," "innovation," and "adoption" of cultural practices. A few of the scholars influenced by this book include H. F. Lionberger, Everett Rogers, Elihu Katz, Paul Lazarsfeld, William Ogburn, Piirim Sorokin, Hornell Hart, and F. Stuart Chapin.10

The absolutism presupposed by such idealists as Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and G. W. Hegel (1770–1831), and such materialists as Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) and Karl Marx (1818–1883) has been thwarted by the complication of extraordinary cultural variations. The idea of civilization and/or culture being seen as a universal and unilinear process has been rejected by many social thinkers as a Eurocentric propensity to scientize cultural studies; or in other words, to seek invariant laws of culture, analogous to Newtonian mechanics, while staunchly refusing to appreciate differences that resist generalization.

Noting the cultural variation between peoples of similar economic stages, many scholars of culture have rejected the primacy of material life. For instance, Alfred Weber (1931) and R. M. MacIver (1931) have argued that "culture" should be used to denote the domain of meanings and values, while "civilization" should be used for material organization. They thus posited a more sophisticated taxonomy than Marvin Harris has offered in his work *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (1979). For Weber, civilization is the product of material technology. It is universal and cumulative. Weber argued that the concept of "civilization" encompasses a semantic field that is more concerned with how humans relate to nature than with how humans relate to society. "Culture," for Weber, represents interpretation in the form of the expressed meanings and values of a group, such as literature, philosophy, religion, and art. The cultural domain deals with the purposes of life and society. MacIver promoted a very similar distinction. According to MacIver, "culture" deals with ends, while "civilization" denotes means. In this scheme, the technological order of civilization is determined by the transcending concerns of the cultural sphere. More recently, Husserl and Martin Heidegger, as well as Geertz, Lewis Mumford, Ong, Marshall McLuhan, Ogburn, and Gebser, have argued that technology both reflects and expresses values.

This is not plain old Cartesian subjectivism posited as theories of private meaning, which the early Husserl and late Ludwig Wittgenstein had already exorcised. Such an ontological posture would simply revisit the "cognitivist fallacy, that culture consists of mental phenomena which can be analyzed by formal methods similar to those of mathematics and logic" (Stephen Tyler, quoted by Geertz, 1978: 12). "Culture" and "cultural interpretation" (essentially the same hermeneutic process) do(es) not participate in some metaphysical requirement of spatial extension so that they (it) are (is) localizable "in" our heads or "in" artifacts. Indeed, the rancorous debates about internal versus external, bottom-up versus top-down locales of reality already presuppose a culture that posits spatial discontinuity and atomization of the world articulated by the current obsession with measurement. This obsession is directly traceable to the Galilean mathematical metaphysic that dominates the essentially operational sense of knowledge/reality. Witness the tired dialectic articulated yet one more time by Rudolf Carnap's (1891–1970) proclamation that "if it exists I can measure it," to which Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) responded, "it exists because I measure it."11

The Cartesian dilemma ultimately draws the line between discovery and creativity. The cosmic bifurcation is, after all, a metaphysical tactic taken to streamline the modern hermeneutics of scientific interpretation. Even the phenomenalist idea of "nature" "out there," which has served survival needs, is artificial and not apparent to all groups. "Nature" is the binary consequence of artifact. Gebser's call for integral consciousness is an attempt to mend the man versus nature opposition before it is too late.

The split between "culture" and "nature" (including the supernatural) occurred during the Renaissance in Western Europe and coincided with the shift in consciousness toward abstract reasoning and the valuation of efficiency as a manifestation of technological power over the forces of "nature." The obsession with this kind of power, however, had existed in the desire to predict the future and its frustration with the uncontrollable wilderness of time and space. Reason brings order to the chaos. Order expresses the will to predict and control. The shifts from unperspectival magic to preperspectival mythic and perspectival mental-rational attitudes indicate a nonlinear, discontinuous process of change from an alchemical world to a world available for rational management—prediction. Modern man (not the politically neutral "human") is characterized by the success his material technology has demonstrated in the effort to domesticate the
“wild,” to make it predictable. The categorical “frontier” (whether of Western ideas of science or civilized space) marks the difference between culture (knowledge, order, and light) and nature (ignorance, chaos, and darkness). Successful subjagation defines the modern hero, be s/he a scientist, literary critic, explorer, or pioneer. Texts of all ilk are brought under control, explained—rationalized. As Francis Bacon (1561–1626) proclaimed, nature’s secrets are revealed under “torture.” Thus, the modern person can say that s/he has a “command” of anything, including language, self, or a literature. Everything comes to be perceived as a potential problem to be rationally categorized (focused), “attacked,” and resolved (the emphasis on perspectivity is obvious).

One of the most recent things that humanity has discovered is itself, for it requires the rational reflexivity that marks classical Western philosophy. The Renaissance commenced with the rediscovery of Aristotle. Once Western humanity discovered itself and sought to know itself, the application of reason, manifest as method, began to be applied to the discovery of human “nature.” The subject became the object of systematic, “value-free” control and investigation. Some consequences have included the invention of “culture” and “society” and of the various disciplines that seek to predict and control human nature. The process of problematization is the ultimate expression of the “modern.” All things thus become subject to conquest, and “curiosity” is highly prized. Once European humanity (like a fish that has discovered water) defined culture, then culture, a problem or theme could be systematically studied and manipulated. A consequence of this fundamental shift to an analytic consciousness is canonized by René Descartes’ cosmic split which inaugurated the methodological, epistemological, and moral debates that characterize the modern world. Because of this resurrection of the classical problems of mimesis, referentiality, simulation, and reification, it is not surprising that rational or “philosophical” hermeneutics would also reemerge with Giambattista Vico’s (1668–1744) conceptual invention of “culture” in Scienza nuova (The New Science) in 1728. Aristotle not only gave the West analytics, but he also recognized that representation and referentiality logically give rise to problems of interpretation. Thus he wrote Peri hermeneias (On Interpretation). The reflective distance that allowed Vico to problematize “culture” also and logically invokes its tandem process, hermeneutics as the study of the problem of interpretation. “Culture” begged to be interpreted and rendered significant. The same reflective impulse that stressed “accuracy” and “validity” as interpretive standards was soon reflexively applied to interpretation itself thus giving rise to a science of the process of interpretation and also a science of how rhetorical processes work. Communication itself became an explicit problem. The problem, which was so central to the issue of knowledge/power, was how can objective truth be gleaned from subjective, personal (empirical) observation. With the rediscovery of Aristotle’s abstractive categorical model of knowledge, methodological conflagrations recommenced. Both the problem and the method emerged together with the mutation to perspectival mental-rationality. It was during this mutation that the great social experiments and ideological revolutions erupted.

Contemporaneous with Gebser’s work, Arnold J. Toynbee’s A Study of History (in twelve volumes appearing from 1934–1961, which anticipated Sorokin’s magnum opus, Social and Cultural Dynamics, in four volumes beginning in 1957) stressed a modern theoretical explanation for the “growth” of civilizations as a series of responses to various challenges. Gebser echoed this in his idea that consciousness mutation is demanded by the need to overcome deficiencies that no longer serve survival. Gebser differed from Toynbee on four essential points, however. First, Gebser suggested that for some consciousness structures, an attitude of cooperation or even nonseparation dominates. Second, Toynbee with his emphasis on stimulus and response betrayed the fundamental modernity of his thinking—a dualism Gebser did not presuppose. Third, Gebser, unlike Toynbee but more like Mannheim (Ideologie und Utopie, 1929), claimed that history is basically discontinuous, and he did so forty years before either Thomas Kuhn (1960) or Michel Foucault’s (1972) mutational theories appeared. And fourth, Gebser offered a much more sophisticated explanatory theory for the origin of sociocultural change (plus-mutation) that outlines shifts in consciousness, which are identified with artifactual change, but without assuming progress.

CULTURE AS GOD-CONCEPT

The tension between the two ideas of “nature” and “nurture,” signified by the covering term “culture,” soon came to be contradictory, for the idealists have seen culture as a process of cultivation with an ideal of human perfection as a goal, based on classical and Judeo-Christian ideas about appropriate (meaning ethical) behavior and the “good life.” A “goal” implies spatial directionality and inherently holds the potential for “movement” that means “positive” “progress” toward an end. The reduction of “culture” to a set of rules followed behaviorally (as in neo-Parsonian metaphysics) makes cultural studies into ethics. In fact, Talcott Parsons (1902–1990) was motivated by the same fear of social chaos as Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Comte (1798–1857). Such thinkers have pro-
posed the need for the leviathan of law and order as protection against the 
mayhem of mass society and mob rule (see Chapter 9 in this volume). The 
elitist, managerial, or “administrative” attitude is obvious. These champi-
on's of order have been echoed by the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss which, 
as Edith Kurzweil (1980: 29) has pointed out, gave the French left a 
conservative means to save its damaged credibility after the trauma of 
Stalinism and the abortive revolt in 1968. The claim to value-free (ideolo-
gy-free), “objective” science has often been used as an incantation that 
serves the ideological function of inoculation. The claim is an effort to 
avoid responsibility for the fact that one’s ideas may actually have an 
impact on “real” people.

These competing definitions of what it is to be “civilized,” to be a 
Christian, or to follow the classical path have led to the conflict between 
a faith in universal cultural laws and cultural relativity based on observable 
variations. The former sense of the “culture” led to spatialized notions of 
unidirectional “progress” and “development.” This is the consequent 
influence of Judeo-Christian eschatology. The other sense of “culture,” 
which is often seen as contradicting the first, emphasizes the different ways 
different groups find meaning and value in their lives. By comparison, this 
latter relativistic attitude can be seen by the absolutist only from a 
defensive position of insecurity. Thus cultural and ethical relativism is 
deemed to be a nihilistic threat to order. According to Gebser, the integral 
attitude of *systasis* yields a very different and tolerant sense of diversity. 

From the modern perspectival attitude, conceptualizations are placed into 
opposition to each other as competing truths. This habit of mind leads to 
the effort to describe societies spatially as “whole” —wholly nihilistic, or 
wholly significant. Of course, the Vienna Circle’s insistence that the world 
is uniform is a logical and metaphysical necessity if one desires to make 
the epistemological claim of validity for the project of measurement. The 
neo-Kantian problem, though, is that not all the presumed world “out 
there” can be empirically observed and that what has been observed 
demonstrates great diversity—in other words, discovery. Uniformity, as a 
logical category, is a faith not founded on the phenomenological principle 
of direct experience. The paradox evident here is that the empiricist cannot, 
in principle or otherwise, justify the validity of measurement. Such a 
quagmire can be overcome only through integration.

Arthur O. Lovejoy (1936) has traced this fundamental *aporia* (unpass-
able passage—contradiction) back to the two conflicting strains in Plato 
and the Platonic tradition. Lovejoy called them the attitudes of “other-
worldliness” and “this-worldliness” (pp. 24, 25). More recently, this con-
lict has manifested itself in the machinations of certain so-called 
“post-modernist” anti-modern writings. Modern ethnology embodies 
some of this ambiguity, in that it holds the suspension of all value 
judgments about the ways of different peoples to be a transcendental good 
taken from the ideal of scientific culture). But the value of being relativ-
istic and nonjudgmental is itself a bias that is quite peculiar to the modern 
Western scientific mentality.

One of the problems with any god-concept, such as “culture,” “system,” 
“language,” “communication,” “structure,” “whole,” “randomness,” or “history,” is that since it is everything, it is also nothing. As is well 
recognized, the law of diacritical binary opposition demands that even god 
must have his devil. Roman Jakobson (1971: 697–708) has demonstrated 
that meaning is the consequence of difference. To this semiotic principle 
must be added the Husserlian notion of transcendent consciousness, 
which “transcends” (an unfortunate spatialization) arbitrary differences by 
synthesizing them into signitive pairs that are meant as polarities and 
dualities. Consciousness of polarity and duality is afforded by the “third” 
transcendental synthetic “position,” which facilitates the co-constitution 
of relationships. Hence, as will be discussed below, “culture” has meaning 
only relative to its polar term, “nature.” Without the active drawing of such 
a synthetic relationship, which distinguishes semantic boundaries and 
domains, “culture” (like all concepts) would be meaningless. In short, one 
cannot have mountains without valleys.

All god-concepts, including “culture,” are the progeny of this dualistic 
dilemma which pits abstracted (purified) knowledge against direct per-
sonal experience. For students of culture, this Occidental dualism remains 
a fundamental problem. Descartes’ followers framed the problem as the 
relationship between the observed and the observer, variously conceived 
as two kinds of analyses such as emic and etic perspectives, among many 
others (Pike, 1966).

The fundamental dualism of the modern Occident has recently led to 
the effort “to enter into the matrix of meanings of the researched, to 
participate in their system of organized activities, and to feel subject to 
their code of moral regulation” (Wax, 1980: 272–273) and to “grasp the 
symbolic nexus between thought and action in a particular social milieu” 
best described this notion of culture as the “imponderabilia of actual life”:

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Here belong such things as the routine of a man’s working day, the details of his care of the body, of the manner of taking food and preparing it; the tone of conversational and social life around the village fires, the existence of strong friendships or hostilities, and of passing sympathies and dislikes between people;
the subtle yet unmistakable manner in which personal vanities and ambitions are
reflected in the behavior of the individual and in the emotional reactions of those
who surround him. (1961:18–19)

But, in our recognition of the “hidden dimension,” as Edward T. Hall
(1966) has called it (so carefully studied by rhetoricians and elocutionists
for centuries), let us not deny such spectacular “extensions” of “spirit,”
“consciousness,” and “Man” as standing armies, oceanic oil-drilling plat-
forms, telephone networks, and skyscrapers (Mumford, 1934; Ong, 1971).
Still, before blindly accepting a metaphysical prejudice in favor of ma-
terialism, it must be noted that other expressions or “extensions” (another
unfortunate spatialization) include religions, philosophies, artifacts, sci-
ences, mathematical systems, logics, mythologies, and other “things of
this world” from the “realm” of ideas (Geertz, 1973:10). As Gebser argued,
all artifacts, including fleeting tones or mannerisms, are civilizational
expressions that concretize consciousness/culture, in the complex and
multiple modalities of willing, visualizing, aspiring, fearing, believing,
imagining, manipulating, hoping, and so forth.

SCHOOLS AND METAPHORS

Before we commence our discussion of Gebser exclusively, there are
other voices about culture to hear and comparatively understand. Clyde
Kluckhohn, in his oft-quoted work, Mirror for Man (1949), has traced the
various acceptations of the concept “culture.” In his quest for semantic
clarity, Kluckhohn variously defined culture as:

(1) “the total way of life of a people”; (2) “the social legacy the individual acquires
from his group”; (3) “a way of thinking, feeling, and believing”; (4) “an abstrac-
tion from behavior”; (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way
in which a group of people in fact behave; (6) a “store-house of pooled learning”;
(7) “a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems”; (8) “learned
behavior”; (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; (10) “a set
of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men”;
(11) “a precipitate of history.” (Quoted in Geertz, 1973: 4, 5)

Reviewing Kluckhohn’s effort, Geertz has noted that it may be the most
courageous attempt yet. At the same time, Geertz has suggested that after
all is done, Kluckhohn turned, “perhaps in desperation, to similes,”
referring to culture as a “map,” a “sieve,” and a “matrix” (p. 5). “Culture”
thus becomes a kind of reified utensil or tool for normative guidance.

For anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1966, 1976) and also for Alfred G.
Smith (1966), “culture” is identified with the equally elusive concept of
“communication” which merely begs the question. For instance, Frank
Dance (1970) has abstracted fifteen distinct conceptual components in
various definitions of “communication.” Elsewhere in the book The
Functions of Human Communication (1976), Dance and Carl Larson have
presented no fewer than 126 definitions of “communication.”

It has been very popular to ontologize “culture” in various ways. For
instance, “culture” is often reified idealistically as a superorganic reality,
à la Hegel, with forces and goals of its own. It has been materialistically
reduced, à la Skinnerian behavioralism, to a pattern of behavioral events.
And it has been psychologized by variously self-labeled cognitive anthrop-
ologists or componential analysts like Ward Goodenough (1967) and
Tyler (1969). As Goodenough has put it, “A Society’s culture consists of
whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner
acceptable to its members” (Goodenough, 1967:1204). The problem with
this conception of “culture” is that, as Geertz has noted, it compounds the
problem of extreme subjectivism with an equally extreme formalism.
What follows from Goodenough’s simplistic definition of “culture” is an
equally misleading confidence about how to describe it. One is led to
believe that all that is necessary to capture the essence of a culture is to set
down the rules of behavior in a systematic way in the form of logical charts,
graphs, taxonomies, and “other ingenuities” or “clever simulations”
(Geertz, 1973: 11). Geertz has pointed out that if this approach were true,
“culture” should be capturable by an “ethnographic algorithm,” thus
enabling any talented mime to become “native” by simply acting native
(surface behaviorism—actionism).

Social science, with its array of simulating instruments (tables, trees,
diagrams, and questionnaires) is a specifically post-Renaissance Western
mode of knowing, with its own attitude, truth, and modes of “appropriate”
investigative behavior. It presupposes the rebirth of the neo-Aristotelian
fragmentation of the cosmos, whereby mind functions as the mirror of
nature and knowledge is reduced to a great body of correspondence with
libraries being Platonic “secondary realities,” mere Lockean reflections—
passive simulacra (Baudrillard, 1983; Rorty, 1979; Feyerabend, 1975;
Locke, 1702; Feyerabend, 1975; Gebser, 1949). This process was launched by
Galileo’s mathematicization of nature (Husserl, 1954). Because of the
cosmic split between the subjective and the objective, in the interest of
transcendental power (method, manipulation, and prediction), simulation
has come to have greater epistemic force (credibility) than direct personal
experience. The issue is to not confuse the paper map with the trees, rocks,
rivers, values, opinions, or psychological states that the method instrumentally organizes and constitutes (Apel, 1979; Habermas, 1968; Gadamer, 1960; Hempel, 1965, 1942; Nietzsche, 1882). The map and all that it naively represents is equally "real," but the ontological sense of each phenomenon, as well as the human motive or interest relative to each, is drastically different. The map is invented, while the trees and rocks are discovered.

The Kantian Legacy

The idea of culture has split along this divide, vitalized in methodological terms by Descartes and asserted in Kant's culture history, as the difference between "phenomena" (appearances knowable to consciousness) and the "noumena" (things-in-themselves, independent of awareness, and thus, in principle, unknowable). Kant's epistemology gives no explanation for how one can know the difference, since one of the poles of contrast, the noumenal is, in principle, unknowable. Knowledge is reduced to phenomenalism, the claim that all that can be known is what is given to our limited and flawed private experience. Again, the question of how Kant knows experience is flawed or even merely limited, without knowing the "true" noumenal thing-in-itself (ding an sich), is never answered. Yet this remains the basis of all investigations that assume empiricism to be sensationalistic and impressionistic (knowledge based on essentially private sense impressions, coupled with an irrational faith in the uniformity of the fundamentally unknowable "out there"). How Gebser's phenomenology differs from neo-Kantian phenomenalism is addressed below.

The point here is that since there is no possibility of knowledge of things-in-themselves, but only of the phenomenal realm, "Kant, in effect, reduced the reality of nature to culture," according to David Bidney (1973:110). Bidney then went on to argue that the logical consequence of this premise is that "all the phenomena of experience are anthropocentric, subjective, cultural phenomena; man lives in a phenomenal world of his own construction, while accepting on faith the possibility of a noumenal world, metaphysical world independent of his consciousness" (1973: 110).

Bidney has made the familiar argument that by ruling out access to things-in-themselves as the realm of empirical scientific knowledge, Kant was "responsible for the alleged antithesis of science and metaphysics or ontology—a thesis which Kant shares with the later positivism of Auguste Comte" (1973: 110). Under the aegis of Kant's profound influence, all experience has come to be synonymous with cultural experience; through his reflexive thinking, Kant invented anthropology. The inescapable screen or filter of a priori categories constitutes the world into a meaningful synthesis mediated by the human mind/culture. For this reason, Bidney has concluded that Kant's "Copernican revolution" was actually counter-revolutionary.

However, Bidney has failed to appreciate that, for Kant, a priori categories are what make experience possible, including the experience of phenomena that are meant as cultural, and that the categories themselves are neither noumenal nor phenomenal but transcendental. Kant's culture history is the consequence of the active transcendental constitution. The true paradox of Kant's position, which Bidney failed to grasp, is that the universal prerequisites for human experience, the very nature of "human nature," lead unavoidably to a transcendental subjectivism that can claim that all experience is essentially cultural—essentially contingent! This epitomizes modern perspectivism and can be described as an implosion of a self-constituting self, rearticulated by the early Husserl's (1913) flirtation with solipsism.

This same Kantian dualism saturates Carl Jung's (1875–1961) cultural psychology. Jung, who has often been compared to Gebser, developed the concept of "psychic reality," which is identical to Kant's phenomenal ontology. In explaining the difference between the "inner" and "outer" worlds, Jung wrote:

"All that I experience is psychic... [including] my sense impressions... [Psychic images] alone are my immediate experience, for they alone are the immediate objects of my consciousness... It seems to us that certain psychic contents or images are derived from a material environment to which our bodies belong, while others, which are in no way less real, seem to be very different. (1933: 190)"

Jung's mentalism or more accurately his Kantian phenomenality, places him, along with Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945), in the midst of a metaphysical dispute that was bracketed or ignored by Gebser. Gebser, following Husserl's phenomenological method, chose to avoid metaphysical arguments that attempted to reduce, and/or spatialize, phenomena as "inner" versus "outer," "top-down" versus "bottom-up," and so on. For Gebser, metaphysical debates such as Goodenough's claim that "culture [is located] in the minds and hearts of men" (1967:1205), which is indicative of a particular mental-rationality, are not fruitful for delineating the essential nature of various civilizational expressions as such.

The work of Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911), another neo-Kantian, is also characterized by an adherence to Kant's particular theory of culture.
Dilthey's attempt to follow Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1929) with his own *Critique of Historical Reason* (1880/1961), falls back into the old Platonic dualism. He sharply differentiated between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*) and the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaft*). Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936) criticized Dilthey's choice of *Geisteswissenschaft* and suggested the term *Kulturwissenschaft* to connote the products of human activity independent of nature. Nevertheless, Dilthey and Rickert agreed that cultural studies should follow a “subjective,” “ideographic” investigation into the symbolism of cultural practices. They agreed on the Kantian principle that cultural phenomena are not subject to natural (nomothetic) laws except the Kantian categories.

Half a century later, a student of Franz Boas (1858–1942), A. L. Kroeber (1876–1960), attempted (1952) to demonstrate that the *Kulturwissenschaft* nearly fifty years earlier, exemplified a profound anxiety about time, and the synchronic dimensions of culture for the sake of methodological purity. Platonic otherworldliness is thus expressed by his nomothetic science of culture, while Platonic otherworldliness is manifest in his ideographic history of culture. Because Kroeber was less emotional in his work, *Configurations of Cultural Growth* (1944), than Toynbee (1889–1975), Sorokin (1889–1968), or Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), he demonstrated an allegiance to rigor that led him to doubt the scientific faith in otherworldly patterns.

Despite his presupposed Platonicism about the two worlds (the realm of the probable and the realm of the absolute) and his optimism about fusing them, Kroeber came to resemble Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1913–1961). He was forced by the evidence to acknowledge that while ethnologists have had some success at delineating historical patterns of culture, they have failed miserably at discovering the elusive transtemporal, transcultural scientific laws that govern cultures.

The Cartesian Legacy

The imitation of the natural sciences, with their metaphysical faith in an objective noumenal reality “out there,” has led to a belief in the existence of social laws. Among such laws, the supreme one postulates that human societies necessarily progress toward “higher stages.” This faith in human development may be traced back to Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), who suggested that the history of human generations forms a continuity, with its own logic, and may be compared to an immortal individual who constantly accumulates knowledge. This idea clearly influenced Hegel’s thinking. Similarly, Charles de Secondat, the Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), described the nature of law in his famous book, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748).

The concept of “progress,” which has influenced the ideas of both “civilization” and “culture,” was promoted by Jacques Turgot (1727–1781). In his *Discourse on Universal History* (1780), Turgot argued that the accumulation of knowledge in the natural sciences is accompanied by a “gradual emancipation” of the mind from anthropomorphic concepts. This process unfolds, according to Turgot, in three stages. The first stage is characterized by the belief that the world is created by intelligent but invisible beings with human qualities. The second stage is dominated by explanations that are more abstract, positing concepts like “faculty” and “essence.” The third stage is exemplified by explanations based on the observation of the reciprocal mechanical action of bodies, which is formulated into mathematical hypotheses that can be verified by experimentation.

Marie Jean de Caritat, the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794), also argued for the idea of the “law of progress” in his work, *Historical Essay on the Progress of Human Reason* (1795). In this book (which initially contained in its title the word “esprit,” which is translated as “reason” in the English title), Condorcet developed the idea of tracing historical-cultural progress in an outline. He believed that such a study would make it possible to predict future progress and thereby to accelerate and direct (“directional” being, of course, a spatial metaphor) the future course of human affairs toward some ideal goal. Of course, if something is predicted, then it will not happen as such, except as a self-fulfilling prophecy—not an authentic prediction at all but, rather a will to make—an instrumental plan. The idea of predicting cultural events is in effect a rhetorical effort to deny responsibility by evoking fatalism, while at the same time exercising a technological will to persuade others to implement one’s vision of the “correct,” and “inevitable” future. Religious prophecy, along with the positivisms of Comte and Marx, are excellent examples of this approach.

Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859. Social Darwinists, especially Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) in *Social Statics* (1850), which suggested that social parts perform “functions,” and Comte, pro-
motivated a progressive ideology as the foundation of their new science of society (it is from Spencer that Darwin took the phrase “survival of the fittest”).

The French inventors of sociology, Henri Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and his secretary and collaborator Comte (1798–1857), were shocked by the destruction of the social groups between the family and the state following the French Revolution. They hoped to “discover” the governing laws of progress in order to postulate solutions to social ills. They consequently proposed that politics must become “social physics,” a branch of physiology, and that each body of knowledge must pass through three stages. This schema is an obvious descendant of ideas already articulated by Pascal, Montesquieu, Turgot, and Condorcet.

Saint-Simon and Comte attempted to alter the attitude of social investigation, ordering it so it would accord with the spirit of positivism. Morals and politics were to become positive sciences—the new religion as set forth in Comte’s The Catechism of Positive Religion (1891). The vision that motivated their joint work, Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for the Reorganization of Society (1814/15), and later Comte’s treatise, A General View of Positivism (1848), is a reorganization of the spiritual and moral order of society. Comte wrote:

I hope to convince my readers that positivism is more in accordance with the spontaneous tendencies of the people and of women than Catholicism, and is therefore better qualified to institute a spiritual power . . . . Positivism is the only system which can supersede the various subversive schemes that are growing day every more dangerous to all the relations of domestic and social life. (1957:5)

Fear of “dangerous” and “subversive” “schemes,” that threaten social order and enlightenment culture motivated the positivist defense to organize society rationally. Comte’s dream of a new cultural attitude and a corresponding social order expresses the perspectival mental-rationality of the West. Society is thus to be governed by social scientists as the new priestly class. The irony in this is that subversive powers, like the Catholic church, are already integrally diffused throughout the culture (including the expression of positivism itself) that they supposedly threaten. Indeed, the causal empiricist, who presumes a reductionistic and materialistic metaphysic that posits “reality,” “medium,” and “impression” as identical experiences stands firmly in the tradition of the Laplacian demon. The French mathematician Pierre Simon Marquis de Laplace (1749–1827) captured the essence of this problem by telling a story about a monster that can predict all future states because it knows the speed and direction of all bodies in the universe. His lesson has been lost on most subsequent thinkers.

As Martin Heidegger (1962) has demonstrated in Being and Time, the modern empiricist has assumed a materialized conception of the Judeo-Christian notion of the prime-mover. Everything is a state in a grand causal chain that leads inevitably back to the divine first motion. The cosmological assumption grounding positivism’s epistemology is a direct descendant of Judeo-Christian teleology.

Comte postulated culture as a power against itself, or at least against certain unsavory, nonpositivistic elements in society. This belief anticipated, in reverse fashion, Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) romantic Civilization and Its Discontents (1930, first published as Das Unbehagen in der Kultur), which presupposed Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712–1778) utopian vision of the noble savage who has supposedly been spoiled by that which invented her. Civilization became a protest against itself. It became modern “culture,” marked as it is by intolerant dialectical logic and the internal contradictions dialecticians like Marx and Derrida are obsessed with. This is not the postmodernism Gebser offered, but an antithetical mode of thinking that is deficiently modern, self-contradicting. Contentious dialecticians are children of modernity. They are antimodern as opposed to being post-modern. Antimodernity is part of modern mental-rational modernity, with its stress on the law of noncontradiction. Thus, modern culture is self-deconstructing. For both Comte and Freud, culture stands defined by its opposite—a chaotic (unproductive) nature of vital forces. The origin of the truncated sense of knowledge as “techne” is transparent, for nature becomes, in the perspectival age, a problem to be technologically confronted. Magic becomes machine. Might becomes mechanism. Psychoanalysis and social engineering, such as criminal rehabilitation, take on the mantle of behavioral, material “science.”

Comte’s stress on the maintenance of order is the professed motive for the ascendancy to power of positivism as the highest spiritual and cultural expression of European humanity. According to the positivistic cosmos, culture is sacred order, and nature is profane chaos. Thus, naturalistic studies, which resist intrusive techniques, are to this day perceived by self-proclaimed positivists as somehow polluted or messy, and certainly as inferior to methods with more control and predictability.
GEBSER VERSUS TELEOLOGY: CULTURE AS THE MARCH OF REASON

Gebser maintained that this legacy of Judeo-Christian teleology and supernatural law (and its transgression), which defines nature as irrational and pagan, is a cultural tendency, a mass reaction like other "isms." That which cannot be controlled and ordered or domesticated (e.g., snakes) are of the chaos—even evil. Gebser argued that "the patently perspectival-sectorial fixity of Comte's postulate [of the theory of spiritual evolution in three stages]—with its almost biologized aspect and markedly teleological, finalistic, purpose-and-goal orientation, and its evolutionary thesis" (Gebser, 1985: 41) is incommensurate with his own notion of discontinuous "plus-mutation" (which does not assume progress). The application of the positivist philosophy to human "nature" and society manifested a cultural obsession with domestication. With the emergence of the perspectival "self," handbooks on the care and feeding of the domesticated self began to proliferate. "Sciences" of human affairs spread, and rational critique accompanied competition as the modus operandi of the modern West. Confucius represented this spirit in the East and also manifested this attitude as material efficiency (meritocracy) but with an emphasis on moral excellence.

Gebser considered the implication of Comte's hierarchical theory of spiritual evolution for the founding of the social sciences to be ridiculous. Gebser wrote, "We do not share with the positivists a conviction that the contemporary positivistic stage, or any rational, perspectival structure represents the non plus ultra of human development" (Gebser, 1985: 42).

Gebser, noting the idea of perpetual progress behind this paradigm, was quick to point out that Comte was not the initiator of this Dr. Pangloss attitude, an optimistic orientation that J. Hillis Miller (1976) has referred to redundantly as "happy positivism." Gebser noted that the postulate of progress and purpose-and-goal linearity, which ultimately post culture as the opposite of nature, has strongly permeated the European mentality throughout the later modern era (since about the 1730's). Its roots extend back to Vico, and it was continued by Montesquieu in his Observations on Roman Greatness and Decline (1734), and by Voltaire in his Experiment Concerning the Customs and Spirit of Nations (1756). The thesis was further expanded in France by Bossuet, Duclos, Volney, and Condorcet; in England by Spencer and Darwin; and in Germany by Buckle's History of English Civilization (1860), by Lecky's History of the Mind of the Enlightenment (1865), by G. E. Lessing's Education of the Human Race (1780), by Herder's Ideas Toward a Philosophy of Human History (1784), and by Schelling, Hegel and Krause. (1985: 41)

To challenge progress as the right and true goal of (Western) culture and technology (or applied "science") is tantamount to sacrilege. The question itself threatens the very temporal basis of this faith. Under the modern attitude, history becomes a sort of record or spatialized measurement of how culture, reduced to technology, is "advancing" (the emphasis on extension and materialistic metaphysics is transparent). It is a story that makes the Westerner secure in his cosmic place. Hence, the truly poststructuralist (postmodern) alternative presented by Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844–1900) and Gebser's integrality, are seen as uncanny, if not subversive. The emergence of the idea of "culture" as a Western phenomenon that occurred in the fifteenth century, at the same time that other manifestations of permanence enhancement became dominant. For instance, the modern notion of "progress," like "history," appeared with the mutation to mental-rational perspectivity. Although "progress" denotes change (for the better), it is itself raised to the level of a permanent fixture in the liberal philosophy from which it emerges. We are forever progressing. Since there is no goal that transcends progress itself, none can be reach. Hence it is self-perpetuating. Progress takes on the cyclical imagery of a myth.

This example demonstrates the fallacy of many modern linear-progressive notions of culture. For instance, according to Marvin E. Olsen in his book The Process of Social Organization (1978), two of three fundamental components of culture—"ends," and the "means" of getting there (the third being postulates)—cannot make sense of its own prejudice: the transcendental value of cultural progress toward a perfect order. If progress ever achieved some final goal or order, it would negate itself; it would be, as Judeo-Christian dogma asserts, the "end of time," the end of the great drama of history. This view is just as suicidal as Hitler's "final solution." The fragmented end of means misses Candide's lesson about the significance of process over the value of finite achievement. Both "progress" and "organization" presume a transcendental cognizance ("ruler" can mean either a sovereign or a measuring stick) such as that which Pascal and Hegel postulated. Beyond this, the Western notion of postulation as the first cause in a chain of behavior is obviously perspectival ("mental-rational" in Gebser's terms). This mentality emerged with St. Anselm's (1033–1109) rationalization of theology in his proofs for divine existence and in the revitalization of classical Greek logic.

In short, Olsen's three-part formulation of culture is obviously a modern Occidental conceptualization that cannot even account for the modern
positivist idea of progress or for how this idea is manifest in notions of "development" and "Westernization" (which is widely and appropriately used as a synonym for "modernization"), let alone explain non-Western cultures. His idea of a logic of means-goals that governs life expresses the temporal anxiety Gebser demonstrated to be the dominant feature of the modern perspectival individual. This anxiety is manifest by the modern expression of drawing lines or points on the whole fabric of life and then labeling them "dead." Increasingly, personal goals take precedence over all others, with a strict linear dimension expressed as the numeric accumulation of money, the achievement of career hierarchy, or the setting of records (establishing a permanent, transtemporal place in the great book of judgment as the once-and-for-all most). This perspectival orientation, manifest as a modern, Western, Westernization, especially the temporal aspect of social organization based on goals and schedules (deadlines).

COPING WITH TEMPORAL ANXIETY: CULTURE AS STRUCTURE (SYNCHRONIZED SYSTEM AS THE "ARRESTING" OF CRIMINAL TIME)

The contemporary structuralisms and neo-functionalisms of Lévi-Strauss (1908–1990) and Parsons (1902–1989), which may be reinterpreted as systems theory, are merely additional duplications of Comte's and Saint-Simon's ideas. Those ideas argue for the reduction of "culture" to a materialistic ontology via behaviorism grounded in physiology, in turn grounded in chemistry, and finally grounded in physics in accord with Comte's call to create a "social physics." As Jean Piaget (1968) has noted, the shift from one level of structure to the next is to be achieved by the mysterious rules of transformation, which are governed by laws or "regulations" (in the cybernetic sense), but which are not strictly operations because they are not entirely reversible. Piaget succinctly condensed the argument, already reaching exhaustion in the European social science literature, in his 1968 book, Structuralism:

Rhythm, regulation, operation—these are the three basic mechanisms of self-regulation and self-maintenance. One may, if one so desires, view them as the "real" stages of a structure's "construction," or, reversing the sequence, one may use operational mechanisms of a quasi-Platonic and non-temporal sort as a "basis" from which the others are then in some manner "derived." (1968: 16)

The stress on "self-regulation," is of course intensely perspectival and stressful. Michel Foucault described this attitude in "The Eye of Power" (1980) and Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1977) as the modern emphasis on "panoptic" examination and surveillance in the interest of control and "correction." Gebser's theory integrates well with Foucault's explanation. The modern stress on vision (or more appropriately, instrumental observation) and the distinctly modern idea of punishment by spatial confinement become clear in light of Gebser's theory.

The neo-Comtean Parisian structuralism developed by Lévi-Strauss is caught on the horns of the Cartesian dilemma. The way out, according to Piaget, is not to reify the concept of structure, especially as it is applied to cultural expressions in the form of various models, theories, and simulations. Classical mimesis, aesthetically motivated, resurrects itself after the perspectival mutation (especially the rereading of Aristotle), but with a different motive—as the obsession to simulate for technological control.

This problem of hypostatization was already understood and articulated at the turn of the twentieth century by physicist Ernst Mach (1838–1916). He was the first to understand clearly the vast difference between explaining the phenomenon of seeing as light waves entering the pupil, passing through a lens that inverts and focuses them before they pass through an aqueous humor, striking a retina constituted of rods and cones, being transduced into bioelectricity and conducted by the optic nerve, and so on, and the direct experience of seeing. A blind person can follow the scientific explanation of sight, but this is obviously very far removed from understanding what it is to see. From Descartes on, the confusion of the rational simulation with the arational experience has led into an absurd situation whereby the marriage counselor should be operating from the level of quantum mechanics.

Yet this rationalization (reductionism) that reifies isomorphic simulation is behind all structuralisms that argue for a linear hierarchy of stage development or what Geertz called the "stratigraphic" conception of the relations between biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors in human life. . . . Peel off psychological factors and one is left with the biological foundations—ana
tomical, physiological, neurological—of the whole edifice of human life” (1973: 37). The idea that trees grow "logically" is a product of the Judeo-Christian faith in a just God (justice being defined as balance or ratio—a rational divinity), which is, as Freud argued.
with Protagoras, an anthropomorphic projection. And, one must hasten to add, the anthropos doing the positivistic imagining is specifically Western.21

This legacy is manifest in cultural studies that seek the transcendence of scientific reason by what Geertz (1973:40,41) has labeled the “consensus gentium” (a consensus of humankind) notion of universal institutional types. This notion was popularized in Clyde Kluckhohn’s idea that social actors depend on Newtonian “inward motions” (1953: 516). However, it was first elaborated in the 1920s by Clark Wissler and later in the 1940s by G. P. Murdock.22 Against the consensus gentium, Geertz sided with Kroeber, noting that “religion,” “art,” “marriage,” “trade,” and even “shelter” are “fake universals,” “vague tautologies and forceless banalities” (1973: 41). By this criticism Geertz meant the sort of Baconian search for cultural universals, “a kind of public-opinion polling of the world’s people,” which leads to the absurdity of relativism (1973: 40).23

Regarding the reduction of forms of cultural practices to ontogenetic material structures, Piaget responded:

Human activity at every level seems to present us with “forms” (sensory-motor patterns, perceptual schemes among them, being one such variety of forms). Should we, then, end our account with the proclamation “Everything is structure” and let it go at that? No. for though it is true that everything can become structured, the difference in modality is all-important. Structure in the technical sense of a self-regulating system of transformations is not coincident with form: even a stack of pebbles can be said to have form but this mere heap cannot become a structure unless we place it in the context of a sophisticated theory by intercalating the system of all its “virtual” movements. We are thus brought to physics. (1968: 36)

This absurd situation, which Piaget succinctly criticized, is countered by the semiotic concept of culture as the process of structuration, not the condition of preexisting innate structures. The lines that various peoples draw between stars for the creation of magic zodiacs are arbitrary. If any universal exists, as von Humboldt, Cassirer, and Geertz have maintained, it is that the human creature is always sociocultural, that it is pure hypothetical speculation to imagine a human who is not cultural, and that the human species is essentially the symbol maker. The fascinating irony about cultures is that they are all essentially semiotic systems of arbitrary values that carry the force of convention or what Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) has regarded as the profound inertia of ethnic/linguistic tradition.

HISTORY VERSUS ETHNICITY: THE DILEMMA OF THE SYNCHRONIZER

With the same intellectual honesty shown by Kroeber and Piaget, Merleau-Ponty in the 1950s responded to his colleague and friend Lévi-Strauss, who continually announced the imminent discovery of the universal unconscious structures of mind/language/culture, writing in “From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss,” “That remains to be seen. Nothing limits structural research in this direction: but neither does anything require it to postulate the existence of such invariants at the outset” (1964:118). For Merleau-Ponty, the great Platonic division rears its ugly head as the problematizing search for universal structures manifested as “the old prejudice which opposes induction to deduction, as if the example of Galileo did not already show that actual thinking moves back and forth between experience and intellectual construction and reconstruction” (1964: 119).

Of course, the question always returns: If the structures are unconscious, then how does Lévi-Strauss know about them, and what evidence, clue, or hunch compels him to search for them? Could it be an unquestioned faith or prejudice, handed down from the scholastic tradition, as Gadamer has suggested?24 Such a search presupposes the action of the hermeneutic circle, in that one must already have a sense of what one is seeking in order to recognize it when one comes upon it. The fashion has been to hypostatize “discursive formulations,” ahistorical “universal grammars of culture,” and “logics of arrangements,” all derived from the modern ideology of extratemporal science that imposes a system of otherworldly transformational rules on the worldly. The fundamental question that plagues Lévi-Strauss to the end and for which he has no satisfactory answer is this: Are the structures autonomously “real” or are they simply theoretical constructs; scientific myth or a reflection of some noumenal order “in” the brain that is shared by the material universe?

When Jean-Paul Sartre (1988) and Merleau-Ponty bothered to play this metaphysical game with Lévi-Strauss and pushed the issue, Lévi-Strauss responded that temporicity, in the form of history, confounds everything. This truism has already been well established by hermeneutics and specifically by Husserl’s investigations in Internal Time Consciousness (1964) and The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (1970), but it fails as an alibi that can vindicate Lévi-Strauss’ claims. For instance, Lévi-Strauss, not unlike Parsons, has claimed that only primitive archaic peoples react via some great reflex arc to the
structural determinations. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss responded to Merleau-Ponty’s call for evidence thus:

One may say that archaic societies are made up of ninety percent of ethnology and of ten percent of history. In more evolved societies the amount of history rises to ninety percent and ethnology falls to ten percent; and in such societies the structuralist’s method, for the present at least, is not apt. In our Western world it can only be applied, as some of my students are in fact doing, to certain forms of sub-societies, or of micro-societies, such as the under-world of drugs, of juvenile delinquency, of prostitution. These are oral worlds without writing, that is without history, and which live in a primitive way from day to day like savage societies. (Lévi-Strauss, quoted in McNicholl, 1968: 44; emphasis added)

The universal unconscious structures that Lévi-Strauss has tried to delineate have not yet “materialized,” despite the retribalization of the world by electronic technologies. Consequently, and with some bitterness, Lévi-Strauss dismissed the neo- or, perhaps more appropriately, post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes and Foucault (each also a student of Merleau-Ponty), for having abandoned the faith.

Merleau-Ponty has noted this fundamental distinction between the ahistorical and the historical, observing that, according to the structuralist, the primitive is supposed to obey some “indigenous theory” of structuralism, such as laws of exchange (which completely dominate theories of its behavior), as the “atom follows the law of distribution which defines it” (1964: 124). Simultaneously, for the complex modern system with its historical motivations, the structures “burst apart.” The perspectival power of reflection to know itself sets one free from previously scrutinized predeterminations. This is manifest as the post-Renaissance critical philosophical attitude that has given birth to ideas like “society,” “self,” and “culture.”

Unfortunately, the word “structure” has been thoroughly confused with “system,” and it is even sometimes seen as a synonym for “culture” itself. To speak of the structure or system of a culture is to reduce culture to a set of rules; these are in turn reducible, via “social physics,” as argued by Lévi-Strauss (à la Comte), to material parameters. Like Parsons, Lévi-Strauss cannot explain diversity or change. This is evident not only in the writings of the neo-Saussureans but also in the sociologism of Alfred Schutz, Thomas Luckmann, and Peter Berger. The liberalized idea of an “open system,” which hedges against the hermeneutic challenge, is not truly “open,” for the rules remain unchanged. What is grudgingly “allowed” is the notion that merely new “data” are assembled and assimilated into the system by its own changeless rules. The reifying dogma of the functionalists can be stated thus: Systematics is the law of the universe. Everything is allowed so long as it is systematized. The dream of arresting time, which motivates the synchronic structuralists, reveals the modern anxiety about time. Systems, which are dynamic, are reduced to synchronous relationships among abstract “points.” Systems are confused with arbitrarily assigned structural “properties.” The danger, of course, is in the transference of inappropriate semantic dimensions of certain terms, like “structure,” “memory bank,” “hologram,” “circuit” or “function” to the phenomenon described. Beyond this, the modern, mental-rational terms of “structure” and “system” are themselves often confused in the literature. Thankfully, Paul Ricoeur (1969/1974) has traced the emergence of the sense meaning of “structural”:

Of course, Saussure does not use the word “structure” but the word “system.” The word “structure” appeared only in 1928 at the First International Congress of Linguistics at the Hague, in the form “structure of a system.” The word “structure” would appear then as a specification of the system and would designate the restrictive combinations, highlighted against the whole field of the possibilities of articulation and combination, which create the individual configuration of a language. But in the form of the adjective “structural,” the word has become synonymous with system. (1974: 83)

THE CULTURAL EFFECTS OF CULTURE WRITING

Since the appearance of the Hegelian penchant for holistic systems theory, massive theoretical edifices have been invented and “applied,” like other technological fixes, to human ills. But, as Søren Kierkegaard said of Hegel’s grand wholes, none has yet proved habitable by people. Where research has stayed “close to the ground,” complexities and variance have continued to frustrate the compulsion to achieve godlike knowledge of universals.

Yet, an irony arises here. The neo-Kantians, most notably the semioticians and specifically Cassirer (1944), have argued that humans can know themselves, not directly as things-in-themselves, but only through a veil of symbolic representations. It is Cassirer’s contention that Homo sapiens is not so much the rational animal as the animal symbolicoïcum, for it is this species’ power to produce environments of symbols that is the essential difference. When this capability is grasped, it opens a new and more accurate way to understand culture. As Cassirer has put it, by defining the human species not as the “rational animal,” as the ancients did (since rationality plays a small part in human affairs), but as the symbol maker,
“we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to man—the way to civilization” (1944: 26).

Both Gebser and Geertz have made the rather unusual argument that culture makes the species, not the other way around. After demonstrating that cultural behavior antedated several organic changes in the primate line known as *Homo sapiens* and may in fact have influenced brain size and the structure of the hand, Geertz concluded, with B. I. DeVore, that “primates literally have a ‘social brain’” (DeVore quoted in Geertz, 1973: 68). While DeVore has recounted the fact that even infrahominid primates cannot achieve many of their most important “performance capacities” or emotional maturity in isolation, which means many primates removed from their socio-“cultural” milieu cannot survive, Geertz has argued that:

man’s nervous system does not merely enable him to acquire culture, it positively demands that he do so if it is going to function at all. Rather than culture acting only to supplement, develop, and extend organically based capacities logically and genetically prior to it, it would seem to be ingredient to those capacities themselves. A cultureless human being would probably turn out to be not an intrinsically talented though unfulfilled ape, but a wholly mindless and consequently unworkable monstrosity. Like the cabbage it so much resembles, the *Homo sapiens* brain, having arisen within the framework of human culture, would not be viable outside of it. (1973: 68)

Likewise Konrad Lorenz has debunked the myth of “wolf-children” and other “feral fantasies” (1983: 95–96). Forty years earlier, in his discussion of “plus-mutation,” Gebser introduced his argument for the integrality of biological structures and the cultural (spiritual) dimension of the life-world (a more complex explanation than Piaget’s ontogenetic dialectics, which are reminiscent of Marx’s base and superstructural theory of evolution). In this regard, Gebser wrote:

It might seem that our concept of mutation has a biologically determined anatomical basis; but it remains an open question whether we are dealing here with a step in evolution brought about by specific organic factors, or with a change “elicited” by the spiritual principle, that is, by plus mutation. Most likely we have to do here with the latter, since it is always the superordinate potentiality that seems to enable man to develop the requisite organ appropriate to the requirements of a given situation. Consequently, there was first light and then the eye, first the word and then the speaking mouth, first the thought and then the cerebrum capable of reflective thinking (or mental thought altogether). (1985: 38)

If theorists like von Humboldt, Cassirer, and Barthes are correct that the human environment is largely of its own making, that it is a cultural world of symbols, and that humanity adapts to its environment, then humanity is increasingly making itself. Furthermore, structural explanations, as Lévi-Strauss has admitted, confront terrific problems of validity. As Sartre argued, because of time and the creative magic that crosses the threshold from nothing to the symbolic world (the eruption of ontological liminality), freedom is ever (and increasingly) outrunning structural determinism. The synchronic “primitive” is transformed into a self-determining historical being, while sociocultural changes accelerate exponentially. This is the temporal stress of the modern.

Such symbolic environments include theories. The value of a theory is determined, as hermeneuticians like Gadamer (1975) and Ricoeur (1981) have maintained, by how much it enriches the cultural milieu upon entering it. Consequently, the most important question to be put to a theory, especially a theory about “culture,” is how much does it help us to understand and expand our horizons while the theory integrates with the world/culture. Does a theory change its audience and in what way(s)? Hegel’s effort, for instance, though perhaps idealistic, does not exist in an ivory tower, isolated from the world of people, but has had profound influences in the world. Theory is not only explanatory but also creative. Social thinkers do desire to change the world, and their works do exist in it, just as Husserl has argued. The point is that explanations of what is are integral with predicting and visualizing future potentialities. It is in this sense that Husserl’s phenomenology (which Gebser presupposed) gives rigor to existentialism and spawns respect for immediate experience. In this regard, Sartre wrote that “the phenomenologists have plunged man back into the world; they have given full measure to man’s agonies and sufferings, and also to his rebellions” (1957: 105). Cultural theory is of and makes culture. As Derrida (1981) has argued, ideas disseminate with unforeseeable consequences. Doing cultural studies is a modern technological project-in-the-world or what Max Weber (1946) has called a “vocation.”

The realization that science does not exist in a vacuum, which is implicit in Hegel, was stated explicitly by Marx when he argued that the point of social science is not to describe the world but change it. Regardless of the modern ideology of “objectivism,” this is the case for even the most abstract theory and the most trivial description. Indeed, the ideology of “objectivism” is itself revealed to be a tactical discourse. Statistics have great rhetorical power to change the world because they present themselves as being without political interests. The strategic,
rhetorical force of statistics derives from their supposed innocence. Because they are "innocent," (pure) numbers are very persuasive. Once exposed, the ideology of objective "value freedom" is transformed into either a myth of the naive or the essence of a cynical and self-serving discourse-in-the-world.

Likewise, the "thick descriptions" by Gilbert Ryle (1971), which Geertz praised extravagantly, would be considered a truncated phenomenology, much like Harold Garfinkle's ethnomethodology, except that even such "mere" descriptive treatises have an unavoidable impact on the way their readers perceive and subsequently interact in the world. Reading explanations and descriptions creates new relationships in the world of the reader. The critical, perspectival attitude that is manifest as modem explanation harbors a layer of magic that expresses a power to confront nature rationally, indeed to define the relationship as confrontational. As humanity attempts to extricate itself from nature's dominion by the force of the will to survive, the essence of dialectical, perspectival conflict dawns. Culture is human action as opposed to natural rhythm. In both cases, however, change is regarded as being permanent and universal.

Cultural theory is part of culture and has the potential to disseminate and produce change. Indeed, the reflexive attitude necessary to conceive the idea of culture, is, as Gebser argued, itself a manifestation of a particular culture and mode of awareness—what he called the perspectival consciousness structure. It is this sophisticated (meaning reflexive) understanding of cultural theory that led Ludwig Feuerbach and Marx to insist on inverting Hegel's idealism into materialism.

Gebser, like Nietzsche, recognized the inevitability of self-destiny and the inherent relationship between freedom and responsibility that denies being chained to any gods or other "first causes." Unlike so many other naive theorists, Gebser was wide awake about the inevitable but unpredictable influence that his theory, like all theories, would have. This realization is not a dream to create a new religion or some new "Weltanschauung" (world view). It is rather the diaphaneity, the coming to awareness, that characterizes Nietzsche's Ubermensch, that being which is by definition integrally responsible for its world. As soon as predeterminations, such as "structures," are reflexively discerned (made transparent), the will-to-power escapes them. The moment of realization is the fecund moment of liberation or at least the initiation of the effort to transcend. All walls beckon us to seek a view of the other side. All knowledge, especially of the self, occurs as a bursting forth (mutation) to a new vista of ever-changing horizons.

CULTURE AS PRODUCTION

While Comte and Saint-Simon, having been influenced by Hegel, were convinced of the spiritual superiority of the positivistic stage of cultural evolution, Marx, following Feuerbach's existential inversion of Hegelian spiritualism, argued that the positive organization of material life determines the "complex whole" of systems and of meaning and value. According to the "late, scientific" Marx, culture does not contain the material organization of life but is itself determined by the "iron necessity" of the "natural laws of capitalist production" (1967: 8) and historical materialism as it evolves generally. The Marxist view is that "culture" contains more than simply meaning and value. It must include the basic material organization and constraints of life or be derived from them as superstructure. Technological materialism, of either the modern capitalistic or communistic brand, leads to nihilism. Once it is believed that all things are predicted, the "play" of difference and consequently of motivation and will evaporate.

For materialists, "culture" is all things made by humans, and humanity becomes the measure of all things. Therefore, the issue of production, as treated ideally by Hegel and then materialistically by Marx, becomes a central component of the idea of "culture." "Culture," as a "body" of values and practices to be "extended," (spatial metaphors indicative of the Enlightenment concept of metaphysical space "out there") emerges as production and reproduction. Thus, we have simulated (though not entirely reproduced) "cultures," not only in social science but in the pervasive entertainment industry, such as at Disney World and in the artificial "wilderness" in national parks, including parks for "primitive" peoples that mimic the stone age milieu. Of course, such "protection" is given in order to preserve "worlds," as artificial natures, for the benefit of modern, touristic, scientific, and developmental gazes (and other modes of consumption). The attitude that preserves against spoilage is manifest as "canned nature." Thus, we have nature preserves and fruit preserves (jelly)—both technological wonders that defeat chaotic wilderness. The idea is to "save some" (perhaps in a geodesic dome or mason jar) for our successors. Similarly, we have banks of frozen embryos (zoos of rare animals in the deep freeze) and warehouses of rare seeds carefully tucked away for some future Eden. In this way, nature finds its final habitat in liquid nitrogen. It is not entirely ludicrous to speak of a TV-dinner paradise awaiting the will to make it happen at humanity's convenience. This is culture's complete success.
For Marxists, culture is a product of human labor and is intertwined with the notion of material history. In the early part of the twentieth century, cultural studies were a dominant concern of the Frankfurt School theorists, including T. W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Siegfried Kracauer, Hanns Eisler, and Leo Lowenthal. In fact, Adorno, as a cultural anthropologist, wrote about such phenomena as insomnia, jogging, divorce patterns, IQ tests, and zoos in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1974). Like Gebser, Adorno and other Frankfurt School scholars, worked within the shadow of Husserl’s powerful critique of metaphysical reductionisms. But unlike Gebser, these scholars of the Critical School (as Frankfurt was alternatively known) were also predisposed to Marx’s powerful critique of culture. According to Martin Jay, “culture” for the Frankfurt theorists is an “inevitable intertwining of material and ideal or spiritual reality” (1984: 112–113). For this reason, the praxis-oriented Frankfurt scholars insisted that “culture” is a somatic whole, not unlike Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the “flesh of the world,” Francis Ponge’s “semantic thickness,” or Sartre’s “signifying soil” (see Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 75).

According to the Frankfurt School of cultural studies, to isolate culture from society, as something superior to society, is to miss the pervasive power of hegemony. In *Prisms: Cultural Criticism and Society* (1967), Adorno argued that to hypostatize the concept of “culture” as a transcending and coherent reality is to fetishize one of the parts of a pseudo-Marxist-Hegelian holism. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), Adorno and Horkheimer argued that the split between mental and manual labor, which marked the dialectic of the Enlightenment, corresponds to the separation of mind and matter, art and administration. Adorno has argued that the solution to this bifurcated world cannot come from within culture itself, for, as demonstrated by the hermenèutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Dilthey, the culture critic is situated within the culture to be criticized and indeed may be a product of that culture. According to Adorno, to be able to question the values of her or his own culture, the critic must treat them immanently as ideologies to be compared to “objective” (noumenal) reality. Comparisons that make possible immanent critique, however, presuppose a transcendental vantage point from which to draw the comparison. In this sense, Adorno has argued that immanent criticism can never suffice by itself.

The alternatives—either calling culture as a whole into question from outside under the general notion of ideology, or confronting it with the norms which it itself has crystallized—cannot be accepted by critical theory. To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel’s polemic against Kant. (1967: 31)

Though he failed to escape Kantianism, Adorno did come to suspect it. For the Frankfurt scholars generally, any adequate conceptualization of culture required an overcoming of the methodological dualism initiated by Descartes between immanent and transcendent perspectivism. This critical understanding of method as an invention of the modern Occident was shared by Gebser. Gebser argued against the dualism of “ideology” versus “objective reality,” for he maintained that one can see one’s culture from “within” via the different modalities that comprise it.

**A GEBSERIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE RISE OF “CULTURE”**

It is no empty coincidence that the term “culture” emerged during the process of nation-state consolidation throughout Europe. Each phenomenon was a consequence of the emergent perspectival consciousness that pushed toward rationalization, order, and fragmentation. Just as Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536) and Peter Ramus (1515–1572) set about re-forming knowledge into parts (academic departmentalization, or what Husserl called “regional ontologization”), Galileo launched the mathematization of nature (*mathesis universalis*) in the interest of technologization. Unlike the Pythagoreans or Euclid before him, Galileo was motivated by technical manipulation rather than by pure arithmetic. Galileo’s postulation of pure causality as an essential quality of the universe embodied the modern analytic mentality that spatializes the world, defining it as fatal linearity. Likewise, the reflexive analytic interest in culture, described as a “rebirth,” “reawakening,” “enlightenment” (and capitalized as Renaissance), is indicative of the modern mentality which, as Gebser argued, erupted in the fifteenth century. Gebser argued (very much like Gadamer) that the experience of aperspectival time can be metaphorically called an “open horizon” (integrating past, present, and future fragments) constituted by multiple “futures” (choice) rather than a *chain* of causality that always already justifies the present and a particular future. The power sought by the doctrine of causality is to make a chosen future appear inevitable, a prisonhouse of causal discourse. Historical “perspective” posits a time line, an indomitable thread of yesteryear leading to, explaining, causing and justifying present conditions. This perspective is often expressed in modern science fiction stories in which...
a person travels back in time, alters conditions, and totally disrupts or changes the present.

During a period of about 200 years (1400–1600), modern space was discovered, objectivated, externalized, explored, and perspectively divided. Against the rapidly expanding sense of space, modern European individualism became condensed and concentrated. This is demonstrated in many ways, including the appearance of the first European psychological texts and Donatello’s (1386–1466) successful depiction of motion in stone (through the recognition of the principle of weight shift or ponderation), as well as his extraction of sculpture from the Medieval niche out into modern, three-dimensional, free-standing space, with his bronze “David” (c. 1429–1432).

Yet another indication of the consolidation of the modern ego is the location of the individual observer before the canvas or fresco, thanks to the discovery of linear perspective by Leon Battista Alberti (1407–1472) and Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), both of whom were influenced by Roger Bacon’s (1214–1294) essays on optics. These cultural expressions, as well as Lorenzo Ghiberti’s (1378–1455) masterful accentuation of depth in his relief “Isaac and His Sons,” articulate the emerging awareness of the autonomous (isolated) self, rationally located in space, relative to external objects. Modern three-dimensional space is perspective-projected from the psyche, fixing its own position as incarnate consciousness. The somatic emphasis, which roots empiricism in intimate kinesics and “proxemics” (the relative location of “things” “in” space) indicates a fundamental shift in attitude from the mythic, unperspectival world. Like free-standing sculpture, the European came to prize self-sufficiency, action, independence, and being “balanced” and “adjusted,” as if she could be “tuned up.”

The relationship between culture and nature has come to be increasingly characterized as a confrontation manifested as a renewed (since antiquity) obsession with the mimetic concept of knowledge as model or simulation. The heavenly lid is thus lifted away by the invention of the telescope. The sense of space rapidly expands virtually to infinity, while the individual shrinks correspondingly and is threatened with no longer being the center of all things. This same decentering of European humanity reveals the expansion of geographic space evinced by Petrach (1304–1374) and the distinctively modern compulsion to explore, to map (to gain rational control over via depiction), and to exploit new worlds (e.g., Marco Polo’s journeys in the latter half of the thirteenth century).29 The emergence of the modern ego manifests itself as a resolute will to confront space and is accompanied by a fundamental change in the sense of European humanity’s relationship with nature. The modern ego is identical with the sum of its defenses.

It is during this momentous shift in attitude, from the unperspectival to the perspectival world, that, as Nietzsche observed, gods begin to die at the hands of scientific heroes—by the blade of reason. As Mircea Eliade (1963) has rightly explained, the point is not to ask if a myth is empirically true but rather if it is alive. The supernatural collapses into the fantastic depth of the natural, with its own mysterious and unbreakable laws. With Galileo and Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), mathematics was reestablished as a pseudo-Pythagorean sacred language. God came to be projected in humanity’s image and, since civilized humanity was European and rational, God was redefined as the Divine Engineer. The Sacred Book of Creation was written in mathematics.

Violent religious “sectorization” (fragmentation) heralded its own crisis in the face of this revolution (which Gebser insisted was nonlinear) as a Re-formation that introduced the doctrine of personal conscience, private guilt, personal salvation, and a personal God (John Huss was burned as a heretic in 1415, and Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517). Concurrently, Descartes (1596–1650) instituted the ancient Platonic cosmic split between absolute objectivism and contingent subjectivism which had been canonized by Bacon (following his Oxford Professor effort), in the form of method (controlling and re-presentational will). Private, silent reading became the norm, legal notions of private, even inalienable rights, were conceived, and attempts to spatialize time, as a medium for measurement with its consequent modern anxiety about scheduling, began.

Quantification and other forms of atomization commenced, ultimately leading to cubism and pointillism in art, the fragmentation of crafts into assembly lines, Frederick Winslow Taylor’s (1911) obsession with time-study, bureaucratization, the modern obsession with speed in transportation, digitized information processing and transmission, sports, and so on.30 Kant categorized space and time as transcendental a priori. These concepts constitute the modern Western world, forming the core ideas that sustain modern science and cosmology up to and beyond Albert Einstein’s attempt to integrate them back into a causal continuum. Both Galileo and Isaac Newton labored to formulate methodically the laws that govern the motion of virtual bodies in virtual space. Time has come to be equated with motion. Time has been reduced to matter in motion.

From around 1400 to 1600, a rationalized but narrowed sectorization that is characteristic of the perspectival mentality became dominant. Gebser traced its first stirrings to around 1250. Around that year, the troubadours began writing the first lyric poetry in the first person singular.
Albertus Magnus (1193–1280), who was Thomas Aquinas’s teacher at the University of Paris, reasserted, after 1500 years, the validity of Aristotle’s linear, hierarchical logic, which became the foundation for the Port-Royal logicians via Descartes. The first comprehensive European textbook on psychology by Petrus Hispanus (later Pope John XXI) appeared in 1277.31

Unperspectival communities, dominated by mythical mentality and a cooperative milieu, gave way to rational competition as a consequence of the temporal anxiety manifested by what Jacques Ellul (1964) has called the “cult of efficiency.” The choice of the religio (religious imagery) as in the “cult-ure” of efficiency, clearly captures the spiritual dogmatism of Comte’s dream of a positive religion where power is materialized as technique and machine. Temporal anxiety becomes manifest as an obsession with convenience (speed), which has emerged as the predominant social value. Increasingly, peoples are willing to conduct warfare for the resources to sustain an overdeveloped sense of “comfort,” and “amusement.”

The rationalization of behavior, as both the early “humanistic” Marx and Weber observed, leads to the human machine. The birth of bureaucracy emphasizes compartmentalization, standardization, and the definition of restricted behavioral domains as “functions,” such as the division of labor and its subdivision by time as motion engineering.32 The concept of “market” becomes hypostatized with “natural” laws of its own. In this light, the phrase “Renaissance man” comes to be seen as a misnomer, for the Renaissance heralded the supreme value of a narrow focus, specialization, and expertise.

The so-called “Renaissance men,” such as Brunelleschi, who created non-directional virtual space with the dome of the cathedral of Florence (300 years before Newton and nearly 200 years before Michelangelo’s dome for St. Peters), and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), who perfected aerial perspective in technical drafting and painting, were actually medievals who had the advantage of a revitalized Aristotelianism. They straddled the unperspectival and perspectival worlds, giving birth to the Greek cultural spirit of praxis. For these individuals, as for the ancients, this spirit still included a polar dimensionality of phronesis (the quality of prudence or ethical, aesthetic judgment still alive in Cicero’s rhetoric) and techne (simple technique). With the advent of perspectivism, this polarity petrified into duality.

Praxis, as manifested by the “Renaissance man,” soon became bifurcated.33 It has become modern practice, which objectively excludes phronesis, leaving a truncated sense of knowledge as the simple awareness of facts and technique (a reduction from transcendental reason to material

Knowledge has come to mean technological prowess. Hence, many scholars, such as Jurgen Habermas (1971), E. D. Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, and James S. Trefil (1987), and David Allan Bloom (1987), have decried the degeneration of the university to the status of a four-year vocational school, with the modern, materialistic metaphorical bias of the dialectic of manual versus mental labor exaggerated.

Machine language, including such terms as “division of labor,” “function,” “operation,” “institution,” “manipulation,” “control,” “feedback mechanism,” “interface,” and so on, has emerged as the dominant system of signification for human behavioralism in its broadest sense. The desire for power/control is encapsulated in the term “management,” which corresponds to the reduction of the world to “resource base,” including humanity metonymically reduced to “hands,” available for exploitation at will. “Culture” thus comes into opposition with “nature,” and the systematic subjugation of the world legitimately commences with the extermination of other species, including “savages” and “scapegoats,” in the interest of efficiency.35

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) heralded the dissemination of political will beyond the royal court to all areas of social intercourse. Strategy thus became the order of the day, and calculation, in the service of ulterior motives such as the precise detection and control of deviation from prescribed “norms,” has taken on a tinge of evil—what Peter Sloterdijk (1987) has called “cynical reason.”

As “civilization” disseminates, it not only leads to discontent but also to more widespread and efficient violence. The definition of culture as a pseudorational “body” of rules opens the way for the modern sciences of surveillance, apprehension, and management of “anti-socials” (criminality) and for widespread sanctions.36 Moreover, in his description of “total war,” Johan Galtung (1980) has referred to the fact that during the twentieth century, massive civilian populations have become legitimate military targets. He has failed to understand, however, that this is so because entire national populations are integrated into war efforts via industrialization. There are no civilians, for to wage modern mechanized war requires vast labor to manufacture and supply the war machine. All of culture becomes synonymous with rationalistic economy/efficiency. B. F. Skinner (1953) has reduced behavior to “operant conditioning,” or “rewards” and “punishments” (without bothering to understand how they may be discerned as such by the “social agent”), while George C. Homans (1961) has reduced interpersonal relationships to an economic formula, a universal logic of exchange. Kenneth Burke (1976), meanwhile, has divided the world into the “friendlies” and the “unfriend-
lies." Digital reasoning defines human action as Newtonian opposition. Modern individualism is thus portrayed. Strategic "mental-rationality," as Gebser referred to it, has become global. Reason is hypostatically projected, with the consequent transformation of spontaneously occurring communities into bureaucratic organizations founded for specific, instrumental purposes. Zoning, which initially segregated graveyards from areas for the living, has progressed to planned ghettoization and the further fragmentation of space into business districts, bedroom "communities," industrial "parks," and so on. The formation of groups (the social) themselves is prescribed and executed as an instrument of change. Initially, groups were formed for warfare and ritual, but today the purpose of the social is to attack all manner of phenomena; an example is RCA's organization of the famed Camden, New Jersey, research "team," led by Vladimir Zworykin, to make television happen, to attack and conquer the problem of "radio with pictures" as a new purveyor of commercial messages.

Value is reduced to quantifiable productivity (statistical significance) or banished from the universe as subjective nonsense. Hence, the burden of modern nihilism correlates with a narrowing sense of value in societies that are dominated by technological culture. Quality is dissolved into quantity, and only work, as announced by Voltaire's (1694-1778) hero Candide, can stave off the darkness. From there it is but a short theoretical jump to Marx, who defined paradise as a condition of nonalienating labor. This proposition is diametrically opposed to the original spirit of Greek praxis, for "work" is doing what one does not want to do and is as such essentially modern, compared with "craft," which retains a dimension of aesthetic satisfaction in creation. Prônesis becomes a despised elitism "up there," leaving the modern technical society materially productive but qualitatively impoverished, with individuals becoming social isolates within an aggregate, not members of a community. This condition has been disparaged in many works.

"Meaning" becomes a major problem across several modern semantic fields, as nihilism is manifested as an invention/separation of "art" from life (craft). The problem of nihilism infects even characterizes the modern arts, including literature, painting, dance, architecture, music, et cetera. I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden (1923) sought the meaning of meaning, supporting Victor Frankle's (1959) announcement of industrial humanity's search for it. The lack of robust vitalism is perhaps most succinctly stated by the popular bumpersticker that reads, "The One Who Dies with the Most Toys Wins." Meanwhile, rates of suicide, divorce, and drug abuse rise in the most technologically "advanced" cultures. Modern youth, lacking respect for inefficient, "backward" tradition, namely seek "causes" worthy of life and death. Addiction to immediate (efficient or convenient) gratification proliferates with attendant impulse-control problems. Urban tribalization multiplies in the forms of youth gangs and modern cults. Motion picture "stars" and "personalities" express the hypertrophy of the modern ego, providing benchmarks of success and surface-level behavioral role models for the masses. These role models trade on abnormality, since as "stars" they are abnormally beautiful, talented, skilled, or whatever. Such role models also foster frustration for the normal person, who comes to see her/his own life as somehow less real or "happening." The lesson of Plato's cave is lost, as shadow boxes captivate not only the imagination but the vital life/time of the viewer. A Third Sophistic threatens as we witness the magnified use of Bacon's rhetorical strategy, which he called "formulae" (ready, premeditated catch phrases), in sound-bite political philosophy and marketing.

Another legacy of the rationalization of culture is the division of life manifest as the warehousing of materially unproductive individuals in housing "projects," day "cares," or "correctional facilities," and "rest homes" for the unskilled, the young, and the elderly. Indeed, for the affluent elderly, entire "out-of-the-way communities" have been engineered along the lines of post-World War II Levittown-like suburban worlds; an example is Sun City in Arizona.40

Similar compartmentalization and individualization are evident not only by the dominance of the automobile but also in related cultural expressions, including the widespread construction of shopping malls, e.xtant from urban centers and residential areas (the so-called "malling of America"). The very term "sub-urban" suggests a loss of civility proportional to the increased isolation of people from the urban center. Other technologies that encourage isolation include the novel, air conditioning, television, computer games, and headphones. "Programmers" increasingly fragment audiences/markets in the search for profits.

Beginning with the Enlightenment doctrine of "mental faculties" (which may be traced to Nicholas Casanus), fragmentation has facilitated modern psychological rationalization (i.e., cognitive dissonance). By this means, individuals may "account" for their behavior, even if it is inconsistent with their ethical values, by telling themselves that the behavior and the morality of it are two completely different domains (e.g., "that's business"). Indeed, morality, being of the realm of judgment, is utterly ignored in lieu of brute behavior patterns.
SYSTATIC APPRECIATION

Gebser’s theory of plus-mutational change facilitates a new way to reflect on “culture,” creating the potential for escaping it as blind (predetermining) faith and making it a concept that enables new ideas. From a Gebserian perspective, “culture” is an invention of the revitalized perspectival attitude manifest as critical reflection. On an ethnographic level, the perspectival culture that generates such “problems” as “culture” has demonstrated itself to be very tenacious, insatiable, destructive, and survivable. A satisfied citizen is the nightmare of the industrialist. Mass production demands mass consumption, and people increasingly define themselves by what they can consume rather than by what they produce. In short, material magic and spatial exploration and exploitation have proven to be very “successful,” in terms of species population growth and expansion. The need to reintegrate nature and culture is becoming critical, however, because the perspectival mentality has become hypertrophic and consequently deficient (suicidal).

Survival demands a mutation toward integral consciousness and a coincidentally new “culture” that is much less fragmentary and confrontational. If such a new attitude can emerge, it will change the very idea of “culture” itself. Postmodern humanity will either be much more aware of the integrality of arational nature than has been the case since the Judeo-Christian revolution or extinction for many species including Homo sapiens, becomes a serious possibility. Signs of the emerging integral culture are appearing, including the dissolution of the cold war and the greater acceptance of “alternative” lifestyles. Major shifts toward global economic and ecological cooperation, rather than competition, are also evident.41

In spite of these signs, the violent and dangerous death throes of perspectivity are still to be experienced. For instance, the rampant nationalism that has reasserted itself in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the uncertainty about who will control the former Soviet empire’s nuclear arsenal are causes for anxiety. As Gebser observed, moments of mutational changes in consciousness (which are “leaps” of awareness, not gradual re-formations) are fraught with anxiety. The current condition is no different.

Gebser’s call for integral consciousness can help us find a way to mend the opposition between culture and nature (among others) before it is too late. He argued for an integral understanding that fosters mutual recognition of One in and through the Other. Difference is recognizable only through or relative to the Other, be it a different object in space, a different idea or emotion, a different cultural modality, or a different person. Each has value (significance) only through the play of difference. For instance, the position of an object in space can become significant only relative to the position of other objects. The integral consciousness or attitude, for which Gebser argued, is not a fusion, a melting pot, or a blending of differences into uniformity. Rather, by “seeing through,” integrating spatial, temporal, linguistic, cultural, racial, and other differences, one can come to appreciate the uniqueness of oneself as revealed through the differences relative to the Other, in Martin Buber’s (1970) usage as “authentic” and valued.42 Without the Other, I cannot be. Each carries the difference of the Other in itself, and it is only through the intertwined differences that each has value and is understandable as different—meaningful. Appreciation presupposes difference. As explained by Eric Kramer (1991), the fascist dream of structured hexapodal uniformity is the death of meaning as difference. This is suicide, for if the Other is destroyed, the self likewise dissolves into valueless nondistinction—nihilism. In a uniform landscape, like an ocean or a vast desert, one can easily go nowhere, simply because there is no diversity.

As a consequence of his call to integral consciousness, Gebser cannot be compared with the many naysayers and dystopianists precisely because of his faith in reflexive freedom, which is not autonomous isolation (perspectival modernity) but the recognition of the contributions of all dimensions. Nevertheless, since the saving integration is no more predestined than any other realization, he was not a dogmatic utopianist either. The will to change must be initiated by the diaphanous understanding that change is necessary for humanity to survive. The domination of the modern perspectival attitude is manifested in conflicts and competitions between peoples and between culture and nature. Instead of seeing that one’s own value is dependent on difference with (“from”) the Other, competing systems commonly erupt into relationships characterized by war, conquest, and extermination.

Integration is a wholly different mode of consciousness, a new attitude/culture that emphasizes interrelational difference. It is this consciousness of process that reveals value/meaning by means of an awareness of the dependency on the sense of Others for the sense of self. Extermination of difference is nihilistic. In this regard, Gebser argued that “we will have no success with mastering the tasks given to our epoch unless we have the courage to supersede the merely three-dimensional, spatially conceived systems” (1985: 286). Systatic, integrative awareness is not a deconstruction of systems into nihilism where, because everything is equally appropriate “appropriateness” becomes senseless, but an
attitude of “seeing through” various systems and appreciating differences that co-constitute their respective (respected) uniquenesses. Difference is constituted by comparative identities, and vice versa. The “fecund moment” of the genesis of meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), contains the integral play of identity and difference: a process integral with the “vast complex ‘time,’ encompassing and co-constituting the world” (1962: 331), a process largely ignored or falsely spatialized until now. As Merleau-Ponty demonstrated, time “arises from my relationship to things” (1962: 412).

Spatializing perspectivity generates systems of categories that fragment the world. The perspectival attempt to spatialize time and to categorize it as an extensity among other measurements rather than as an intensity reveals an attitude that falsely postulates time as being controllable by re-presenting it spatially. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of time that has resulted in anxieties about it. These anxieties have been expressed by stress-induced illnesses like ulcers, a great need for barbiturates (a chemical slowing down), and phrases such as “deadline,” “kill time,” and “down time.”

Agreeing with Husserl, Merleau-Ponty recognized that time, as the “pre- eminent acategorical magnitude” (1962: 332) is an intensity, rather than a spatial extensity. Categorizing systems, which are spatialized and “fixed” as “structures,” need not be rejected, but must be reduced to their appropriate magnitudes and extensities while intensities must be seen in their own mode of arrangement—what Gebser called “systasis” (1985: 286). Insofar as such an attitude can be achieved, the ability to perceive acategorical effectualities, not categorical fixities, will be realized. Such a mode of perception is called “diaphanous” or “transparent” “sight.” When it is possible to think/perceive acategorically, the world becomes “transparent.” “Under” such conditions, “we are then no longer tied to the spatial structure of systems but will be able to see through them systastically (integratively). The transparently (diaphanously) emerging space will then no longer be a three-dimensional, but already a four-dimensional, reality” (p. 286). Even to refer to time as a “dimension” presents an unwarranted spatialization. Systasis is a perception through multiple cultural systems and their correlated consciousnesses. Integral (systatic) consciousness (awareness) allows each of them to emerge as unique and valuable.

Integrality is an awareness of the multiplicity of modes of consciousness that simultaneously and meaningfully constitute our world as a diversity of ways of experiencing. It does not “transcend” all other ways of experiencing. Indeed, “transcendence” is a unique project of the mental-rational perspectival consciousness. Rather, integral awareness is a self-reflexive experience that reveals itself to be constituted of all other consciousness structures. It is not a combination of them but an integration of their differences. Integral awareness allows one to experience the magical, the mythical, and the rational in “oneself.” Neither mode of experiencing is privileged. Therefore magic and myth are not rationalized out of existence, nor is reason mystified or worshipped exclusively from a mythical or a magical attitude. The differences between each mode of experiencing and which give each its unique quality, are appreciated, not ignored (as inefficient or incorrect, or irrelevant) or rejected.

Time as a problem erupted in the twentieth century in efforts to control it representationally in science (Einstein), art (Picasso and Georges Braque), philosophy (Husserl, Alfred North Whitehead, Heidegger), literature (James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, Rainer Maria Rilke), history (Foucault), music (Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Anton von Webern, John Cage) theater (Federico García Lorca, Bertolt Brecht), management (F. W. Taylor, Kenneth Blanchard), and so forth. Systasis, according to Gebser, is a complementary integration of acategorical time with the previously dominant categorical mode of spatializing thought. The diaphanously revealed space-time continuum is bound by integral continuity. Gradually, time comes to mean more than clock time. With understanding (seeing through) what time means, so too the meaning of eternity emerges. Integrality yields a sense that is neither temporal nor eternal, but rather an appreciation of each as seen through the other. The fixity of structural thinking can only be understood as a temporal expression. Boundary and boundlessness are coconstituting, cosignifying. Each culture constitutes a temporic schema, such as rhythmic cyclicality, linear eschatology, and so on. Some include ideas of eternity and others teleology. All presuppose, however, an original atemporal immediacy of experience (in Husserlian terms, the “standing streaming now”) that is “located” in accord with a lived cosmology—resident truth in its most immediate and total (inconcently unquestionable) mundaneness.

Once perspectivism in its multimodal manifestations (such as fear, hate, vengeance, and greed) is seen for what it is, the opportunity to transcendentally criticize it is realized. “Cooperation,” or more appropriately “community,” with no linear goal or accompanying anxiety and which is nondirectional—nonspatial, is the behavioral expression of integrality. For instance, integral seeing recognizes magic in and through cybernetic rationality and has no interest in hierarchically systematizing an evolution of worldviews (positivism). Each worldview is revealed by others. The modern problem of intersubjectivity (which is the birthplace of objectivity as intersubjective agreement) is dissolved or reinterpreted systatic-
ally as the genesis of meaning, which is always communal, intersubjective, and transcendental. One cannot appreciate oneself unless one sees oneself in the Other. If all the world were one color, then “color” would be a meaningless series of letters. The point is not to evoke simple complementarity, but to reveal the very process that allows for awareness/meaning (meant as different) itself. We truly appreciate by systematically seeing through differences, and this is how we have knowledge (understanding). This is how we know what is cultural as compared with natural and also how we find wonder in multicultural experiences (see Chapter 8 about multiethnic education).

Systatic experiencing, or the understanding of how diaphanization can enrich experience, is not unilinear adaptation. Adaptation presupposes a hierarchical and intolerant power that compels the weaker cultural element to conform to the stronger cultural element (the overwhelming foreign milieu of the “host” culture) and which, if totally achieved, exterminates the joy of difference, the ecstasy of the unpredictable. Uncertainty leads to anxiety only when control is the central interest. Witness the loss of Native American cultures, which is a simultaneous loss of value for all non-Native Americans. Diaphanization, rather than adaptive conformity, is a multidimensional appreciation of self and Other simultaneously as coconstituting and coevaluating phenomena. Gebser’s call to a mutation in consciousness/attitude that is essentially systatic is a response to what he perceived as the suicidally aggressive drive to conformity most profoundly embodied by Nazi ideology. Gebser’s realization was arguably evident in Franz Kafka and Nietzsche as well. Forty years later, Paul Feyerabend produced Farewell to Reason (1987), which parallels Husserl’s, Heidegger’s, and Gadamer’s critiques, especially Husserl’s Crisis, Heidegger’s The Question Concerning Technology, and Gadamer’s Reason in the Age of Science. In it he warned against the alarming rate at which the “advancing fog of sameness” and environmental “pauperization” was occurring. We are now witness to the greatest mass extinction of biological diversity since the Great Extinction some 65 million years ago! The current crisis is the result of the “success” of a particular perspectival cultural attitude over nature. Just as the naturalists Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and John Muir observed, nature is seen by this divide-and-conquer mentality as a base resource, without value, to which value must be “added” via fragmentation and rearrangement, à la McDonald’s chicken nuggets.

It is not only “nature,” however, that is losing diversity through control (domestication and homogenization) in the interest of efficient exploitation. Cultural diversity is also receding at an alarming rate as social and technological (attitudinal) uniformity advances. As diversity disappears, across the dichotomy of culture and nature, so too meaning evaporates, leaving a vacuum of boredom and nihilism. Feyerabend has written of the dangers of a homogenized “world culture.”

By now Western forms of life are found in the most remote corners of the world and have changed the habits of people who only a few decades ago were unaware of their existence. Cultural differences disappear, indigenous crafts, customs, institutions are being replaced by Western objects, customs, organizational forms. (1987: 2–3)

To be sure, some artifacts that are commodified (Westernized), such as pre-Columbian, Indonesian, or African “art,” find their way into the living rooms and museums of perspectival man, but he knows them only as curiosities and commodities; that is, he knows them only by his own terms. They have lost their indigenous significance. Even if he does know the “stories” that they embody, he knows their truths only as “stories” or “myths.” He does not participate authentically in their power. Their magic becomes a rational fiction. Increasingly, it is the Indonesians, post-Columbian Latinized “Americans,” Africans, and others who, following the West, are selling the things of another attitude or “bygone” or waning world; they are killing their gods. For the gods of their fathers have lost their indigenous significance. Even if he does know the “stories” that they embody, he knows their truths only as “stories” or “myths.” He does not participate authentically in their power. Their magic becomes a rational fiction. Increasingly, it is the Indonesians, post-Columbian Latinized “Americans,” Africans, and others who, following the West, are selling the things of another attitude or “bygone” or waning world; they are killing their gods. For the gods of their fathers cannot match the potency of spatializing machine magic. Their gods become historicized entities of past, pre-enlightened times. The gods and spirits fall into time, which is Western history. They fall to their deaths. What was an integral part of the pre-Columbian’s world becomes abstractly categorized by the perspectival intellectual to the level of being “supernatural.” In the moment of conquest, the moment when he gains only what he can physically see (a material object), perspectival man exterminates a world of alternative meanings, impoverishing everyone including himself. A sacred utensil, with its pragmatic, “useful,” and perhaps even urgent or terrifying vitalism, becomes an artifact for rational display on an organized shelf, carefully deployed in modern, perspectival space for viewing. It does not matter that the shelf is in Mexico City or London. The way of understanding is the same.

While increasing numbers of individuals are beginning to perceive what is happening, Gebser’s call to integrality is a call to a new appreciation, to an understanding that webs of meaning that enrich experience are codependent. Being Mayan is enriched when one realizes that non-Mayans exist. Once this is appreciated, the preservation of meaning (world),
including what is meant by “self” and “Other,” can be allowed to show itself without rational limit.

NOTES


5. Probably still the best discussion of this is to be found in Jacques Ellul, Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes, 1965, especially his discussion of modern rational technique leading to “orthopraxy.”

6. The use of the word “spirit” has always been central to the notion of social organization and was used in this sense, for instance, in Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1930). See also Robert Nisbet, History of the Idea of Progress, 1980.

7. The issue here is one of fundamental attitude or “consciousness structure,” to use Gebser’s phrase. The Greek attitude is vital and pervasive today in our expectations and values.

8. A good example of this is the notion of the “Five Civilized Tribes” of Native Americans now located in Oklahoma. Civilization means domestication (to rule) and bringing into the urbane sphere of the city.

9. See an analysis of this process in Edmund Husserl’s The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy, 1970. Husserl explained how transcendental mathematics was conjoined by Galileo with the naive trial-and-error approach of medieval alchemical empiricism, affording him more control and generalization. The classical search for secular transcendental laws to cover all contingent cases was reborn.


11. It must be understood, however, that while Karl Mannheim’s idea that knowledge is situation-bound (situationsgebunden, meaning tied to a given epoch’s constellation of sociohistorical circumstance) and therefore not available for diaphaney, he was also a dialectical progressivist. See Karl Mannheim, Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus (1935). Both positions are quite at odds with Gebser’s theory.

12. The various “objective” techniques for conquering “the text” have been shown to be less than adequate. See, for instance, Claude Lévi-Strauss’ and Roman Jakobson’s “scientific” interpretations of William Shakespeare and Charles Baudelaire. Also see Geoffrey Hartman’s work, Saving the Text (1981), which discusses Derridean “reading.”

13. Gebser was careful to note that change meant as progressive usually also meant material/technological change.

14. Most “postmodern” writings stand on three major critiques of Western reason that are themselves very modern: those by David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Jacques Derrida’s work bears an extremely close resemblance to Martin Heidegger’s work, which in turn draws very heavily from Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness (which Heidegger edited just prior to writing Being and Time). Derrida has managed to confuse and misrepresent many of these authors throughout in the name of Nietzsche. Derrida’s antimodernity is neither aperspectival nor postmodern. Derrida’s work is a decidedly hypertextic state of perspectival modernism. It manifests an egomaniacal disrespect for Others. For a detailed tracing of Derrida’s purposeful misrepresentation of Husserl’s work for his own interests, see David Lehman’s Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man, 1992, and J. Claude Evans’ Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice, 1991, and Eric Kramer’s “Television Criticism and the Problem of Ground: vol. I (1988).

15. As Heinrich Rickert wrote, “Culture is the common affair in the life of the nations; it is the possession with respect to the values of which the individuals sustain their significance in the recognition of all peoples, and the cultural values which adhere to this possession are therefore those which guide historical representation and conceptual formation in the selection of what is most essential.” Heinrich Rickert, Die Grenzender naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, 2nd edition (p. 509).

16. Both Wilhelm Dilthey and Rickert were standing on the shoulders of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), who argued that all culture is a complex system of significance, thus making civilizations texts for hermeneutical analysis. This “universal semantization” already outstrips the synchronic, fragmentary approach to language offered by Ferdinand de Saussure’s “scientific linguistics,” which was introduced a century later with the posthumous publication of his famous Cours de Linguistique Générale, in 1915. Humboldt’s work in linguistics, especially his concept of the “inner form” (innere Sprachform) of languages, which implies a deeper structure than external grammatical principles, has directly influenced several scholars including A. F. Pott and Heymann Steinthal in the nineteenth century and Kenneth Pike, Noam Chomsky, and Lévi-Strauss in the twentieth. As Howard Isham (1967) has
stated, Humboldt’s belief that “Languages delineate the cultural characteristics of nations, each of which has its own individuality and arouses a sense of unity in men” (p.73) directly influenced B. L. Whorf, Edward Sapir, and especially Ernst Cassirer (who offered probably the best evaluation of Humboldt’s contributions in the first volume of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms).


19. As Merleau-Ponty has written in his essay, “From Mauss to Claude Lévi- Strauss,” however, “When Frazer used to say of field work, ‘God save me from it,’ he was depriving himself not only of facts but of a mode of [experiential] understanding.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signs, Fr. 1960/Eng. 1964 (p. 120).

20. Husserl is instructive here. In The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, he reached the logical limit of the idealized mathesis universalis, or purified “formulae world” abstracted from res extensa to become the exclusive domain of knowledge. Husserl was the first to demonstrate clearly the absurd situation in which abstraction is truth, while direct experience is suspect because it is always personal experience in the life-world of the perceiver. Under such modern rationalization, the source of knowledge—direct experience—is rejected on the grounds that it is “subjective.” Though Husserl first recognized this absurdity, Gebser extended this explanation back to its origin in the modern attitude. Several excellent works about Husserl’s phenomenology of science are available, including Charles W. Harvey, Husserl’s Phenomenology and the Foundations of Natural Science, 1989; Joseph J. Kockelmans and Theodore J. Kisiel, eds., Phenomenology and the Natural Sciences, 1970; and Elisabeth Stroker, The Husserlian Foundations of Science, 1987.

21. For instance, there is a passage (a modern spatial metaphor) often attributed to the Indian chief, Seattle, and agreeably cited as a corroborating non-Western authority, especially by modern environmentalists and biologists. In it the chief described the universe as an intricate system like the web of a spider. This well-known statement has been exposed as the fanciful lyricism of a modern white copywriter from Texas. The perspectival metaphor of “interdependence” and the biologized “system” could never have been so conceived by Chief Seattle (1790–1866).

22. See Geertz’s The Interpretation of Cultures, 1973, especially chapter 2, “The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man” (pp. 33–54).

23. To demonstrate what he meant, Geertz referred to M. J. Herskovitz’s work, Cultural Anthropology, writing, “What, after all, does it avail us to say, with Herskovitz, that ‘morality is a universal, and so is enjoyment of beauty, and some standards of truth,’ if we are forced in the very next sentence, as he is, to add that ‘the many forms these concepts take are but products of the particular historical experience of the societies that manifest them?” (p. 41).

The argument is applicable to E. T. Hall’s fantastic generalization to a single dualistic axis of “high” versus “low” “context.” In his work, “context” loses the sophistication that it carries in hermeneutic analyses, from which field he borrowed it. The problem here is that no one communicates with a culture, whether “high” or “low.” Rather, people communicate with other people, a complication that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) had already faced in the early 1800s. Those who commit to memory Hall’s categorizations of different national communication styles and then proceed to attempt to behave accordingly while in a different country are very likely to fall victim to an oversimplifying mythology generated by the modern Western obsession with parsimony.


25. For a comparison of Talcott Parsons’ functional structural theory with Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism, see Appendix D (pp. 785–787) of Eric Kramer’s “Television Criticism and the Problem of Ground” vol. II. (University Microfilms International -8816770) 1988.


28. See Martin Jay, Adorno, 1984 (p. 116), about Adorno’s disagreement with Karl Mannheim’s notion of the “free-floating” intelligentsia.

29. For instance, in the memoirs of Christopher Columbus (translated by James Reedy, unpublished manuscript), there is left little doubt about his colonial designs, as he described the New World thus:

Thirty-three days after my departure ... I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our illustrious Monarch.... In that island...[which] we named Espanola, there are mountains of very great size and beauty, vast plains, groves, and very fruitful trees.... The inhabitants of both sexes in this island ... go always naked as they were born, with the exception of some of the women, who use the covering of a leaf, or some bough, or an apron of cotton which they prepare for that purpose .... [T]hey are naturally timid and fearful.... As soon however as they see they are safe, and have laid aside all fear, they are very simple and honest, and exceedingly liberal with all they have.... They exhibit great love towards all others in preference to themselves: they also give objects of great value for trifles, and content themselves with very little or nothing in return.... It even happened that a sailor received for a leather strap as much gold as was worth three golden nobles. (pp. 5–8)

We see that Columbus, in one stroke of the pen, has turned from the appreciation of the natives’ “great love towards all others in preference to themselves” to a discussion of commodities. Columbus concluded with the pledge “that with a little assistance afforded me by our most invincible sovereigns, I will procure them as much gold as they need, as great a quantity of spices, of cotton, and of mastic ... and as many men for the service of the navy as their majesties may require” (p. 15). Columbus probably wrote this in the Azores in February, 1493.
and sent it from Lisbon in March, notifying the Royal Treasurer of the Spanish Court, Lord Rafael Sanchez. In return for the native people's love, Columbus offered conquest, plunder, and slavery. A clearer statement of the erupting perspectivism can hardly be found. This indicates at once both the power and selfishness of the modern European mentality.

30. In The Principles of Scientific Management, Frederick Winslow Taylor wrote on page one, "This special edition printed in February 1911, for confidential circulation among the members of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, with the compliments of the author." Taylor was clearly pleased to achieve social engineering of a precision worthy of mechanical engineers. The fact that his work was initially circulated in confidence also exposes the anxiety about the new "scientific management" (temporal stress) that was already being felt in labor relations.

31. See Gebser's extensive analysis in The Ever-Present Origin, especially the first chapter.

32. See an explanation of the shift from craft to industrial labor practices in Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital, 1974 (p. 11). Scales are arbitrary, and as Jurgen Habermas (Ger. 1959/Eng. 1973) has demonstrated, this reveals two different attitudes toward praxis: Mannheim's, which retains the Aristotelian notion of Phronesis (prudence), and Rudolf Carnap's Technik, with its exclusive emphasis on efficient doing/making. This critique began with Husserl's last work, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (which was edited by Walter Biemel and appeared in German in 1954) and was extended by the Frankfurt theorists (notably Herbert Marcuse), by Heidegger in The Question Concerning Technology, (a compilation of lectures given in 1949 and 1950), and Gadamer's Reason in the Age of Science (which first appeared in German in 1976).


34. See Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, 1971.

35. As reported by several sources including Jacques-Yves Cousteau, The Cousteau Almanac (1980); Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jorgen Randers, Beyond the Limits (1992); Paul Ehrlich in Animal Extinction: What Everyone Should Know (1985), R. J. Hoage, ed. We are currently in the midst of the greatest mass extinction since the end of the Mesoic Era. Of course, the great extinction that marked the end of the Age of Reptiles was a natural occurrence. Extinction as the result of extermination, with its volitional and directional will-to-power, is a completely different issue.


37. See, for instance, Kenneth Burke's discussion of Mein Kampf as the "well of Nazi magic," which corresponds very closely with Gebser's analysis of the Nazi consciousness and its various manifestations. Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, 1950.


41. Note the multinational reaffirmation and agreement to protect Antarctica that was signed in 1991, the consensus (despite the ambivalence of the United States) about solutions to global warming and species preservation displayed at the "Earth Summit" by over 120 national leaders in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June, 1992, and attempts to limit expenditures on arms by the United States and the former Soviet Union during the 1990s.

42. Alfred North Whitehead's conceptualization of process and relativity is instructive here as it is quite similar to Gebser's ideas about systasis. See his Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh during the session 1927–28 and published as Process and Reality, 1978.

43. It may be that Steven Vaitkus' discussion of "fiduciary attitude" as the essential (nonrelativistic) foundation of practical everyday life, suggests a social "order" that is aperspectival—based on a "taken for granted" trust. This fundamental attitude of credulity (readiness to believe in the Other) is exposed by the fact that we can never completely confirm the intentions or motives of each other. Without such an attitude of trust, community would be impossible. It is for this reason that George Herbert Mead's conceptualization of social organization as being an essentially formal and logical relationship, his Cartesianism expressed by his distinction between the interobjective and intersubjective social group and the formalized relationship between the particular and the universal (systemic interpretation), and his adoration of the "scientific" group (as the highest attainment of social evolution) are deemed inadequate to the integral attitude. The "scientific" group, despite being goal-directed, is successful only to the extent that it already manifests a fiduciary attitude. Steven Vaitkus, How Is Society Possible?, 1991.

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