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II. B. Culture.

1. We have already seen that cultures may be regarded as principal among

the unities of human evolution
constituted by human consciousness.

Other, ^{less extensive} products -- e.g., institutions, communities, etc. --

we all seem

to be functions of culture.

Reaching back

for the roots of culture -- as -- expression

we find

the mediation of the world
to human consciousness
by meaning.

} "Dimensions of
Meaning,"
Collection.

That is,

every culture as an expression
of consciousness

is a resultant of

a particular way

of understanding experience (meaning)

a particular way of constituting
the human world

on the basis of that understanding,

and particularly of one aspect

of that grasp of experience:

the evaluative or existential aspect:

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The aspect under which
it grasps or apprehends
certain ways of living, performing, projecting,
as worth while,
as valuable,
as furthering,
as to be undertaken.

This I arrive

at my definition of culture in its roots:
culture is the at least implicitly operative set of assumptions
of meaning and value

that informs the lifestyle and project
of the members of a given group of people.

I. e., a culture, is the understanding of the world
in its roots and the projection of that understanding
into living and action
on the part of a particular people.

This understanding & projection
is more often than not
implicit,
except among the most educated
and widely traveled & experienced
members of a given culture.

I. e., it is unquestioned:

this is just the way things are done.

A culture, then, is constituted
by the common sense of a people.

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Common sense is

a set of insights
into meaning and value
that is shared by a group of people,
that is geared in particular to the
practical execution of the task of living,
and that is always supplemented
by particular insights into given situations
as these situations arise.

The combination of the more or less implicit
set of insights
and the particular insight
into the concrete situation
enables the people, under more or less steady conditions,
to master new situations
in a practical fashion,
as these new situations arise.

Now this

implicit set of assumptions re: meaning & value
will differ from one people
to the next. Differences can be more or less dramatic.

· E.g. of traveling through Europe --
one common sense
after another.

Not just a matter of language.

Rather, different ways of structuring the world.

Egs. of northern & southern Europe, Zürich & Nice.

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Eg. of ^{more} dramatic differences, MOR, 247-9
251-2.

Here the differences
become so acute
as to lead
not only to
mutual incomprehension
but to hostility
and even warfare
under the standpoint
of ~~the~~ common sense
is transcended
in favor of a more
universal
& cross-cultural
point of view.

2. This notion of culture

is an empirical one:

there are as many different cultures
as there are operative sets of assumptions
of meaning & value
informing lifestyles and projects.

The empirical notion of culture

is another achievement
of historical consciousness.

The development of historical science
in 19th century

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is responsible
for the empirical notion of culture,
according to which cultures are many and diverse
in time
+ in space,
and a function of different ways in which the
world is mediated by meaning,
understood & evaluated.

Prior to this,

education in the West
was based on a

classical notion of culture:

only one culture was normative,
and it is that culture

which had its roots in Greece and Rome
and was spread more or less effectively
to other parts of the world
by conquering armies

+ Christian missionaries. Eg. of Chinese missions.

Cf. the Greek distinction

betw. Greeks & barbarians (not Greeks &
Persians, Jews, Egyptians, etc.
but Greeks & barbarians).

Difference

is a very difficult thing
for human es to deal with.

Common sense in particular

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seems threatened by difference,
and especially by difference in
meaning & value,
understanding & evaluation.

It tends to regard
what is different
as inferior.

Group bias: the elevation
of cultural or group standards
to normativity.

Thus for ^{the} classicist mentality,
every thing wh. is subsumed under culture --
canons of art,
literary forms,
rules of correct speech,
norms of interpretation,
ways of thought,
the manner & style of philosophy,
the notion of science,
the concept of law,
moral standards,
methods of education --
were assumed to be normative
in a more ultimate sense,
normative for human authenticity.
i. e. a particular way,
limited & relative,
of making one's way in the world.

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This notion of ^{the} normativity of classicist culture broke down w. the rise of historical study and is no longer operative. Classicist culture has broken down in the West and has given rise to modern Western culture, modernity, of wh. we shall say much.

But there still is the tendency of common sense to regard the mediation of the world by meaning & motivation of action by value of one's own culture in a normative fashion, not only for oneself but for people of other cultures.

Because we are historical beings, rooted in a culture, our own culture's mediation of the world (common sense) is important for us, & can only be broken from by a violence that is in most instances unnecessary & psychologically unhealthy unless it violates the normative standards set up by consciousness itself.

But it is only ^{our} particular mediation, more or less satisfactory for us, but not normative for other peoples.

This empirical notion of culture, then, gives rise to an insistence on cultural pluralism as an irreducible fact of our world.

* & to the extent that

To uproot an ind' or a people fr. their culture is disastrous. Cultural change will come about, but healthily only from within.

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To bring this point
closer to home,
for every operative set of meanings & values,
there is, at least potentially,
a different culture.

Thus, in the U.S. today,
we can speak of many cultures:
e.g., ^{various} white middle-class suburban cultures,
the cultures of the super-rich,
& black militant culture,
other forms of black culture,
various American Indian cultures,
feminist culture,
playboy culture,
youth cultures,
counter-cultural movements
(New left & hippies)
the culture of the Jesus movement
or of the Hare Krishna movement,
etc.

To the extent one is sharing in common
operative assumptions of meanings & values
that really inform & determine
a given style of life,
one is a participant in a ^{given} culture.

This is what I call
the more restricted notion of culture,
highly particularized.
In the next class I will contrast it w. a more
general notion that still satisfies the definition.

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but that embraces
larger totalities of people
and longer periods of time.

42: Collect journals.