

Preview

A COLLOQUY OF CULTURE THEORISTS

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General goals

The most general goal of this volume is to present a broad-gauged and accessible discussion of theories of culture, especially as those theories relate to current research issues in the development of mind, self, and emotion. A possible title of the book might have been "Culture: What Is It and How Do You Get It?" An alternative title might have been "The Concept of Culture: Who Needs It?" Most of the contributors to this volume think you need it.

The volume represents a stage in the development of the so-called symbols-and-meanings conception of culture. That conception of culture, expressed in an influential formulation by Geertz (1973:89), defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." One aim of the volume is to draw attention to that view of culture as shared meaning systems. A second aim is to examine conceptual and methodological problems in the definition and study of meaning. A third aim is to show how the study of meaning can help answer questions about the origins of mind, self, and emotion.

In the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf one finds a simple yet dramatic example of the way meaning systems transform affective functioning (1956:267). Whorf points out that the sound pattern *queep* elicits a universal set of associations: *queep* is fast (vs. slow), sharp (vs. dull), narrow (vs. wide), light (vs. dark). Our affective response to *queep* is automatic and that automatic affective response is probably preprogrammed, and it is the same program for !Kung Bushmen, fifteenth-century Florentians, and us. Whorf then asks us to consider the sound pattern *deep*. *Deep* is phonetically similar to *queep*, and, indeed, it elicits the same set of affective associations (fast, sharp, narrow, and light) from everyone except speakers of English. For English speakers, however, *deep* is not simply a sound pattern or non-sense sound; it is a sound with meaning. And that meaning, a subjective conventional fact, totally overrides and alters our reaction to its objective sound properties. For English speakers, and for English speakers only, *deep*

is slow, dull, wide, and dark. Many essays in this volume can be viewed as elaborations of Whorf's insight into the transformative power of meaning systems. Whorf's vivid example also intimates a fourth aim of the volume: to revisit the problem of "relativism" in the light of recent advances in semantic analysis and in culture theory.

History of the volume

The volume is the product of a conference that was itself the product of a planning session. On March 14, 1980, a group of scholars met at the University of California, San Diego, to plan a conference on Conceptions of Culture and Its Acquisition. There were eight of us: Roy G. D'Andrade (University of California, San Diego), Clifford Geertz (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), Carroll E. Izard (University of Delaware), Robert A. LeVine (Harvard University), Theodore Schwartz (University of California, San Diego), Richard A. Shweder (University of Chicago), Michael Silverstein (University of Chicago), and Melford E. Spiro (University of California, San Diego). The planning session turned out to be a successful trial balloon for the subsequent conference: We argued for two days and the debates at the planning session anticipated many of the issues of concern at the conference itself. The conference was held one year later, May 8-10, 1981, at the offices of the Social Science Research Council in New York City. Selected edited transcripts of our debates and discussions at the planning session and conference are presented below. The conference participants are identified at the end of this volume.

Sponsored by the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Social and Affective Development During Childhood, the aim of the conference was to provide a forum for the discussion of recent developments in culture theory and to examine the potential relevance of the culture concept for the objectives of the SSRC committee under whose sponsorship we met. The planning group was motivated by two considerations. First, over the past twenty or so years, although culture theory has advanced, opportunities for scholars of various denominations to compare notes and address common theoretical issues have been rare. Those denominations can be variously defined, but, however one defines them, such sorts as symbolic or interpretive theorists, cognitive scientists, ethnoscientists, phenomenologists, psychoanalytic theorists, critical theorists, contextualists, and so on had not talked to each other nearly enough over the past two decades. United by a common interest in "symbols and meanings," we believed a transdenominational gathering to be not only desirable but possible.

The symbols-and-meanings conception of culture is not entirely free of conceptual and methodological difficulties, and there are several exciting and challenging areas of controversy. To study what something means is to study what it implies to those who understand it (Hirsch 1967, 1976). That much is uncontroversial. For almost every other

question about meaning, there are at least two answers and for every answer there is a "school of thought." How is meaning in everyday language and thought similar to, or different from, meaning in scientific language and thought? Is the concept of meaning reducible to the idea of reference? Should our concept of meaning include some of the non-referential functions of language? Is what something "implies" reducible to *logical* implication or is the idea of "necessity" (what you must conclude from what was said) broader than logic? Is there non-logical (cultural) necessity? Should the concept of meaning be broadened to include both what something means (externally and objectively) and what something means to someone (internally or subjectively)? "He's your father" does not imply "secretly he wants to mutilate or castrate you or remove you from the scene," but that's what it means to some people, even though the meaning seems to be more "in the head" than in the utterance. Such subjective unconstrained meanings are sometimes called "free" associations. Are "free associations" to be included in our concept of meaning? These are fascinating and important questions, and the answers one gives reveal presuppositions about the role of logical and scientific canons in the analysis of mind and beyond that, deeper assumptions about free will, determinism, relativism, and so on. By confronting those presuppositions and assumptions, the planning group hoped to explore the range of ways to analyze cultural forms from a symbols-and-meanings point of view. Thus, spokesmen from diverse schools of thought within the symbols-and-meanings framework were represented at the conference.

There was a second consideration for the planning group. The symbols-and-meanings approach to culture seems to be an unusually well-kept secret in the psychological sciences, most notably among developmental researchers working on such culture-saturated phenomena as personhood and self, morality and convention, social cognition and interpersonal relationships, self-regulation and emotional response. It was the bet of the planning group that this was the right time to bring recent developments in culture theory "out of the closet."

Ten years ago the bet would have been a bad one, and even now it is risky. Much research in the psychological sciences appears to be guided by five rules of thumb, or research heuristics, which, in combination, induce a feeling of resistance to the study of shared meanings, collective representations, and the social origins of mind, self, and emotion.

Heuristic 1: Be indifferent to content; process and structure are primary.

Heuristic 2: Language is epiphenomenal; it can be ignored.

Heuristic 3: What's really real is inside the skin; the individual person is the sole unit of analysis.

Heuristic 4: Search for universals and/or study automatic processes; knowledge in psychology should be modeled after knowledge in physics, chemistry, or biology.

Heuristic 5: Don't think about anything that can't be measured.

Those research heuristics have proved quite useful to experimental psychologists, especially those working on the psychophysics of perception. Unfortunately, those research heuristics, although useful for certain problems, have become too widely applied, for example, among developmental researchers working on more meaning-dependent topics such as moral judgment, interpersonal relationships, social behavior, self-regulation, inferential reasoning, and so on. Indeed, the first four research heuristics have received powerful expression in Jean Piaget's influential agenda for child development research. That agenda has dominated the field for twenty years, and during that period developmental theory has not been at all hospitable to the concept of culture.

The planning group sensed a sea change. What Ted Schwartz has aptly, even if facetiously, dubbed the "pristine processor" view of the child's mind has come to seem, in recent years, less attractive to many psychologists and developmentalists, and the field of child development is now entering what might be called a post-Piagetian stage. As Jerome Bruner commented at the conference:

Over the last few years many social scientists have recognized the narrowness of the image of acquisition that is premised on the conception of a lone child faced with a natural physical order – with the task of the child being to somehow balance his own assimilative tendencies, to accommodate to that natural environment, and to somehow make sense of it. In this image, knowing language makes no difference. Others can't instruct the child until such a time as the child already knows. That image is an image that you get principally from Piaget, but it's also the image you get from classical behaviorism – it's the image you get from Skinnerians. Somehow, the only thing that's there is a natural order of stimulation for the lone child.

There was once a time, not so long ago, when psychology was known as the nonsocial social science. In the last decade this has changed. There has been a renewal of interest in social cognition, social relationships, and social communication (see, e.g., Flavell & Ross 1981; Higgins, Ruble & Hartup 1983), and one even finds psychologists puzzling over the question "What's social about social cognition?" There has been a growing recognition that an indifference to content denies an understanding of actual cognitive, affective, and interpersonal functioning. There has been a retreat from the excessive emphasis on generalized abstract structures (see Shweder 1979, 1982, 1983 for an overview); what psychologists have discovered is that logic is not all there is to thinking and that abstract traits are not all there is to affective and interpersonal functioning. With that discovery, what something "means," how to talk about meaning, and how to study it have become central issues. As George Miller (1981:136) puts it:

Logic was once believed to be the language of thought. That was before we understood how short the leaps are that logic can negotiate. Strictly speaking, formal logic cannot even go from "Fido is a poodle" to "Fido is a dog," because the relation between the two sentences depends on their meaning, not their form. Logic can go from "all poodles are dogs" and "Fido is a poodle" to "Fido is a dog," but it makes for dull conversation.

There are surprisingly few sources to which a psychologist can turn to find a broad-gauged and readable discussion of the "symbols and meanings" approach to cultural analysis. There may be no single source that addresses topics of traditional concern to psychologists: self, emotion, cognition. This is unfortunate, because we are entering a period when culture theorists and psychologists have much to learn from each other. Mindful that recent anthropological, linguistic, and philosophical contributions to the study of meaning and the analysis of idea systems are less widely known than is desirable, the planning group designed a conference in which culture theorists would confront hard-core psychological topics. The essays in this volume present alternative formulations of a symbols-and-meanings conception of culture. Some essays ask how meanings are transmitted in the process of cultural acquisition, and others try to show what difference cultural meanings make for the genesis of mind, self, and emotion.

Way back in 1960 the Social Science Research Council established a Committee on Socialization and Social Structure, chaired by John Clausen. That committee defined an agenda of needed research on social and emotional development and commented on the relative lack of attention that had been given to the content of what is transmitted during socialization and to processes of incidental learning. Now, after twenty years of cognitive structuralism, social scientists are finally turning to these topics.

The colloquy

In the normal course of events the most exciting part of a conference, the informal discussions and exchanges, never reaches a wider audience. All five days of the planning session and the conference were taped. Not unexpectedly, many of the exchanges were revealing, illuminating, and incisive – and the best way I know to preface this volume is to share with you some of our conversations about the problematic aspects of the field. What follows are a few edited transcripts from both the planning session and the conference. Expletives have been deleted.

PROBLEMATIC 1: DO WE HAVE A MESSAGE IF WE DON'T SPEAK IN ONE VOICE?

LeVine: The vast majority of social scientists outside anthropology are not aware of what's been going on in the area of culture theory over

the past twenty years. Even many social scientists who are sold on the idea of cross-cultural research are not convinced that there is anything in the concept of culture that's important for them to understand. Their notion of anthropological research is that it provides a travel-guide-type thumbnail sketch of areas where you might like to work – the anthropological equivalent to the PanAm guide to that area. Many social scientists are not aware of the kind of relativism that is broadly shared in anthropology. Many totally reject the notion that culture represents a complex system that structures subjective experience. Our goal should be to do something about that in the form of a scholarly communication.

Spiro: The notion that we should be a "light unto the Gentiles" is an interesting one, but then, like Saint Paul, you have to have a unified message. And I think it is obvious that we do not have a unified message; we don't have a new testament. We can't say that Christ has risen – a simple message but a very powerful one, if only because there was unanimity among the apostles who preached it. In anthropology there may be as many messages as there are apostles. I'm rather dubious about there being a consensus. For example, I would dissent from the view that we're all relativists. I'm not a relativist, not at least in the usual sense of "relativism." The conference should clarify those conceptual issues that divide us as well as those that unite us.

Shweder: I don't think our goal is to arrive at a standard version of culture theory. Indeed, I doubt it would be possible to arrive at a standard version, even over the long run. I guess I accept Gallie's [1964] notion that social concepts are "essentially contestable" – there will always be divisions between evolutionists, universalists, and relativists. What we can do at the conference is set out a range of possible positions. Fortunately there are fewer viable alternative positions than there are vocal advocates. There are not as many messages as there are apostles.

Geertz: It seems to me there is no consensus in conclusions. What has changed in the last twenty years or so is the realm of discourse as a whole. The sort of things that are discussed now were not discussed, certainly not in that way, twenty years ago. Issues that were central then, even old issues like relativism, are discussed in very different ways now. Insofar as there is any intersubjectivity, it is in this discourse realm. That could be made clear to people outside the field. I'd like to make a second point. I think it would be unwise to think that all productive thinking about culture theory goes on in anthropology. We are much more open to European social thought than before, to certain trends in philosophy and certain kinds of historical work. It's a mood change. That doesn't do away with differences because they are essentially contestable, and they'll be there long after we're all old and gone. But the frame of the discussion, the mode of discourse, that has shifted some, at least for many people. If we could invoke that, and present it as a gigantic quarrel that is going on, but a different sort of

quarrel about different sorts of things said in different sorts of ways, people outside the field would stop thinking about the state of the discussion as though it were twenty or thirty years ago.

No one quarreled with Geertz's point. There is a realm of discourse shared by culture theorists. Culture theory cuts across disciplines. Disputes among culture theorists go on within a common, even if broad, framework of understandings – and I suspect most of the conferees would feel comfortable with Geertz's own definition of culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" [Geertz 1973:89]. But, of course, as Geertz himself has noted, "terms such as 'meaning,' 'symbol' and 'conception' cry out for explication" [ibid.]. Indeed, it is around such questions – what kinds of meanings are there, what kinds of concepts are there, what kinds of symbols are there, how does historical transmission take place, is this or that meaning, concept or symbol historically transmitted or not, what is this or that person's or people's conception of this or that (e.g., kinship, emotions, self, etc.), how are ideas and symbols related to attitudes, feelings, and behavior – that all of the quarreling, much of it fruitful, goes on. Those are the questions addressed in this volume.

PROBLEMATIC 2: MEANINGS, CONCEPTIONS, AND SYMBOLS:

WHAT ARE IDEAS AND WHERE DO YOU FIND THEM?

D'Andrade: When I was a graduate student, one imagined people in a culture; ten years later culture was all in their heads. The thing went from something out there and very large to something that got placed inside. Culture became a branch of cognitive psychology; it was the content of cognitive psychology. We went from "let's try to look at behavior and describe it" to "let's try to look at ideas." Now, how you were to look at ideas was a bit of a problem – and some people said, "Well, look at language." That notion, that you look at idea systems, was extremely general in the social sciences. On, I think, the same afternoon in 1957 you have papers by Chomsky and Miller and in anthropology. Ward Goodenough. All signal an end to the era of "Let's look at people's behavior and see what they do." Before 1957 the definition of culture was primarily a behavioral one – culture was patterns of behavior, actions, and customs. The same behavioral emphasis was there in linguistics and psychology. The idea that cognition is where it's at struck all three fields at the same time – it has a slightly different trajectory in each discipline – whether you do experiments or whether you look for intuitions or whether you talk to informants. I think it was a nice replacement. But the thing is now breaking – that force set in motion in the late fifties. And I feel it's breaking in psychology, it's breaking in linguistics, and it's breaking in anthropology – and we each have different ideas about how it's breaking up.

Geertz: At the same time the revolution was going on where people were putting things inside people's heads a counterrevolution was going the other way – criticizing the whole myth of inner reality, the whole myth of private language. The one thing that anthropologists hadn't said about culture is that it is a conceptual structure. What does it mean to say that? Take, for example, the theory of infant damnation. To know what that is you have to, first of all, conceptualize it historically and with other beliefs of this type. Then you can discuss the incidence of it, and how people got it, and how they got rid of it, and what determined all these things. But, what the cultural element is, is the structure of meanings, ideas, or significances that that particular religious ideology contained. The reason I'm against putting things in people's heads is that it reduces the tension between cultural analysis and psychological analysis. By psychologizing things you don't have the kind of problematic where you can ask what is the impact of a conceptual structure or system of ideas such as the theory of infant damnation during the reformation? What psychological effect did it have on different people in different contexts? That tends to get lost because the theory is identified as a psychological phenomenon in the first place. And it's not a psychological phenomenon in the first place. It's a conceptual structure – and that's what the whole depsychologizing of the concept of sense, of meaning, was all about and still is about.

This colloquy raises the question whether meanings are internal (in the head) or external (in the theory of infant damnation). It's a hazardous question and in this case the differences between D'Andrade and Geertz may be more apparent than real. To ask whether meanings are internal or external seems as futile as to ask whether "redness" is in the color chip or in the perceptual system or whether "funinness" is in the clown or in the audience. Most culture theorists would agree that an understanding of the meaning of the theory of infant damnation is a complex psychological process. At the same time, most culture theorists would acknowledge that the content of the theory, its meaning, what it has to say about what, what it implies or suggests, can be understood "as a theory," related by similarity and contrast to other "theories," understood in terms of its consequences for institutional and individual action, and so on.

I suspect the most important feature of the D'Andrade–Geertz exchange is their *joint* emphasis on mind as meanings and ideas, with the implication that minds, just like meanings and ideas, can change and differ.

PROBLEMATIC 3: THE INTERPRETATION OF "BELIEFS" OR THE NATIVE'S MEANINGS ARE NOT TRANSPARENT, NOT EVEN TO THE NATIVE

Shweder: How should we interpret and represent the apparently false knowledge of an alien culture? The Bongo-Bongo tell you that eating

the ashes of the burnt skull of the red bush monkey will cure epilepsy. What do you do with that? Do you render it as a "belief," adding that the Bongo-Bongo believe this strange false thing, that they fail to see that these things are unconnected. The same problem arises when studying children. Developmentalists are faced with many instances of apparently false knowledge. Generally, in those cases, they treat children as pre-competent – as naive scientists. The child is said to be on his way to knowledge but he hasn't gotten there yet. Now, clearly there are other possible moves you can make. You can treat apparently false knowledge as a metaphor or trope of some sort. You can try to contextualize the natives' ideas or give it a frame of reference that makes it appear rational from the point of view of the persons whose belief it is. The ground rules for making one move or the other are unclear. What seems clear is that whole "schools" have grown up over their answer to the question "Are you willing to attribute a false belief to another people?"

Geertz: It's often very hard to tell whether it's a *belief* – whether it's an assertive. It's hard to know what is really being said. Even with tropes you don't know what's being said. It's very difficult to know and it isn't that you don't think they have false beliefs. Everybody has lots of false beliefs and I'm sure that the Balinese, the Javanese, and the Moroccans have all sorts of false beliefs, as we do, but you're not always sure that you're faced with a belief, true or false. You may be faced with some other kind of statement about something. When a Javanese tells me that his son fell out of a tree because the spirit of his grandfather pushed him out, if I were to take that as a simple empirical proposition in my terms, I have no doubts about whether it is true or false. But I'm not sure that's what's being said.

To give an example of that, Susanne Langer once said, rightly or wrongly, it doesn't matter too much that the interpretation of Pueblo rain dances as causing rain is really quite wrong. People had said of the Pueblos that they waited to see if it was going to rain and then they had the rain dance as if it were a fake sort of way to keep the thing going. But Langer was saying that what the Pueblos are doing is to present to themselves a living tableaux in which the rain gods, nature, and people are all having some meaningful interaction – a drama. When it rains, the drama comes off. When it doesn't rain, it's like a failed play. Whether this is right or wrong, what she's saying is that the whole assumption that the Pueblos are thinking about this mechanistically, that they are thinking about it causally may be wrong. They may be trying to imagine for themselves the relationship between rain, people, and landscape. And they present this image to themselves to have a sense that they have an understanding of the world. But they're not thinking in the paradigm "rain dance cause, rain effect, which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't." The only point I'm trying to make is that often it's harder than it seems to understand what you're being faced with.

Schwartz: We are at a different level of sophistication now than we were thirty years ago. We realize that there is a whole range of possibilities with respect to assertive beliefs. We used to confidently describe belief systems – now we realize there are variations in the valence of beliefs.

Spiro: We don't want to fall into the other trap. In the first place we don't know, except for our own scientific *Weltanschauung*, that the Hopi rain dance doesn't have an effect causally. Even if we do accept our scientific *Weltanschauung* as valid, we don't have to go to the Hopi for examples of its rejection. Two years ago there was a drought in southern California and the mayor of San Diego declared a day of prayer, not so we could express our feelings that we were suffering but rather to influence God to bring rain. Now San Diego may not be the most sophisticated city in the world, but it's also not the least sophisticated, and if San Diegans can believe, whatever the wishful thinking involved, that prayer can affect rainfall, it is not counter-intuitive for me to believe that the Hopi might have the same belief.

Shweder: An interesting question arises here – which is, whether you can know better than the native whether or not his utterances express "beliefs"? The native tells you, "This is what I believe – in fact I think it's true." And you say, "No, that's not your belief." And the native keeps on asserting something like "this dance causes rain" or "he was pushed by his grandfather's ghost." How do you make that intelligible to the readers of your ethnography?

Schwartz: Take Mannus myths. Do the Mannus believe they are true? This is something I've investigated. In some ways the Mannus will argue that their myths are true. They'll say: "And there's the very rock he sat on" – and they'll offer this kind of evidence. At the same time, as Reo Fortune [1935] noted, in their religion the Mannus never invoked these creatures of their myths. They have no other place or function other than in the narration of that myth. The Mannus don't act as if those are real creatures.

Spiro: But what if they view what we call myth as history. I can say that I believe that Napoleon did such and such – and I can go to France and point to the place. But I don't invoke him in religion or believe that he has special powers – or, indeed, that he is alive and can respond to my invocation of him.

Geertz: The myth thing is the same business again. It has often been said about myths that they don't tell you what happened. They tell you what happens. This is the way it goes. This is the way things happen. Take semimythical things like *Macbeth*. Northrup Frye [1964:64] has said, you go to *Macbeth* not to find out about the history of Scotland but to find out what happens to a man when he gains the world but loses his soul. That's what it's about. You don't ask of *Macbeth* whether there really was a man like that. Why does the historical literalism of the nineteenth century have to be applied to myths as such? It's possible that they're like *Macbeth*.

Spiro: I think we have to, and precisely because both are possible. My grandfather – a person I knew fairly well – did believe that *Macbeth* was a fictional character. But he also believed that Adam actually existed. And that Abraham existed. And he believed that the myths regarding them recounted actual events – they were true. Whereas, if you asked him about the events in *Macbeth*, he'd say, "Well, of course, they didn't happen." He distinguished very well between narratives that he took as fictions and narratives that he took to be true.

Now one of the things that Hallowell [1967a] pointed out about the Ojibwa is that they have no concept of fiction. All traditional narratives are thought to represent actual historical happenings. That is probably not a universal among primitive peoples, let alone among sophisticated people like the Burmese, the Balinese, the Moroccans, and so on. But there are cultures that do not apply the concept of fiction to traditional narrations, so that what we are calling "myths" are from their point of view historical events.

D'Andrade: I want to say something about the rain dance. I think if you interview the Hopi, a majority of the community will tell you that the rain dance makes rain. Now the sense of the word "make" and its translation into English is very difficult indeed. There is some practical sense there about making rain. But notice how complicated the whole thing is. The anthropologist may report that "the Hopi do the dance in order to make it rain." That may be a little different from what the Hopi said. The Hopi may not say "I do this dance in order to make it rain." He may say: "I do the dance and I think the dance makes it rain." You ask: "Do you do the dance for other reasons?" and he may say "Yes" or "What are you talking about?" When we report that "the Hopi do the dance in order to make it rain" we make it sound like this making it rain is the total control over the behavior – like everything that's being done is under the control of this master intention – to make it rain. As if the decision whether or not to continue the dance is contingent on whether or not it rained. And that may be quite wrong. Now I do think people have these practical things – they say they do these practical things. But when you look at it there are so many other meanings to what they are doing – it's a lot of fun, and there is a vast drama there, and people do impersonate the Gods, and they become Gods. It's very complicated.

Spiro: But the fact that rituals, like other kinds of symbols, are polysemic does not rule out the possibility that one of the meanings of the rain dance may be "the dance causes rain." So long as we agree that that may be one of the reasons for its performance, there's no problem.

D'Andrade: Mel, people agree, in principle, that it's polysemous, but when they give explanations they stop. They have now ascertained that the Hopi think the dance makes it rain – and that is it. That is why the Hopi do it! They think it makes it rain. It's like that with folk explanations of human behavior, too. If you ask people "Why does

so-and-so do that?" – if you elicit a lot of explanations of behavior – you find that people go along and then they hit one of these explanations that allows them to stop explaining. I have a practical reason. It makes him money. I stop at this point. That's why he does it!

What seems to emerge from this spirited exchange is agreement that science or ethnoscience is not all there is to cognition. While no one denies the fact-stating functions of ordinary language and the cause-seeking inclinations of the human mind, there is a general acknowledgment that the man-as-scientist approach to language and thought can be stretched only so far. While everyone agrees that the man-as-scientist metaphor has its place, no one equates ordinary language and thought with the language and thought of the scientist, statistician, or logician. What emerges is a pluralistic view of mind, meaning, and symbolic functions. Whereas all peoples assert beliefs, true and false, ordinary language and thought aims to do more than merely report and represent the causal structure of reality, and relatively few utterances or practices serve a pure and exclusive assertive function. Indeed, what emerges here is the view that there is no general solution to the problem of interpreting utterances and practices. Myth is not history, but there are histories and there are myths and we, as culture theorists, must be sensitive to all the interpretive possibilities and know how to tell them apart. The essays in this volume present a pluralistic view of the functions of the human mind, thus, inevitably, restricting the range of application of the man-as-scientist, man-as-logician metaphor.

PROBLEMATIC 4: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OF THE "SELF" ANYWAY?

Shweder: I want to raise a point about Cliff's [Clifford Geertz] fascinating essay on the "self" [Chapter 4, this volume]. It seems to me that the concept of the self Cliff refers to as a *Western* conception – that is, the notion of the person as a bounded, unique, integrated, and dynamic center of judgment and action – is precisely the concept that most developmental psychologists would say has to be there in childhood in all societies, not just in the West. That is, the force of internal actional experience in infancy and early childhood with the physical and social world would quickly lead to a universal differentiation at the skin of the self from others and external events. Certainly by age 3, and perhaps much earlier, all children in all cultures would be expected by most developmentalists to have this "Western" conception – the idea of being bounded, self-motivated, of associating their observing ego and their will with their body and so on. In Bali there must be a point of transition. It seems that in Bali the adult cultural system does not build upon the child's early experience in self-definition, which may emerge out of precultural or at least "brute" interaction with the world. In fact, it seems that the adult cultural system is capable of reversing early childhood understandings of the self. But what is the

process by which you can take what is presumably a very widespread sense of self in 3-year-olds and end up with adults who have these variant conceptions of the self that Cliff describes? In other words, something that fits Cliff's description of the Western adult conception of the self may also be a universal infant and early childhood conception of the self – a universal childhood conception that gets expressed among adults in the West and overridden or reversed among adults in Bali. The Balinese 3-year-old may be more like a Western adult than like a Balinese adult.

LeVine: It seems to me that Hollowell [1967b] laid out pretty well forty or so years ago a nice conceptualization of which aspects of the self are universal and which are culture-specific.

Schwartz: I think this is a very good issue for discussion. I took a yearlong course on the self with Hollowell and I remember reading Geza Roheim and things like that. Nevertheless, the course was almost entirely inferences drawn almost entirely from cultural institutions. We would make judgments about the constitution of the self from the fact that people believed that they had three souls or that they believed that the child's soul does not enter its body permanently until the age of 7. Those were the kinds of data we were working with – all ethnographic. I don't think we can say that the issue is settled. I think some analysis of the question would have some paradigmatic value.

Geertz: There's no doubt it would be useful to discuss the question of the self as a paradigmatic contrast between the way in which psychologists and anthropologists think about things.

Shweder: Let me try again. I accept Cliff's description of the Balinese, Javanese, and Moroccan adult self-concept, and I am not arguing about the facts about childhood around the world. I'm raising the possibility that you can have an intuitive early childhood system that is either built upon or reversed in later development – I think the question "How does that reversal take place?" is an interesting one. I think I could point to evidence of this type of case. Take Cal Izard's [e.g., 1980] descriptions of the emotional life of children – he would probably argue that discrete emotions like anger, sadness, and surprise are all there in the Balinese, Javanese, Moroccan, and American child. Yet we know from Cliff's descriptions of the Javanese and Balinese adult that by the time the Javanese and Balinese child is an adult he's "smoothing out" his affect, whereas American adults are still encoding and expressing the same range of discrete childhood emotions. Something very interesting has happened to those Javanese and Balinese kids.

Schwartz: There is another point I was trying to make about the Hollowell course. It's that I came to feel that even if we came to know the Balinese conception about the self in the sense of a cultural ideology about the self, we still wouldn't know all that I'd like to know about the Balinese self. I think we should make some distinction between

cultural ideology and the psychological and beyond that the cultural constitution of the self.

LeVine: I agree. But one of the nice things about the self is that it can be conceptualized as both an individual mental representation and a cultural or collective representation. You can examine its status in cultural ideals and prototypes and also examine the child's or adult's individual representation of self, and then look at how that's acquired and what relationship there is between the individual's mental representation and the cultural ideal – not assuming with Hallowell that the two are fused or the same thing. There is some kind of relationship between the individual's self-representation and the culture's.

Spiro: That there is some kind of relationship I agree. But we know clinically that there is a difference between the self-representation and the ideal self-representation. And I would speculate that to the extent there is an isomorphism, it is between the individual's *ideal* self-representation and the cultural conception rather than between the self-representation and the cultural conception. I agree with Ted [Schwartz] that the inferences you would draw about the self from cultural representations would be different from whatever evidence you would get with respect to the self itself.

Schwartz: I think that Hallowell used to believe that this cultural ideology of the self not only represents but actually comes to constitute culturally different self-structures.

Spiro: I think he did believe that, but I don't agree with it.

Schwartz: I think this is the case in many other domains as well. The ideological variance is much greater than the phenomenal variance.

Izard: Mel [Spiro]. How transcultural do you think this distinction of self-ideal self is?

Spiro: I think that in all societies you would find that individuals have self-representations and ideal self-representations and that there is always a tension between them. I think, too, that it's that tension that's involved in notions of morality, notions of oughtness, as well as self-deprecation and low self-esteem. All these are functions of the tension between self-representation and the ideal self-representation. Hence, I would guess that the distinction is universal.

LeVine: I want to come back for a minute to Rick's [Shweder] formulation. What Cliff [Geertz] describes in emphasizing cultural differences – these are ideologies of selfhood that do not in themselves deny the universality of the self at some level of human experience. This is why I raised Hallowell's point. Although he was concerned with cultural differences, he nonetheless made a case for believing that in all cultures there was some perception of the self as a continuous entity in time and as, in some sense, the same person. There was some kind of distinction between internal experience and external things. In other words, the self was a universal and there weren't any cultures in which people simply merged into other people, however much cultures vary

with respect to their emphasis on autonomy or sharing at the level of more formulated ideology. The job of cross-cultural research is to identify just what is universal and what is culturally variable. Part of it has to do with the distinction between intuitive and reflective notions that Rick has been interested in. Perhaps the kind of thing the child acquires is a primitive or intuitive distinction between self and others, the idea of itself as a continuous entity, notions of pride and shame that pertain to himself, his body, himself as a social entity that other people identify and so on. But to get at those understandings you also have to look at things like meaning systems, the cultural labels and concepts that the culture imposes on the intuitive understandings. We've only just begun to do that.

Shweder: Cliff can obviously speak to the implications of his essay better than I can. But I didn't think the essay was just a description of cultural ideology – the enshrinement of a certain notion of the self in cultural ideology. I thought you were saying that the cultural ideology became an *effective* representation for *individuals*; that individuals in fact *worked* to overcome that intuitive notion of a discrete self, which I would guess must be there in the Balinese child; that you were saying that a culture's ideology had implications for an individual's sense of individuality and separateness, his notion of continuity over time. To the extent a culture buys in to the idea that the building blocks of society are social roles, not individual persons – that there is an elaborate cast of characters and that self is tied to the roles you play – to that extent there's a sense of discontinuity that's emphasized: to change roles is to change one's identity. The theoretical question is this: Do you need an enshrinement in the cultural ideology of the self to pull that off? Do you have to have an articulated, explicit, cultural conception of the self before it's possible for individuals to alter their childhood self-conception? People work at these things – there are disciplines of self-alteration involved in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Geertz: Actually, in the longer essay on the Balinese self I argue that. But suppose we were to turn the whole argument around. Let's imagine that the Western concept of a centered, highly continuous self really suppresses a natural fact – the fact that we're playing roles throughout our lives. That it creates a myth of continuity that has to overcome the actual experience of the fact that we behave so radically different in radically different contexts. That's where I begin to get nervous with the idea that there is one sort of pattern that is fundamental and the others are reversals of that. You can describe the Balinese pattern as a reversal of early continuity feelings. But you can just as easily describe our tremendous emphasis on continuity, sincerity, authenticity, the "true self" sort of thing, as a reversal of the fact that we are all wearing masks all the time through all the changes of social morphology. But there's nothing transcultural, as far as I can see, that would make one of those more fundamental. Suppose as a thought experiment all of psychology and anthropology had grown up

in a Balinese context rather than in a Western one and then tried to interpret us. There's nothing particularly privileged about our theories of the self.

Shweder: What you're saying is that all cultural ideologies are available in all cultures, at least in an incipient form. That the Balinese or the Moroccan pattern is available in our system to both adults and children and that the question is how much we pick it up, amplify it, represent it, and enshrine it.

Geertz: Right!

Shweder: Then we return to the question: What difference do the enshrinements make?

Geertz: They make a lot of difference in my opinion, a lot of psychological difference.

Shweder: So when I sign a letter "sincerely yours," I have access to the Balinese pattern - I'm acting like one of your Balinese informants. The issue of "really feeling it" or of being sincere or authentic doesn't arise. I just write "sincerely yours" - it's a conventional form and one just follows it. Bali is "sincerely yours" amplified and made into a cultural ideology.

Spiro: Cliff, I'm not sure that if anthropology and psychology had arisen in Bali that they would have been essentially different from what they are, given their Western origins. I'm not referring to folk theories or ethno-self theories because, after all, the theories of the self in psychology or anthropology are not the Western folk theories of the self. I would think that one of the points about science is that it is about demystification - it takes these folk theories and it demystifies them. Although there might be some differences in the contours of Balinese anthropology and psychology, I would assume that they too would engage in the process of demystification. And I would like to believe that Balinese and American psychologists and anthropologists would, qua anthropologists and psychologists, arrive at some kind of common view of the nature of human beings and the nature of culture, so that the differences between them would be no greater than the differences within "Western" anthropology and psychology.

LeVine: I can tell you that the Japanese see our way of formulating things in our psychological theories as predicated on folk assumptions that are culture-specific.

Spiro: So we don't have to do this as a thought experiment. We can compare notes with Japanese and Indian psychologists and anthropologists.

D'Andrade: There are sometimes advantages to interviewing an ape [laughter]. You get to ask them about selves. Now, of course, you can only believe what they tell you [laughter]. No, I think a lot of the things Koko the gorilla is supposed to have done are interesting for people interested in the development of the self. Koko has a lot of things to say about Koko!

This is a complex discussion indicative of the complexity and richness of the problem of "the self." The self-concept is about so much that fixing the topic of the discussion proved to be a formidable task. A series of topics emerged. Distinctions were drawn between self-representations (the way the self is) and ideal self-representations (the way the self ought to be) as revealed or expressed in three quite distinguishable, and potentially independent, ways: (1) in action, (2) in individual consciousness, and (3) in cultural ideology. Several parameters of self-description were introduced: individualism, locus of control, continuity, the self as an observing ego (the "I") connected or unconnected to the organism, the self as an object classified within a social morphology (the "me"). Processes of self-formation, both cultural and noncultural, were invoked. It was even proposed that the social sciences are a folk theory in disguise, an articulate expression of our culture's ideology. Vast cross-cultural differences in reflective conceptions of the self were acknowledged as well as differences in the degree to which this or that conception of the self is elaborated, symbolized, and made consciously available to individuals in a society. Participants considered the possibility that the full spectrum of human conceptions about the self is available in tacit and/or unelaborated form in all cultures. The degree of influence of those processes promoting cultural consciousness (symbolization, labeling, elaboration) on the lived phenomenal self of individual persons remained unsettled. That unsettling topic is addressed in several essays in this volume.

PROBLEMATIC 5: CULTURAL INTEGRATION: FACT OR FICTION?

Kay: I've been wanting to say something scandalous ever since this conference started - and I think now is my chance. So I had better seize time by the forelock - and indeed "time" will be my example. The general point I want to make is this. We have heard a lot about the systematicity of culture, the organization of culture, the way it all fits together into one neat thing. I have a kind of historical theory about that view - which I admit is scandalous, but nevertheless I ask you to listen to it. First, I want to tell you why the view arose, and then I want to give a counterexample to the view. I think the view arose that cultures are integrated because anthropology arose in an institutional setting where people had to write Ph.D. theses. Ph.D. theses, if they were successful, were published as books - and books tell a consistent story. I semi-seriously propose that the exigencies of the publishing trade or literary genre have been imposed on the subject matter of cultural anthropology so as to make everyone feel that if I go out to study the "whoevers," I've got to come back and tell a consistent and entertaining story about what the "whoevers" are like - and everything they do had better fit into this one story. Let me mention one counterexample to this view.

"Time" is perhaps the favorite thing that anthropologists point to so as to exaggerate the exoticness of other peoples; they love to say