

By courtesy of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., copyright 1958; used with permission. For personal, noncommercial use only.

### CULTURE AND HUMANITY

In the tradition of the humanities, the term culture assumed its meaning in application to the variety of things that might be "cultivated." The terms culture and cult have the same derivation and were applied by the Romans to the cultivation of the fields (*agri cultura* or *cultus*), the cultivation of the mind (*animi cultura* or *cultus*) and the cultivation of religion and God (*Dei cultus* or *cultura*). Cicero, thus, defined philosophy as the "culture of the mind," and argued that philosophy first educated men to the cult of the gods.

The development of the idea of culture centred about three related problems: the relation of culture to nature; the relation of the cultivation of man to the cultivation of God; and the use of the arts and literature to achieve "humanity," both in the sense of individual perfection and in that of mutual love. As early as the Greek Sophists the distinction was made between man in the state of nature and in various stages of civilization, and the Cynics used the criterion of natural simplicity in opposing culture as a sign of corruption and decadence.

The Roman censor Cato the Elder wrote a treatise on agriculture as well as a handbook for his son warning him against Greek physicians and Greek literature. According to Cicero, on the other hand, the circle gathered about Scipio used culture as a synonym of literature and of humanity or (in modern languages) of the humanities. In the western empire the humanities came to mean erudition in the arts and the cultivation of letters (Aulus Gellius, 14, 6, 1: *litterarum cultus*), while in the eastern empire Themistius argued against the Christians that the love of mankind (*philanthropia*), essential to the training of a statesman, is achieved by the study of literature.

During the Renaissance the term culture was applied to the arts and letters in *cultura bonarum artium* and *cultura litterarum humaniorum*, and the nature of culture was explored in treatises on pedagogy and the arts. Philosophers of the 17th century, on the other hand, sought to apply the methods of science to the study of man and spoke of the culture of the mind or of man. Francis Bacon, having expounded the reasons for the discredit of learning in book i of the *Advancement of Learning*, uses the figure of agriculture and husbandry in book ii to name one part of human philosophy *De cultura animi*. Thomas Hobbes uses the word *cultus* to signify the labour which a man bestows on anything, and distinguishes two applications: one to things subject to us, as "the labour bestowed on the earth is called *culture*, and the education of children a *culture* of their minds"; the other to God as in *cultus Dei*. John Locke used the analogy of "breeding" in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and gives a subordinate place to learning or the culture of the mind, *ingenii cultus*.

The reaction to this conception of culture as the cultivation of man based on knowledge of his nature took two characteristic forms during the 19th and 20th centuries. German philosophers, taking their start from the study of the "history of culture," investigated the nature of culture and of the spiritual life, and the relation of the sciences of culture, *Kulturwissenschaften*, to the sciences of nature, *Naturwissenschaften*. According to Johann von Herder, in the 18th century, "The culture of a people is the blood of its being," and after him Hegel and the Romantic philosophers Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Georg Simmel laid the lines of philosophic and sociological speculation concerning the values embodied in cultural objects, the structure and nature of cultural values and the interplay of subjective and objective in the transformation of cultures. English essayists and reformers, on the other hand, taking their start from problems of politics and religion, investigated the practical uses of culture. Matthew Arnold responded to John Bright's dismissal of culture as "a smattering of the two dead languages of Greek and Latin" in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), defining culture as a pursuit of our total perfection by means of knowledge of the best which has been thought and said in the world and the development thereby of all sides of our "humanity." Religion is one of the forces by which men perfect themselves, and Hellenism, which is the effort to see things as they are, and Hebraism, which is conduct and obedience, are interacting ways in which they have pursued this aim.

The meanings of culture in contemporary literature continue to reflect the three problems which influenced the first development of the term. John Dewey conceived culture to be the result of interaction between man and his environment, but philosophers of existence emphasize the creative aspects of culture which exceed naturalistic determinations. A large literature has grown up concerning the relation of culture and religion, and writers like T. S. Eliot, who question Arnold's usage of "culture" as more comprehensive than "religion," make culture the incarnation of the religion of a people. Humanists finally continue to ask how culture, in the sense of the cultivation of the arts and literature, may further the self-realization of individual men and the mutual understanding of peoples.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.—Heinrich Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* (Tübingen, 1899); Alois Dempf, *Kulturphilosophie* (München, Berlin, 1932); Albert Schweitzer, *Kulturphilosophie* (München, 1923; Eng. trans., *The Philosophy of Civilization*, London,

1929-32; New York 1929-33); Alfred Weber, *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie* (Leiden, 1935); John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York, 1939; London, 1940); T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (London, 1948; New York, 1949); Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London, 1948), *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (London, New York, 1950); H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951; London, 1952); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Interrelations of Cultures* (New York, London, 1953). (Rd. McK.)