2 KINGDOMS OF ENDS

Nobody makes the concept of culture more dubious than the practitioners of the discipline that defines itself in terms of culture. In their 1952 book, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions,* the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn found 164 distinct meanings of the term in the literature, no doubt chilling further attempts at definition. Other anthropologists have lately been questioning whether there are any cultures at all. Thus Robert Brightman suggests that we "forget culture" (Brightman 1995). Perhaps this is not so odd. While we have made "culture" our favorite name for what it is about groups of "Others" we ought to tolerate, it is the anthropologists who have had to make methodological sense out of what is for many of us a bumper sticker.

Their worries are multiple. We cannot find in human societies anything answering to Emile Durkheim's *conscience collectif.* There is no reason to assume "holism" across very diverse social contexts, to expect a society's way of cooking, its literature, public health, sports, manners, religion, and military technology to express common meanings. Certainly in almost all societies social meanings are contested: rich and poor, high-status and low-status, employed and unemployed members may each give the anthropologist a different account of "shared" meanings depending on their position in the intramural competition. If the degree of diversity within a society rivals the degree of diversity between it and others, what does the ascription to that society of one shared culture explain? And last, even if it makes sense to speak of culture, it may not make sense to speak of *cultures,* bounded packets of meaning. Is "culture" then merely a simplifying construction meant to harness the exoticism of the native, the "other" for the Western anthropologist?

Our response can be simple, although working it out will be complex. Calling aspects of a social group's behavior cultural is an empirical claim that two conditions hold. The first is that explanations of the behavior of

social members are not exhausted by class, occupation, legal status or citizenship, social status, clan, and gender differences or by species-wide characteristics. The second is that we can observe commonalities holding across distinctive behavioral zones in group members' lives, such that purely intracontextual explanations of their sports or business or religious rituals or kinship arrangements miss something. The tolerably adequate adjective for the commonalities missed by such explanations is "cultural." Would it really make sense to say that class, occupational, status, clan, and gender descriptions exhaust group dynamics, or that manners, religious belief, ritual, kinship rules, art, sport, and literature *never* exhibit overlapping meanings? Of course not. Likewise the fact that discrete, rigid boundaries defining a culture are not discoverable indicates only the continuous and stochastic (statistical) nature of the phenomena. That we cannot see a nonarbitrary point on the color spectrum where red turns into orange does not mean that red *is* orange, or that there are no distinct colors. The same is true of distinct cultures.

But there is another problem. Our understanding of culture is arguably modern, which means that we may be imposing on the historical record what culture means for us today. Of course, most of what we refer to with the term "culture"—distinctive peoples and their folkways—is not modern. But it would be right to say that the eighteenth century for the first time made culture *philosophically and politically important,* albeit ambivalently as a boon and threat. As Samuel Fleischacker recounts, it is the Enlightenment that distinguished the artificial cultivation of human faculties and manners beyond what is universally given by nature as a vehicle of progress (Fleischacker 1994). When in his 1765 *The Philosophy of History* Voltaire referred to "culture" as the higher values, the cultivation, of the Enlightened era, he reflected that modern usage. But it was the German philosopher Gottfried Herder who set out to provide a systematic account of culture. In his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (four volumes, 1784–91) Herder argued that the world's peoples embodied distinctive worldviews, virtues, and interpretive habits, ordered by God to fully reveal the totality of spirit. Thus for the first time in Western philosophical history, the differences between peoples were claimed to matter *philosophically.* For the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, Goodness and Truth entailed approximation to a universal human standard, from which ethnic differences are at best a distraction. Likewise for the mainstream of the Enlightenment, the evolving ideal of universal scientific knowledge required abstraction from

descent group, local origins, languages, and above all religious traditions and superstitions. Cosmopolitan cultivation was good; local acculturation created barriers to the universals of Reason and Science and Nature. In the classical, medieval, and dominant modern views, a difference in virtue or cognition between individuals or peoples just indicates that *somebody is wrong;* uniqueness is only valuable in so far as it is a unique approximation to the universal norm. To be sure, as recent critics of Eurocentrism have pointed out, this supposed universalism was at the same time regarded as the unique achievement of a particular continent, civilization, and race, in comparison to which others were viewed as backward, or worse.

The nineteenth century, led by Romanticism's love of the particular, embraced Herder's position. Anthropology emerged in 1843 as Gustav Klem first used "culture" to label the complex of customs, beliefs, and political forms that characterize a society, and was taken up in English by E. B. Tylor's influential *Primitive Culture* in 1871. Herder influenced Adolf Bastian, and through him Franz Boas, one of the earliest and most influential ethnographers, teacher of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. But nothing could have enhanced the role of the concept of culture more than the political expression of Romanticism, *nationalism,* most famously formulated by Germans in response to Napoleonic France's threat to dominate Europe. We are familiar with nationalism's later checkered history, from the liberal nationalism of Mazzini to the fascism of Mussolini and Hitler. But as Ernest Gellner and Liah Greenfeld separately argue, nationalism played a crucial role throughout the modern West in forging the modern egalitarian notion of the citizen (Gellner 1983; Greenfeld 1992). Only nationalism was able to break the *ancien régime* separation of society into isonomic castes—a hierarchy of unequal classes with rough equality *within* each—making the German-speaking peasant and German-speaking aristocrat equal *as Germans.*

At any rate, the problem raised by this historical development is that when we use the term "culture" today we may be presupposing a particularly modern Western view of social behavior and meaning as resting on a fundamental hermeneutic web possessed by sovereign nations or "countries" that does not easily apply to world history or prehistory. We must especially be on guard against the canard that cultural politics or nationalism is something traditional, premodern, or primitive. For thousands of years, the great agricultural empires that created what we call civilization were certainly *not* organized around national or linguistic solidarity. If in ancient, hunter-gatherer societies *clan* trumped culture, in civilization *caste* trumped

culture. The triumph of cultural identity has been made possible by the modernity that, with its other hand, dismissed culture as the great obstacle to progress.

Preliminary Considerations

William James liked to say that "experience" is a double-barreled term, being a name both for a process (experienc*ing*) and for the contents or data revealed by that process (experienc*es*). Following his analogy beyond the possibilities of the shotgun, culture is a *triple*-barreled word. It is in one sense a *how,* a medium through which the world, society, and the self are interpreted and represented, in this sense like a language. But culture is not merely a process or medium, it is also a *what,* or a large collection of *whats* including physical things: buildings, symbols, rituals, artifacts, paintings, clothing, literary works, and so on. Cultures are repertoires, inventories. Indeed, cultures can be destroyed, or deeply harmed, through the destruction of key icons or buildings, or the prohibitions of key practices and discourses. Lastly, a culture is also a *who.* It belongs to or characterizes a group of people. As such it comes in collections or networks that differ from one another, even if, as noted, their borders are elusive. Thus an adequate view of culture must show how the what, the how, and the who of culture qualify one another. We may begin with some basic points attendant on the fact that cultures are social phenomena.

Culture is *collective,* not individual or private. There can no more be a "private" culture than a private language. So we may say that culture is public. But in saying so we must recognize that culture is *also* private in that people carry their cultures with them as individuals wherever they go, even in solitude. Culture is not solely public, nor public in the sense that, for example, politics is public. Robinson Crusoe remained a child of his culture (no doubt to Friday's dismay).

Some inquirers, especially in ethology and anthropology, mean by "culture" the intersection of two things: the totality of what any living group learns and passes on to the next generation, and what distinguishes one population of a species from another. The effect and conceptual purpose of such a definition is to make the antonym of culture whatever is genetic. For genes neither learn nor carry anything acquired or devised in the process of experience. Whatever else it is, then, a culture is learned. The term's Latin

root *colere* means tending, as in agricultural husbandry, or more broadly "cultivation." In the nature-nurture debate culture is thus on the side of nurture and so, in this sense, against nature. Such learning is accomplished by a local population, a subgroup of the species. The tokens or instances of the term "culture" are *particular* and *historical.* Like persons, each culture *is* a history and cannot be understood independent of it. If there were only one culture among humans on Earth, there would be little point in giving an account of culture distinct from an account of human being *per se.* Discussing culture as distinct from human nature only makes sense because there is more than one. Further, each is, we would say today, "contingent," that is, a product of largely undesigned, collectively acting forces whose effects accumulate over time. Each culture could have been different if other things, like its physical environment, had been different.

Cultures in the primary sense of the term belong to whole societies or what Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz call "encompassing groups" (Margalit and Raz 1995). To modify Will Kymlicka's term, we are here concerned with *societal cultures,* cultures of relatively independent, self-reproducing societies within which members can live their whole lives, and not the "cultures" of corporations, voluntary associations, or professions, in which people live only part of their days. Those things may be *cultural,* but they are not *cultures.* Neither are "subcultures," such as communes, monasteries, or bohemias, which depend on a larger encompassing society for all manner of sustenance. Likewise, cultures are almost never local or brief; they hold usually over at least a region and last many generations.

Culture represents a form of human grouping that must be distinctive; labeling the difference between two groups "cultural" must be different from labeling it "social," "economic," or "religious." A culture is not a family, tribe, class, caste, status, or occupational group. Those distinctions must range *within* the kind of grouping we are after. As seen earlier, this also implies that the functional spheres of a society's life—its sports, economy, politics, and so on—are not distinctive cultures. What the term "culture" refers to must be interdisciplinary, must include different kinds of phenomena, different zones or areas of social life. While particular activities within a culture can be regarded as valid in terms of distinctive norms—scientific claims are supposed to be true, art aesthetically compelling, and political action right—a culture spans all these activities, hence is *omnivalent,* responsible to several norms, not one. Culture cannot be understood as a disciplinary sphere *within* social life. We can speak of a society's economy, its

politics, its art, its religion, its sports, as differing from each other, but culture cannot be on that list. That would be a category mistake. None of this implies, of course, that the various spheres of a culture's social life must all cohere or express a single pattern. Cultures are not monolithic; they do not even need to be coherent. They are always conflicted. Nevertheless, there is a kind of unity a culture must have: its various important components must be capable of functioning together, capable of being lived and belonged to by social members.

We could say that culture functions in part to provide sociocultural expectations and norms, so that signaling or being marked as a member activates the proper set of judgmental rules. We could call this *judgmental endogamy,* implying that under "normal" circumstances exogamous judgments carry little or no normative force. In this sense a culture is something in terms of which social members make their judgments (although culture is not the only thing of which that is true). Hence we might employ a criterion which applies to all human associational identities, cultural or not: ye shall know them by what they *exclude.* As argued by Fredrick Barth and his school, groups define themselves through boundary maintenance (Barth 1969). The kind of group a culture is will be evident in what other memberships or identities cannot be exhibited by its members, identities which render the individual's cultural membership suspect or marginal.

Finally, we ought to distinguish culture from *civilization,* a word that has its own long etymology. Without troubling ourselves with the fine points separating recent students of the term (c.f. Toynbee 1961, Hodgson 1974, Quigley 1979, and Huntington 1996), we can simply say that civilizations are the broadest cultural groupings, *families* of cultures related along some cultural axis. Thus it makes perfect sense to distinguish, for example, the West—that is to say, Western Christendom dating to the eighth century C.E.—as tied together by overlapping cultural themes, from Islamic civilization, a family of cultures from the Maghreb to Indonesia, tied together by religion above all.

Culture and Society

Having milked the dependence of culture upon society for what it's worth, we must, nevertheless, *not* identify society and culture. If we ascribe culture to any species that exhibits social behavior, then we must also assert that ants have cultures. But they don't. Perhaps some primates or cetaceans do,

but it is very difficult to argue for culture much lower on the phylogenetic scale. Even staying with humans, the identification of society and culture muddies the waters. Is every social fact a cultural fact? The computer-generated list of courses for the next semester at my college is socially created and produced, full of signs meant to communicate, but is it a part of my culture? Using a distinction that will be important later, evolutionary anthropologists have argued for the distinction of social from cultural communication, or the social, communicative use of symbols from their cultural, ritual use (Chase 1999; Watts 1999). The distinction of society from culture is required if we are ever to notice that a society can change while its culture remains the same, or its culture may change while society stagnates. Suppose a society of hunter-gatherers is forced by lack of game to turn to rudimentary slash-and-burn agriculture. Which would illuminate their predicament more, to say that they have a "slash-and-burn culture" or that they are a hunter-gatherer culture that has recently and perhaps temporarily adopted a new social practice that they consider distinct from their culture? If there are culturally pluralistic societies, then it must be possible for two people to belong to the same society but different cultures. And finally, the distinction of society from culture also makes it at least logically possible for a society not to have a culture. This is useful to contemplate. The vaunted social contract theory of modern political philosophy precisely imagines a group of people coming out of the wild to form an interdependent socioeconomic group, arguably a society, but without any shared cultural resources. In the real world social groups under intense pressure to survive might in effect lose their cultures; we might want to say that refugees, residents of a concentration camp, or plane crash survivors constitute a "society" or social group, capable of cooperation, but share no culture. In *The Mountain People* Colin Turnbull described the Ik as so close to starvation that all long-term cooperation, rituals of marriage and death, all mediately significant human behavior, had fallen away (Turnbull 1972). The "high" end of culture—meaning not only fine art, music, and literature, but all symbolic practices—can be absent and yet a kind of rudimentary society exist, retaining predictable patterns of interaction and accepted forms of communication.

For these reasons we will throughout this study regard culture as a subset of the domain of social facts. We will reserve the term "society" for geographically continuous associations whose members are open to regular interaction in the tasks that constitute living, hence responsible to one con-

tinuous politics (note that members are "open to" such interaction, not actually interacting all the time). A society is a *horizon of interaction and interdependence.* Such social interaction entails a *grammar of intelligibility and propriety.* Culture extends, contextualizes, and legitimates that grammar. It thus has something to do with how and what a society thinks, means, understands, interprets, imagines. In this sense, Hegel was on the right track in viewing culture as objective or social mind. Thus we may say that culture *supervenes* upon society like a mind supervenes upon a human organism, as long as we remember that culture cannot have the unity of a mind (since it is not an agent), that cultural "mind" is not immaterial (since it includes artifacts), and contra Hegelian idealism, culture is fundamentally, although not exclusively, a matter of practices.

This third point, famously associated with Pierre Bourdieu, must be clarified (Bourdieu 1990). The American pragmatists, beginning with Charles S. Peirce, put meaning, truth, and mind itself in the context of action. Concepts, words, and beliefs mean what their affirmation would imply for an agent's behavior. But a later contributor to this tradition, Justus Buchler, offered a further step. Buchler argued that while the pragmatists had sought to demonstrate the active nature of cognitive judgment, putting saying and knowing in the context of doing, the more radical point is to expand the notion of judgment *per se,* thereby to hold that "action *as such [is] judicative*" (Buchler 1955: 32). Rather than making all forms of human appropriation or discrimination matters of practice, Buchler severed, finally and completely, the presumed special relation of *verbal utterance* and *representation* to *rationality* and *wisdom.* Unlike many contemporary critics of the "logocentric" tradition who magnify linguistic primacy while criticizing it, Buchler allowed doing (practice) and making (construction) utter equality with saying (linguistic assertion) as the potential bearer of meaning, reason, knowledge, and validity, so that those normative terms apply indiscriminately to the three modes of judgment. This approach, crucial for conceptualizing culture, will be followed throughout.

Meaning Culture

All the things we call cultural must *mean.* The *how* of culture, what it does or the way it functions, has something to do with meaning. But it cannot be true that everything that means, or all meanings, are what we mean by "culture." If, to take a slightly narrower term, culture is like a language, it is

not the case that everything I can say in my language is equally and indifferently part of my culture. There is a sense in which advanced mathematics, a system of sentential logic, and the instruction manual that came with my computer, while semiotic products of my society, are not cultural in the way that, for example, a Japanese tea ceremony or a Gothic cathedral or the figure of John Wayne are. If culture is semiosis, it must be rather *thick* semiosis.

What is meaning? In the broadest sense it is *implication*. If an object, event, or experience is capable of implying, referring to, or suggesting something beyond itself in the mind of an intelligent agent, then it has meaning. In this sense, as Charles Peirce defined signs, what means must be something that means something to someone (or, I would say, be *capable* of so doing) (Peirce 1955: 99). Meaning then has to do with connection among things, as opposed to their—to borrow another Peircean doctrine—sheer phenomenal quality (Peirce's "Firstness") or their brute facticity or physical resistance ("Secondness") (Peirce 1955: 75ff.). Qualia and difference impress, and are salient; but when they "mean," they must exhibit connection, relation ("Thirdness"). Meaning comes to spread across the majority of the experienced world in the form of implication and is invoked and functions in experience in all sorts of ways (which need not imply that relation metaphysically outweighs particularity, disconnectedness, or irrelevance). While *everything* cannot mean, *anything* can, given the right circumstances. The first light of dawn means it is daytime, an open door can mean my apartment was broken into, and a particular array of photonic traces on a photographic plate can mean that some physical theory is false. Even nothing, in the sense of absence, can mean. Coming home to an empty house after an argument with my wife on the telephone can have a lot of meaning. But not everything which means is a sign. Signs are humanly appropriated meaning-carriers that have a place in the process of thought or communication. The first light of dawn is not manipulable, and so not a sign. If we wish, we can say that humanly created things alone can *be* signs, while other things can *function as* signs.

We turn now to a crucial point. Instrumentality has an ambiguous relation to culture. From Max Weber's diagnosis of modern *Zweckrationalität* (means-rationality) through Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's critique of "functional reason" and Heidegger's analysis of technology, to the more recent three-cornered debate among Jean-François Lyotard's postmodernism, Alasdair MacIntyre's premodernism, and Jürgen Habermas's "promodern-

ism"—in all these analyses of modernity the critique of instrumentalism or cult of efficiency devoid of "value" has been a constant. This is all familiar. But what has gone unrecognized is that this has always been a debate about the relation of culture, understood as the domain of humanly constructed or posited ends, to instrumentality. There is something about the instrumental attitude—treating each thing as a fungible, exchangeable moment in a process—which removes the "cultural" valence of a cultural thing, like regarding a painting as nothing but an investment, or a religious service solely as the venue for a business deal. Not that there is anything immoral or unseemly here; there may be, but that is not the point. The point is that such an approach removes the meaning of the thing or event from the domain of culture. If a society regards a practice *as purely* instrumental, hence as exchangeable without normative loss for greater efficiency, then that practice ceases in some sense to be cultural.

The distinction of symbolic from everyday communication is relevant here. Knight makes the provocative claim that in ancient societies ritual, the first form of symbolic culture, cannot be reduced to signaling or messaging (Knight 1999). Despite the overlap—culture, of course, uses language—the modes and contexts of daily language use differ importantly from ritual and religious speech. Ritual is very "costly" in its expenditure of energy, repeating affectively loaded behaviors and sayings at high volume, over and over again, in a way quite different from the nonritual, everyday speech of preliterate peoples. His explanation is that ritual is not communication *per se,* but the collective creation and maintenance of a virtual world, an ontology of symbolic beings of various kinds: deities and ghosts (entities); chiefs and bridesmaids (roles); scepters and stop signs (material objects); sin and authority (concepts); baptizing and promising (acts). In the chronology of *Homo sapiens sapiens* these are late achievements of the Upper Paleolithic era, not "natural" expressions. Now, Knight and his colleagues presuppose something that for philosophers is an open question, a pragmatic world of fact on top of which a cultural deception has been added. But a slightly different formulation can still capture the point. There is something about culture which is in excess of, supererogatory to, the most basic or pragmatic dimensions of human existence. In culture a people adds something to their existence beyond the necessities of food, shelter, and reproduction, even if that addition is often inextricably bound up with those activities—as in a recipe, an architectural style, or the details of a marriage ceremony.

I suggest we regard cultural meaning, as opposed to any other employment of signs, as meaning in relation to *ends.* An end, in the sense of goal or the Greek *telos,* is something experienced, known, and acted upon for its own sake. Ends draw attention, appreciation, thought, action. Ends arise ontogenetically as qualitatively compelling phenomena, chief among saliences, we may say. While an end emerges into experience as a compelling quality, if it remains an end over time it comes to serve as the "for-which" of a process that gives temporal organization to precedent events reconstructed as a dramatic structure of process-leading-to-an-end. Ends form the fabric that gives finality and shape, which is to say a certain kind of meaning, to human existence. Here John Dewey's account of means and ends is particularly useful (Dewey 1958). For Dewey means and ends are not two types of things but two respects in which the same event can be experienced, or what is the same thing, *two kinds of meaning* an event can have. Ends, or qualities, are moments of experience that constitute termini, experienced as that-for-which and that-toward-which a process of experiencing was proceeding. They are *consummatory,* hence nonprocessural. They are the stuff of norms, categorized as moral, aesthetic, or alethic (cognitive), and both give meaning to and limit the processes they terminate, thereby restraining imagination, desire, and action.

There are ultimate and proximate ends. The former are the summary ends of human existence as understood by a social group, those values for the sake of which socialized persons live; the latter are the indefinitely many things which we experience and treat as consummatory. The ultimate ends are like the peaks of a hilly countryside; they culminate the view, complete the landscape, but the beauty of the surrounding fields and brush would not disappear without them. Ultimate ends are those whose value can be given no deeper account, whose finality is susceptible to explication and interpretation but not explanation. Proximal ends, while consummatory, do not leverage the value of existence itself; many people find politeness valuable in itself, but very few make politeness that for which they live. And certainly ends can do double-duty as means, which is to say, function simultaneously in two different orders of events with two distinct meanings. Romantic love is an end for those experiencing it, perhaps even an ultimate end, and simultaneously serves reproduction. But to understand romantic love as merely or primarily a means toward reproduction is to cease to be a romantic lover.

Some meanings cluster about ends, forming networks where the meanings in question each refer, however mediately, to ends that *root* the network. The interpretation of the end is the operation of relating the end to other things in such a way that the other things become the background for understanding the value of the end, and the background is endowed with value thereby. Culture entails social meaning-making and -interpreting, where "meaning" is teleological meaning, meaning connected, however mediately, to socially recognized ends. A set of meaningful things is cultural in so far as it is connected to, gains its meaning in reference to, socially posited ends. In terms of the relation of culture and society, whereas social action must always presuppose a grammar of intelligibility and propriety, that grammar, hence the social action in question, *is cultural to the extent that its rules of intelligibility and propriety are connected to, understood in terms of, socially shared ends.* In this way cultural things and processes intertwine with social things and processes to varying degrees, some social acts being more thickly and directly motivated and explained by ends, others less so. It is at the point where the experienced and understood meaning of the event, act, or object ceases to be consummatory, either proximally or ultimately, that it and the network of acts and things oriented around it ceases to be cultural.

Practices, Artifacts, and Narratives

Culture comprises three species of human appropriation of the world, namely, *practices, artifacts,* and *narratives.* These overlap; a representation may be an artifact and the focus of a practice. These categories are meant to capture Buchler's rendition of the old Aristotelian trilogy of practical, productive, and theoretical reason, or more modestly, doing, making, and saying (Buchler 1966). Such a categorization, if we were to pursue it to the "molecular" or micrological level, might well be unsustainable; we might find that human appropriation or judgment requires a more extensive list of categories. But left "molar" this categorization represents an advance on both the tendency to cognitivize culture into assertive beliefs and the tendency to pragmatize it solely into practices.

The whats of culture are artifacts. Artifacts, what is made, include fabrications of all kinds, high art, all manner of *technē, poiēsis,* all decoration,

clothing, building, the construction and transmission of stories and speeches, the organization or configuration of elements, and so on. Not all made things are, however, artifacts. The tool whose structure and use is not endowed with meanings that are related to consummatory values is not an artifact. The screwdriver is not cultural until decorated, or experienced as itself the consummation of a process, or otherwise endowed with teleological meaning. In so far as culture is a set of meaningful items that characterize a people, in which they find and express significance, culture is artifacts.

Culture is also comprised by what a society believes, how it depicts the world and itself, whether this is expressed in plastic arts or verbal assertions, whether it aims to describe a given world or posit a better or ideal world. "Representations" may be the best term here. Representations tell about states of affairs, and they are supposed to be true. But not all representations are cultural phenomena, just as not all made things are artifacts. They become cultural when placed within social narrative. What does not fit into a narrative, hence dramatic, structure is not a narrative representation, hence not cultural.

Lastly, culture is practices. A practice is a discrete, repeatable, organized process of action. Following MacIntyre, practices have internal goods, dependent upon internal ends or purposes; that is, it makes no sense to claim to understand the practice and to engage in it while discounting the goods thereby entailed. They are the characteristic things cultural members do, in the way that they do them, carrying the meaning that they typically or normatively carry for members. Not all behaviors, even all behaviors common to or typical of a society, count as practices. The act of nose scratching I just engaged in is no cultural practice, nor is the slash-and-burn agriculture of the tribe for whom it is a pragmatic necessity at odds with their cultural self-understanding. The latter is social, of course, but not cultural. At least not yet.

To this horizontal categorization of cultural judgments and things we must add a vertical distinction. Practices, artifacts, and narratives can function on a *mundane* level characterizing more narrow, context-specific concerns as well as on a *symbolic* level as global, explicit ends-in-view, normative anchors of all other more contextually narrow appropriations. Practices, constructions, and narratives *become symbolic* as *ritual, icon,* and *metanarrative* or *myth*. While a particular way of decorating spoons (artifact) or of greeting strangers (practice) or a conception of who counts as a cousin (fitting

into a narration of familial life) may be characteristic of a culture, and meaningful as such, we nevertheless may in our analysis pay more attention to religious rituals, metaphysics, and sacred icons. "Foundational" would be the wrong metaphor for the symbolic; symbols do not ground, but *complete* other cultural phenomena, retrospectively and anticipatorily serving as that-for-which they are accomplished and that-in-terms-of-which they are to be understood. The symbolic cultural items are *not* more cultural than the mundane; the mundane are just as fully implicated in a cultural network. Nor must it be the case that all the mundane cultural phenomena refer to or implicate the symbolic phenomena. Rather, the symbolic refers to the cultural phenomena that the *culture itself* regards as ends in themselves, as its "sacred" points, its grand stories of origin or destiny, its most treasured objects, which most nexuses or collections of related cultural phenomena at some point entail. The symbolic is the pinnacle of a continuous (which is not to say unified or harmonious) realm of cultural practices and meanings, just as, in an earlier figure, the hilltops remain continuous with the slopes and fields below. And as symbols they are inherently *vague.* They are reference points capable of diverse interpretations, as are canonical texts in MacIntyre's sense or myths in Baeten's sense. That a culture cannot "go beyond" them does not mean it cannot observe them or reflect on them.

Agency, Practice, and Ritual

Metaphysically, normatively, and logically, neither practices nor artifacts nor symbols are prior to the others. However, ontogenetically, psychologically, and pedagogically *doing comes first.* As Buchler suggests, each human being is born in a "state of natural debt, being antecedently committed to the execution or the furtherance of acts that will largely determine his individual existence" (Buchler 1966: 3). If sharing a culture means sharing a "way of life," then practices are the leading edge of what constitutes such a "way." I must learn to do what members of my society do, I must acquire its practices as the most basic dimension of my judgmental repertoire. And it is primarily through cultivation or training or acquisition of these practices that individuals are socialized, come to share the sensibilities of other members, and to divide up the world as the culture represents it. Pragma-

tism, which, like both Kant and Wittgenstein, accepts Goethe's figural response to the opening of the Gospel of John, that "*Im Anfang war die Tat,*" "In the beginning was the deed," need not be the metaphysical or epistemic truth, but it may well be the anthropological truth. If nothing else, our old and continuing theoretical tendency to focus on "beliefs," "worldviews," or representations makes it at least circumstantially beneficial to put practices, for once, first.

A practice is a series of acts, purposively organized into a unit such that the acts gain their intelligibility from that inclusion and their end from the *telos* of the practice. A practice is distinct from "technique" in that it is not purely instrumental. That is, society inculcates and vets the process, not just the product. Practices are modules, each a complex series of acts distinct from others, so a social actor knows when they begin or end. They are repetitive and social. The goods internal to practices must be valuable—that is, they must really be *goods.* In one of MacIntyre's favorite examples, knives *should* be sharp. Practices are, as for Pierre Bourdieu, manifestations of a practical intelligence that is not reducible to linguistic or cognitive intelligence (Bourdieu 1990). Expanding Dewey's early notion of the "sensori-motor circuit," we can say that a practice is a motor-affective-sensory-imaginative process of doing, a bodily and cultural engagement with the world, distinguished and delimited by social learning. As Michael Oakeshott insists, it cannot be adequately summarized by a verbal formula, hence captured by theoretical knowledge (Oakeshott 1991). Practices are the most basic web of meaning and value, self and society. They are fundamentally communicative, being always "gestural" in George Herbert Mead's sense (Mead 1974).

As noted, a society must have a set of largely implicit but occasionally explicit rules for how people are meaningfully to behave, which entail a grammar of intelligibility and propriety, of what acts, artifacts, and sayings mean, and what may and may not be done, made, or said. But there is an additional component of interaction: a shared *grammar of sensibility.* I mean a configuration of salience in perception and feeling, in what we sometimes call *taste,* which then is a constitutive part of the practical wisdom common among members. The culture must encourage in members a particular distribution of attention across the indefinitely complex array of experience and a corresponding distribution of emotional response, hence various sensibilities, dispositions to weigh certain experiences more than others, to feel some things more than others, to "natively" respond to

experiences in certain ways. This is the affective substrate of the grammars of intelligibility and propriety that must hold in a person's relations to others. A fundamental part of what we call practical wisdom is exhibiting the right or proper sense of proportion, of what matters in personal and social life. This must be built into the structure of a person's experience, not merely into a reflective response to that experience. The individual who feels rage in inappropriate situations, but reflectively exercises self-control, not only fails to be a *phronēmos* or "wise" woman or man, but even a reliable or socially accepted woman or man. It is in this way that culture enters most intimately into the constitution of the process of experiencing characteristic of members.

The primacy of practice means that the self is primarily, although not exclusively, an *agent*. The agent is the dominant coagulation of or nexus in experience. I do not mean that the self is nothing other than what the person is taken, and takes herself, to be socially. Rather, of the totality of phenomena involved in the experiences characterizing a person, which are too overwhelmingly plural to be incorporated into any meaningful unity, those cohering about what can be socially expressed in agency must inevitably be dominant. The requirements of agency select saliences within the inner horizon of experience. Not that there is a perfect match; social requirements are not a purely procedural definition of the self. But components of personal experience that are in stark contrast to, or cannot be integrated with, a relatively coherent agency must be neglected under most circumstances.

At the symbolic level, practice becomes ritual, an end-in-itself that is known as such by the agent. This does not mean it is devoid of instrumental significance. But the culture comes to regard its practices as rituals at the point where they function as crucial normative components of social organization whose meanings *must* be internalized. The ritual both enacts an ultimate end of social existence, and in doing so, itself becomes such an ultimate end. Or, to preview a later point, ritual is practice become *dramatic.*

Construction, Artifact, and Icon

Constructions, artifacts, things people make, are certainly a major part of culture. Indeed, one might imagine that culture is pretty much all constructions. But this is not so. In the classical sense making or *poiēsis* is about the formation of materials into meaningful wholes. While much of what we call

culture, and virtually all cultural *things,* are indeed the products of making, certainly making is not all of culture. Practices are done, not made. The notion that culture is all made is the result of the overuse and expansion of the metaphor of "construction" by contemporary theorists, who tend to label "constructed" anything showing the effects of human activity. Assertion and action then get subsumed under making. This tendency must be resisted. Making is one pole of a continuum that includes selecting, choosing, interacting, and affecting, unless we are going to claim that leaving footprints on K-2, or even *naming* it "K-2," are no different from having built the mountain itself from the ground up. It is true that people construct things. The things they construct are artifacts where they carry cultural meanings. The artifacts of a society have the special function of constituting a meaningful environment for members. It is the system of artifacts that has a right to the overused philosophical term "second-nature," a constructed world that supervenes upon nature.

And it is in this sense that construction does have a kind of primacy in the conception of culture. For while culture as a whole is equally a matter of doing, making, and saying, the entire *symbolic* dimension of culture, as opposed to the mundane, can from an external point of view rightly be considered something we *make.* By "external" I mean from the perspective of an observer, rather than a member, of a culture. For symbolic rituals, icons, and myths are arguably *added* to nature by human beings, and addition is more making than doing or saying. That is, while we engage the world by saying what it is, and by responding to or dealing with it, we also engage by supplementing it, clothing it in human terms, hence by arranging and forming natural materials into a new whole. But it remains the case, as we will see in Chapter 6, that this making is always the making of an *agent.*

Remarkably, the best recent account of this artifactural world comes from a work in social and political theory; but then, its author was a remarkable political theorist. In *The Human Condition* Hanna Arendt expands the concept of *Welt* and its dependence on practice from Heidegger's *Being and Time.* "World" for Heidegger was the horizon of all meaningful things, a horizon projected by *Dasein* or human being as the context for its experience. Whereas Heidegger's analysis of the physical projects that form, or form part of, this world stopped with tools (*zuhanden,* "ready to hand" things), Arendt makes human artifacts the structure of the world. Like a

tent, Arendt's world is propped up and given structure by human *poiēsis,* making, or as she calls it, "work" (not to be confused with labor), including art, poetry, history, and crafts, all the manifold forms of human creation that leave behind durable meaningful objects. For even though political action is her focus, action is only commemorated and memorialized, hence capable of building something that outlasts the actor, if there is an artifact to capture it. The work-world of Arendt is clearly the world of culture.

As she notes, modern society privileges construction. Modernity makes man the maker *(homo faber).* In the premodern world two castes present alternate models of ideal humanity: the aristocratic model dictates that the sheer *being* of an individual marks its worth, granted by blood, while the scribal-religious class regards *contemplation* of the eternal as the essential task of humanity. Work was, in agroliterate civilization, a degraded category, embodied by peasants and merchants. In modern bourgeois society the measure of greatness is fabrication: here Kant's transcendental turn provides the epistemological twin to modernist art and Promethean capitalism. Certainly premodern people worked, but modernity shifts work to the center of its anthropology, thereby liberating work from the classical and medieval versions in which the fabricator is a copyist of ideal, tradition-bequeathed models. Modernity is the triumph of work, even if, as Arendt fears, in late modernity work threatens to degenerate into metabolic, meaningless labor.

The artifact or cultural construction that becomes a recognized end-in-view is an *icon,* a thing that is an end in itself for social members. Art-works are the most obvious examples, but so are many treasured objects. Iconic constructions provide to sensibility the aesthetically normative compulsions of a culture. They become centers of interpretation just as do the canonical texts of narrative tradition.

Representation, Narrative, and Myth

Representations are depictions and descriptions which claim to be true of what is described. It is here that the beliefs shared by cultural members have their place. I claim cultural representations are organized into meaningful patterns through narrative. That is the form in which representations come to be shared by social members as part of their culture. This is to argue that the primary form of the intelligibility of human existence, one

which coheres with both practices and artifacts, is the narrative. It is in the historical depiction of events as they pass from beginning through middle to end via the activities of agents (human or nonhuman, that is to say, divine, supranatural) that culture provides this intelligibility. This might seem too restrictive. Certainly social members also share purely synchronic (nontemporal) representations or beliefs. But just as not all makings or actions are cultural, representations or beliefs that are not connected to shared narratives are not cultural.

Storytelling was presumably one of the first forms of culture, along with ritual practices and the artifacts of cave painting and bodily ornamentation. The canonical texts and folk wisdom of later agricultural civilizations are also primarily narrative. And in a postreligious age secular societies commonly substitute narratives of progress, national self-determination, and the achievement of liberty and individual authenticity as their dominant conceptions of the sense of life.

Narration is verbal representation normed, as noted, by truth. One might argue that our modern notion of truth-functional discourse has no place here, that ancient, segmentary narratives did not follow our modern notion of true representations as propositions whose correspondence to states of affairs can be evidenced or justified. One might imagine that the oral history heard by the fire functioned not to be the depiction of truth, but rather the reinforcement of a social bond, as Lyotard says (Lyotard 1984). He may be right, but that is beside the point. If the sociopolitical context of the story made clear that all present must then "believe" it without "evidence," must see the world in relation to it, must say the world *is* as the story says, then it was indeed offered as "true" *as well as* socially normative. The difference is not the absence of truth in the ancient context. Truth was there, just as aesthetic compulsion and moral-social normativity were there. But they were there *differently* than for us, in a predifferentiated state, as we shall see.

At the symbolic level the narrative structure of cultural representations becomes what Lyotard called metanarrative, or more simply, myth. Myths serve as the articulations of the ultimate ends of the culture and as such become *ultimate ends themselves.* Following Elizabeth Baeten's analysis, a culture's myths are the cognitive representations beyond which it cannot go, which provide explanation for other social activities but cannot be explained themselves, only explicated and interpreted (Baeten 1996).

Kingdoms of Ends

We can now offer a preliminary definition of culture. Culture is the *public repertoire of meaning-establishing and -interpreting processes and products, rooted in socially projected ends.* It is the teleologically *thickest* layer of a society's hermeneutic horizon. Culture is *not* a particular social sphere, not a rule-governed context of action. It is the indefinite repertoire in terms of which all such contexts gain their mediate significance, their "place." Just as a sovereign state cannot be part of a larger political unit (if it is, then it is not sovereign), a culture cannot function as a *part* of society or society's semiotics. It is rather a dimension of social experience which invokes social norms in narrative, practical, and artifactural meaning-structures. Differently put, culture is the net of interpretive products in so far as they are connected to socially normative ends. As to the question why I ought to commit some social act, rather than answering that I ought to do it because others expect it, it will feel good, will be practically beneficial—perfectly good social reasons—culture amplifies by answering: because it is right, or good, or sacred, or beautiful, or awesome, or true.

None of which implies that a culture *is* a system, or a substantive unity, but it can *function as* a unity. A culture's elements cannot be reduced to applications of a few central themes or ideals. An apt metaphor for its unity might be Giles Deleuze's "rhizomes," tubers that reproduce from any point rather than "arborially" in a "logical tree" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). We may imagine a culture as a family of variously connected hypotheses spread out like clumps of kelp across a region of sea, swimming, as Peirce figured it, "in a continuum of uncertainty and indeterminacy" (Peirce 1931a: 70). Like an irregular construction of a child's tinker toys, every clump is connected to at least one other, but none connects to all or dominates the far-flung network.

The idea of a society of beings whose behavior is coordinated by ends-in-themselves may remind us of the attractive phrase coined by Kant for the imagined community of moral beings, "the kingdom of ends." Moral action requires that we act in conformity with that imagination, which is a necessary posit of practical, or moral, reason for Kant. For rational beings are and must be treated as ends in themselves. What is it about human beings that makes them ends for Kant? It is their moral autonomy, their capacity rationally to choose to obey moral law. For Kant the only ends in themselves are the beings with that capacity. Whatever the virtues of this approach, it denies that humans can reasonably regard something as *more important than*

themselves, and this is an unnecessary truncation of how humans have in fact imagined the meanings of their lives. Human beings require more guidance in life than can be gotten from the notion that human individuals are the sole ultimate ends. For humans are the kind of ends *that must find other ends,* ends under which their autonomy, in so far as there is such a thing, gains its value. Kant should have called his system of moral beings the kingdom of *choosers of ends.* As for the kingdom of ends, *that is culture.* But unlike Kant's modern, cosmopolitan conception, the principalities of culture are many. Culture is more like a *feudal* kingdom of ends, locally dominant meaning-structures arranged in a decentralized patchwork of local authorities, in which no ruling end can be more than a *primus inter pares,* a first among equals.