

The Self-Organization of the Cultural Subsystem of Modern Society

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Abstract

This paper tries to link self-organization theory and Cultural Studies. Its approach can be described as a dialectical Cultural Materialism that integrates aspects from semiotics and systems theory in order to describe culture as an integrative, dynamic, complex, evolving system. Subjective theories conceive culture as opinion, ideas, beliefs, a state of mind of human beings, objective theories consider it as symbolic content stored in objects of the human being's environment or as collective ideas and world-views and a totality of collective meaningful practices in society, dualistic theories consider it as having independent subjective and objective forms. Culture is a social process that produces common meanings that signify certain entities in a self-organizing system, this process is based on a mutual productive relationship between the subjective culture of a human being (his ideas, norms, values, beliefs) and objective cultural structures (meaningful cultural artefacts with symbolic content, and collective norms, ideas, values, rules, traditions, world-views (Weltanschauung) ethics, morals).

Knowledge is a threefold dynamic social process of cognition, communication, and co-operation, an active productive relationship between knowledgeable human beings. Collective norms, values, rules, world-views, traditions, morals, and ethics as well as cultural products store knowledge about the social world and reduce the complexity of the social world, they are objective cultural knowledge. Objective cultural knowledge and subjective cultural knowledge (individual ideas) produce each other mutually.

All social realities are interpreted in cultural processes by which they gain certain meanings. Hence the cultural subsystem is related to and structurally coupled to all other subsystems of society. Peircian semiotics enables us to interpret signification as a dialectical social process, in contrast to deterministic (Adorno, Horkheimer) and indeterministic (Baudrillard, Luhmann) assumptions a dialectical concept of meaning production argues that each social reality allows different meanings and that material and symbolic social struggles constitute antagonistic relationships between different meanings that can be dominant, negotiated, or oppositional in nature. Such a view can be elaborated based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu and representatives of British Cultural Studies such as Stuart Hall. The fact that the production of meaning is social and contested means that the relationship of object and meaning is not linear, but complex and nonlinear. Due to the influence of social struggle and social conditions each object of social reality has a conditioned variety/plurality of meanings. Culture is a relatively autonomous system that is in constant interaction with the other subsystems of society. The superstructure is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the base, the base is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the superstructure.

Cultural development is based on a dialectic of enculturation and deculturation, continuity and variation. Fundamental cultural change is the result of class struggles that aim at the accumulation of economic, political, and cultural capital. Cultural development is related to the whole capital structure and the related whole ways of struggle of modern society. Symbolic capital accumulation is an active ideological process of struggle that determines dominant meanings and social groups.

Keywords: culture, self-organization, emergence, cultural studies, dialectical cultural materialism, semiotics, capitalism

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1. Introduction: A Typology of Cultural Theories

For me the main results of the very fruitful, participatory, and self-organizing conversations of the Foundations of Information Science (FIS) group at the 12th Fuschl Conversations (April 18th-April 23rd, 2004; participants: Søren Brier, Anthoneta Doncheva, Christian Fuchs, Wolfgang Hofkirchner, Gottfried Stockinger) include the following ideas:

- In order to solve the global problems mankind and society are facing today we need to create a co-operative participatory society. In order to do so a praxiological understanding of basic processes such as communication and co-operation is necessary.
- The essence of all reality is that it changes and self-organizes itself permanently, hence it is a dynamic, complex process.
- Systems develop based on metasystem transitions where new qualities emerge.
- Metasystem transitions have an individual phase, an interactional phase, and an integrational phase.
- These three phases correspond to Peirce's concepts of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness and to Hegel's three phases of dialectical development: 1. thing-in-itself (identity), 2. being-for-another (negation), 3. being-in-and-for-itself (negation of the negation, higher-order identity).
- As a result of permanent triadic development processes (in nature and society) the triadic sign emerges as a new quality of reality, which is both structure and process.
- Self-organizing systems are proactive and semiotic, which makes them cognitive, communicative, and co-operative. These are semiotic processes.
- Communication is based on a reciprocal structural coupling of cognitive systems: system A produces a representamen of B's behaviour with the help of system B and B produces a representamen of A's behaviour with the help of A. Thus communication is a common production process of representamens and interpretants.
- Human co-operation means that human beings find common understandings and meanings of certain aspects of the social world. These shared meanings are then objectified and represented in the form of objects of the social world that are part of the shared social environment of the human subjects involved in the co-operation process.

Based on these ideas I want to discuss the essence of human culture as a signification sphere of society and want to show how the ideas developed by the FIS group at the Fuschl Conversations 2004 that deal with threefold dialectical processes, threefold semiotic processes, and self-organizing processes of cognition, communication, and co-operation can be applied to the cultural realm of society. The main questions that I treat in this paper are: What is culture? What is the role of culture in modern society? How can culture be conceived as a dynamic system? I try to give one legitimate answer by considering culture as a self-organizing system. Traditionally culture has very frequently been conceived based on a series of dualisms between subject/object, actors/structures, system/environment, production/consumption, continuity/discontinuity, base/superstructure, nature/culture, high culture/popular culture.

My approach is based on trying to show that these categories are not separated form of beings, but that they interact and produce each other mutually. Hence philosophically the underlying logic employed is dialectic, this dialectical reasoning is embedded into a theory of social self-organization. My position can be characterized as a dialectical Cultural Materialism, it is both dynamic and realistic. The main influences on this work are British Cultural Studies, especially thinkers like Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, and Pierre Bourdieu's social theory.

In section 1 I first deal with the relationship of subject and object in cultural theory and discuss different approaches on culture and provide a typology of cultural theory that identifies subjectivistic (1.1.), objectivistic (1.2.), dualistic (1.3), and dialectical (1.4.) approaches. The question of how actors and structures are related in culture will be of specific importance in section 1. Then I will try to show that culture is not just subjective knowledge, but a knowledge system where subjective knowledge is linked to specific forms of objectified knowledge in dialectical production processes (section 2). Then I will try to explain the cultural process of the production of meaningful sign systems in society (section 3), the focus will be on the relationship between cultural production and consumption. Section 4 deals with the question whether cultural evolution is a continuous or a discontinuous process, it tries to show that the concept of self-organization allows us to conceive cultural development based on a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. In section 5 I discuss the relationship of base and superstructure in modern culture and suggest that symbolic struggle between different life-styles, the class and capital structure (understood in a very broad non-economistic sense), and ideology shape the development process of modern culture. Section 6 discusses the relationship of nature and culture.

Chris Jenks (1993) has identified four meanings of the concept of culture. Culture as

1. general state of mind
2. state of intellectual and/or moral development in society
3. collective body of arts and intellectual work
4. a social category that describes the whole way of life of a people

The first two meanings are more subjective ones, relating to the ideas (1) and values (2) of human subjects. The third and the fourth meanings are more objective ones in the sense that they describe realities outside of the individual, i.e. cultural products (3) and the totality of meaningful experiences and practices of a social group (4). Cultural products and way of life can be seen as objectified cultural forms: cultural products are an externalization of subjective human ideas; social practices in processes of communication and co-operation relate the subjective knowledge of individuals, each individual is both subject as well as object of knowledge.

Raymond Williams (1983) indicates three distinctive usages of the term:

1. Culture as a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development
2. Culture as a particular way of life of a people, a period, a group, or humanity
3. Culture as the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. "This seems often now the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film" (Williams 1983: 90).

Usage (1) is a subjective one, usages (2) and (3) are objective ones.

I want to discuss subjectivistic, objectivistic, and dualistic approaches on culture in order to show how my own concept differs from these ones and tries to bridge the gaps between them

(cf. the typology of different concepts of culture in tab. 1). Subjective theories conceive culture as opinion, ideas, beliefs, a state of mind of human beings, objective theories consider it as symbolic content stored in objects of the human being's environment or as collective ideas and world-views and a totality of collective meaningful practices in society, dualistic theories consider it as having independent subjective and objective forms. The decisive criterion for the typology in tab. 1 is the relationship between subject and object that can be conceived as reductionistic, holistic, dualistic, or dialectical.

Type of Approach	Culture conceived as...
Subjectivistic (individualistic) approaches	cognitively constructed domain in the form of opinions, ideas, beliefs, a state of mind <i>(culture as cognitive attribute)</i>
Objectivistic approaches	material symbolic artefact (cultural products, cultural works) or meaningful social structure that exists outside of human subjects <i>(culture as symbolic material thing or as collective meaningful values, world-views, and practices)</i>
Dualistic approaches	two independently existing forms: 1. a cognitively constructed domain, 2. a material symbolic artefact or dominant collective value-systems and practices <i>(culture as two independent subjective and objective domains)</i>
Dialectical approaches	a meaningful process of cognition, communication, and co-operation that has both subjective and objective aspects <i>(culture as process and reflective relationship)</i>

Tab. 1: Typology of approaches on knowledge research

I now want to discuss each of these approaches in more detail.

1.1. Cultural Subjectivism

I want to give some examples of such an approach that considers culture as cognitive, subjective state of mind.

“A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. [...] Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people,

behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them” (Goodenough 1962: 36).

“A distinctly human capacity for adapting to circumstances and transmitting this coping skill and knowledge to subsequent generations” (Harris/Moran 1979)

For Richard Johnson culture is “the subjective side of social relations”, it involves the “historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by” (Johnson 1996: 80).

For Kroeber and Kluckhohn culture is “transmitted patterns of values, ideas and other symbolic systems that shape behaviour. [...] Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action” (Kroeber/Kluckhohn 1952). “By culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.” (Kluckhohn/Kelly 1945).

Talcott Parsons: “Cultural objects are symbolic elements of the cultural tradition, ideas or beliefs, expressive symbols or value patterns [...] treated as situational objects by ego” (Parsons 1951). For Parsons culture is a subsystem of action systems that has the function of “latent pattern maintenance“, it stabilizes norms and values. “Culture [...] consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes” (Parsons 1949: 8).

Max Weber: “The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes ‘culture’ to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of this value-relevance. Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is colored by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to their connection with our values“ (Weber 1949: 76)

1.2. Cultural Objektivism

Objectivistic cultural theories understand culture either as artefactual cultural works or as collective norms/rules/ideas/knowledge/behaviour of social groups.

First two examples for the first objectivistic usage of the notion of culture:

For Norbert Elias culture means mental, artistic, religious facts (1939: 90), the value and character of certain human products such as artworks, books, religious and philosophical systems that are an expression of the character of a people opposed to the character of other peoples (ibid.: 91). Contrary to the concept of culture, the notion of civilization would not mean products, but human manners and forms of behaviour. Civilization would be a process, culture a product or result of such processes.

For Lawrence Grossberg culture means texts and discourses that “that are produced within, inserted into, and operate in the everyday life of human beings and social formations, so as to reproduce, struggle against, and perhaps transform the existing structures of power” (Grossberg 1996: 180).

Now some examples for the collective dimension of objectivism. Note that the difference between these notions and subjectivistic notions is that the former speak of a collective dimension, whereas the latter of an individual dimension of culture. Collective means that values, norms, knowledge and rules are constituted and reproduced in social processes, they are shared by or imposed on a social group.

For Karl Mannheim culture has to do with “spiritual formations“ (Geistesgebilde)/“intellectual formations“ (Denkgebilde) (Mannheim 1982). Culture would be an expression of identical patterns of experience of social groups (70ff). A cultural community (Kulturgemeinschaft) would be a group of people with common experiences and consciousness, it would be an experiential community (203f) that has collective representations (Kollektivvorstellungen) (208ff).

Van Maanen/Schein (1979) consider culture as “values, beliefs and expectations that members come to share”.

"A culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society" (Linton 1945: 32).

"Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (Lederach 1995: 9).

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede 1984: 51).

"Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways" (Banks/McGee Banks 1989).

One of the most famous definitions of culture has been given by Edward Burnett Tylor who sees it as the patterns of feeling and thought of social groups: “Culture [...] taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871: 1).

Marvin Harris stresses that culture is not an individual, but a social phenomenon. “Culture refers to the learned, socially acquired traditions of thought and behavior found in human societies. [...] When anthropologists speak of a human culture, they usually mean the total,

socially acquired lifestyle of a group of people, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Harris 1997: 88).

Becker/Geer (1980) define culture as a “set of common understandings expressed in language”.

"Culture: learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day- to-day living patterns. these patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism" (Damen 1987: 367).

“Culture means the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. A culture is less precise. It can mean the forms of traditional behavior which are characteristics of a given society, or of a group of societies, or of a certain race, or of a certain area, or of a certain period of time“ (Mead 1937: 17).

“Culture is like the sum of special knowledge that accumulates in any large united family and is the common property of all its members“ (Aldous Huxley, quoted from: <http://www.wsu.edu:8001/vcwsu/commons/topics/culture/quotations-on-culture/quotations-on-culture.html>)

1.3. Cultural Dualism

The most important dualistic concept of culture is the world model of Karl Popper. He argues that there is knowledge in the subjective sense consisting of dispositions and expectations, but that there is also objective knowledge consisting of linguistically formulated expectations submitted to critical discussion (Popper 1981: 66). Popper says in rationalist tradition that most of our knowledge and dispositions are inborn and inherited. Subjective knowledge would be possessed by some knowing human subject, it would be a state of mind or of consciousness or a disposition to behave or react. Objective knowledge would consist in the logical content of theories, conjectures, guesses (ibid.: 73). “Knowledge in this objective sense is totally independent of anybody’s claim to know; it is also independent of anybody’s belief, or disposition to assent; or to assert, or to act. Knowledge in the objective sense is knowledge without a known: it is knowledge without a knowing subject” (ibid.: 109). Objective knowledge would also exist if it is not recognised by the human being, “a book remains a book [...] even if it is never read” (ibid.: 115). Examples for objective knowledge would be theories published in books and journals and stored in libraries. Popper called the world of subjective knowledge world 2 and the world of objective knowledge world 3. World 3 would contain theories, arguments, conjectures, journals, books, problems, and problem situations, world 3 ist the world of culture. It would have an independent existence, although a human creation, it would create its own domain of autonomy (ibid.: 118).

Popper distinguished three worlds of existence: “first, the world of physical objects or of physical states; secondly the world of states of consciousness, or of mental states [...] and thirdly, the world of *objective contents of thought*, especially of scientific and poetic thoughts and of works of art” (ibid.: 106). Hence culture is for Popper world 3, the world of objective knowledge, it contains products of the human mind that continue to exist independently of their originators. It has been created by human beings, but is independent of their existence. “The third is the world of intelligibles, or of *ideas in the objective sense*; it is the world of possible objects of thought: the world of theories in themselves, and their logical relations; of arguments in themselves; and of problem situations in themselves” (ibid.: 154).

Popper talks about both subjective and objective aspects of knowledge, but for him these two domains are independent. World 3 is created by world 2, but exists independently of it. He misconceives the relationship of subject and object as dualistic, and doesn't take into account that the knowledge of human individuals and social structures is mutually connected and produces each other. Popper constructs a dualism between human actors and objective structures. The objectification of human activity for Popper are only things that make up world 3, books, artworks, videos, computers, papers, etc., he doesn't see that also collective organizations (like enterprises, parties, universities, etc.) are an objectification of subjective human knowledge and activity.

1.4. Dialectical Concepts of Culture

Objectivism reduces culture and/or meaning to the side of the objects as such (as commodities, things, etc.). "The text-as-produced is a different object from the text-as-read. The problem with Adorno's analysis and perhaps with productivist approaches in general is not only that they infer the text-as-read from the text-as-produced, but that also, in doing this, they ignore the elements of production in other moments, concentrating 'creativity' in producer or critic" (Johnson 1996: 93). Subjectivism reduces culture to the individual and to cognition, it conceives culture solely as ideas and subjective meanings. It leaves out both aspects of production and social relationships.

Dialectical concepts of culture stress that the latter has both subjective and objective aspects that interact. Culture is considered as a dynamic process relationship that establishes common meanings that signify certain objects. My view here is one that is close to British Cultural Studies (especially to the theories of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall). I try to combine a sociological dialectical materialistic perspective with a semiotic one.

Stuart Hall (1996) stresses that British Cultural studies has been influenced by two paradigms: structuralism and culturalism. The strength of the first would be the "stress on determinate conditions, [...] the fact that, in capitalist relations, men and women are placed and positioned in relations which constitute them as agents" (Hall 1996: 42f). The strength of the latter would be the stress on "conscious struggle and organization" (ibid.: 45). Hall notes that Cultural Studies should take the best elements from both paradigms, I suggest that such an interconnection can best be made by dialectical reasoning, i.e. the notion of mutual production of cultural practices and cultural structures.

For Raymond Williams culture doesn't mean the best ideas in a social formation in the sense of "high culture", for him culture means the production of common meanings, it is ordinary. One of Williams' achievements is that he has challenged idealistic and elitist theories of culture that see culture as "the best which has been thought in the world" (Arnold 1957: 6)¹, the use of the "language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends" (Leavis 1930: 5), and mass culture as "a parasitic, a cancerous growth in High Culture" (Macdonald 1957: 23), and that try to argue that dominant groups are more intelligent and gifted than others and hence attempt to ideologically secure domination. They hence e.g. suggest "to save culture by restoring the old class lines, [...] to revive the cultural elite" (Macdonald 1957: 33). Such conservative views see the mass of human beings as passive, dumb, inactive beings that are not able to make good decisions, and hence they call for authority and are totalitarian in nature. Against such conservative, elitist, heteronomous definitions it is important to hold that

¹ Arnold argued that the popular culture of the working class causes anarchy in society and that hence authority and repression is needed in order to secure high culture.

culture is a meaning-producing social process that can be found in all social relationships. In the 1920ies many such conservative thinkers have suggested that charismatic leadership figures are needed in order to save society from the dangers of modern technology and mass culture. At least in Germany they have helped to intellectually pave the way towards fascism. E.g. Oswald Spengler who considered culture as an organism that like nature follows a life pattern of spring, summer, autumn, and winter (Spengler 1918/1922) considered modern technology as causing a destruction of Western white culture, due to technology humans would become slaves of machinery (Spengler 1931: 75), coloured people would use technology for trying to destroy the white race (ibid.: 82f), technology would destroy the authority of leadership figures, the “coloured world revolution” would be the greatest danger for white Western culture (Spengler 1933: 146), colored people would wage a “race war” against the West (ibid.: 147). Spengler’s theory is racist, idealistic, and deterministic.

By seeing culture as related to descriptions that make sense, Williams stresses subjective aspects, but by referring to culture as the whole way of life he also stresses the social (“objective”) aspects. “We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning – the special processes of discovery and creative effort. [...] Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind” (Williams 2001: 11).

For Williams culture is the totality of relationships between social practices (whole way of life) and the meanings that these relationships produce and express in e.g. art, learning, institutions, and ordinary behaviour. The objective dimension here is present in the form of social relationships, the subjective one in the form of conscious experiences. Together these two dimensions are termed by Williams “structures of feelings” which he defines as “a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which give the sense of a generation or a period. [...] We are talking [...] about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness” (Williams 1977: 131f). The structure of feeling would be the culture of a period, “it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization” (Williams 1961: 48). This concept is an attempt of trying to think together lived experience and social structures.

Semiotic concepts of culture are close to a dialectical view of culture because they consider culture as establishing a relationship between the real and the symbolic (a relationship between object and meaning in bivalent semiology, and a relationship between object, symbol, and meaning in trivalent semiotics). E.g.: For Clifford Geertz (1973) culture is a “web of significance” (5), an “interworked system of construable signs” (ibid.: 14), a “symbolic system” (ibid.: 17), the “accumulated totality” of “organized systems of significant symbols” (ibid.: 46). If human behaviour were seen as symbolic action, the question if culture is subjective or objective would lose sense. For Richard Münch culture is a system that enables the assignment of meaning to social action (Münch 1991: 49). It is a “system of meaning” (ibid.). This meaning would be realized in communication processes. Such understandings of culture consider it as a relationship, but are based on the rather idealistic shortcoming that they consider as cultural only the symbolic realm, not the relationship between the real and the symbolic.

Culture is a social process that produces common meanings that signify certain entities in a self-organizing system, this process is based on a mutual productive relationship between the subjective culture of a human being (his ideas, norms, values, beliefs) and objective cultural structures (meaningful cultural artefacts with symbolic content, and collective norms, ideas,

values, rules, traditions, world-views (Weltanschauung) ethics, morals). Human beings enter social relationships where they produce and reproduce social structures that enable and constrain further practices. This is the process of social self-organization or re-creation (Fuchs 2002, 2003a-d, 2004a, Fuchs/Hofkirchner/Klauninger 2002, Fuchs/Schlemm 2004). Practices of human actors produce social structures that produce further practices that enable the production of further social structures and relationships. This idea of social self-organization is related to Anthony Giddens' idea that the "structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems" (Giddens 1979: 69) and Pierre Bourdieu's idea that the habitus is a property "for which and through which there is a social world" (Bourdieu 1990: 140). A dialectical notion of social self-organization that opposes the dualism of Niklas Luhmann's works can be based on the works of Giddens and Bourdieu (Fuchs 2003c, d) rather than on the functionalistic social theory that has traditionally shaped social systems theory. Cultural self-organization means the processes of self-organization that take place in the cultural subsystem of society. It is based on human actors, their interactions, and the structures that are produced. In cultural self-organization human actors based on their subjective ideas, norms, values, beliefs in social relationships produce collective meaningful artefactual and social structures that enable and constrain human thinking and actors and hence produce further social practices that produce further collective cultural structures (cf. fig. 1).

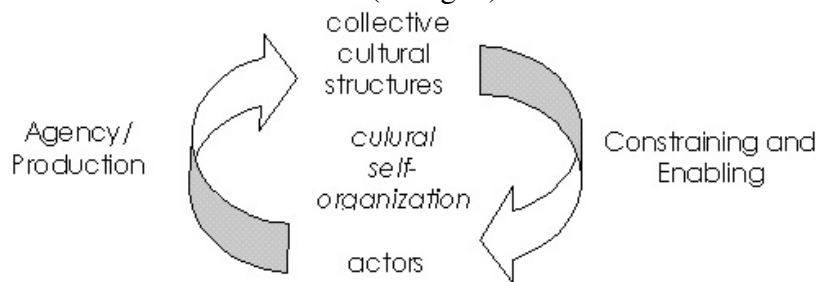


Fig. 1: Cultural Self-Organization/Re-Creation

To describe culture as a dynamic, self-organizing systems means that we assume that there is the permanent emergence of new cultural structures in social systems. The notion of emergence as the appearance of new qualities in a system that can't be reduced to the underlying elements, but stem from the creative synergetical interactions of these elements, is one of the central concepts of theories of self-organization. For the area of subjective cognitive cultural structures (knowledge) this is obvious. Concerning collective cultural structures we can say that new cultural artefacts emerge relatively frequently. This is especially true in the information or media society where the cultural industries have a strategic economic and social role. Certainly also meanings are permanently attached to entities in social processes permanently. This means at least that collective meanings are permanently reconstituted, but not that they permanently change fundamentally. There is indeed a certain continuity of collective norms, values, rules, traditions, ethics, morals that is being permanently reproduced in order to contribute to and enable the overall self-reproduction of society and social systems. Meanings interact, are related, and can form higher order symbolic systems, symbolic systems are frequently emerging and imerging.

The notion of cultural self-organization helps us to conceive culture as complex dynamic system and to see that in every society common meanings are permanently established and recreated, these meanings are objectified in dominant norms, values, traditions, as well as in rules, institutions, artefacts. Cultural meanings are "made by living, made and remade, in ways we cannot know in advance" (Williams 2001: 15).

Raymond Williams has as early as 1973 in his paper “Base and Superstructure” – one of the foundational texts of Cultural Materialism – coined the term “emergent meaning” and “emergent culture”. “By ‘emergent’ I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences are continually being created” (Williams 2001: 170f). Emergent meaning is the permanent discontinuity and novelty through which culture can reproduce and organize itself. Williams notes that dominant culture is alert “to anything that can be seen as emergent” (ibid.: 171). Williams didn’t connect this notion of cultural emergence to the sciences of complexity which were just about to emerge full-scale in the 1970ies, but he intuitively anticipated the idea that self-organization in the sense of the self-reproduction of a system requires the permanent constitution of new qualities of a system.

The cultural subsystem of modern society that produces collective meaningful structures that represent world-views, rules, norms, values is itself organized in the way of a number of subsystems such as the mass media (cf. Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2003, Fuchs 2003f, 2004b), science (cf. Fuchs 2004c), art, education, and systems of physical recreation like sports and medicine.

The mass media form an autopoietic or self-organising system that is organized around the permanent production of topical news about the state of the world, it produces views on the world. Mass media are organized around certain technological media (printing press, radio technology, television, computer etc.) that are embedded into social institutions (for more details cf. Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2003, Fuchs 2003f, 2004b). Hence the term mass media doesn’t simply denote certain technologies, but social relationships that make use of technological media in order to organize themselves and to reach certain goals. The mass media are closely structurally coupled with the economic, political and technological subsystems of society, they can achieve their goals only by making use of technological, economic, political and cultural media. Institutions of the mass media frequently (especially within deregulated social and institutional settings) also pursue economic interests and make use of technological media in order to achieve these aims, i.e. they sell knowledge and news as commodities. The commodification of symbolic forms aims at capital accumulation both in a direct and an indirect way. In a direct way information commodities are sold on the market, the indirect way is constituted by the sale of advertising space (advertisement in television, banner-commercials in the Internet). We should employ the term *mass* media because technologies are used in order to reach a large number of people. Audience ratings are an important economic aspect of the mass media. A central characteristic of the existing organization of the mass media is that the main contents are controlled and produced by a relatively small number of people and groups, whereas the number of recipients is much larger.

As I have tried to show elsewhere (Fuchs 2004c) that scientific systems are self-organizing units that perform the production of theories and truths by the way of a productive, circular causal duality of scientific actors and scientific structures. Science is a dynamic system where research practices produce and reproduce structures that produce and reproduce research practices. Scientific structures are medium and outcome of scientific actions. At the action level one can find a systemic hierarchy that is made up of individual researchers, research groups, scientific communities, and the overall scientific community. Scientific structures include theories, research institutions, technologies, journals, publications, science funds; norms, values, and rules of scientific conduct. The main scientific practices can be categorized as genuinely scientific practices (innovation, dissemination, scientific interchange, funding-related activities, teaching), cultural practices (public discourse), political practices (science policy), and economic practices (action related to scientific knowledge as commodities, patents, science-industry-partnerships, sponsorship).

Art is the system of human creativity that produces artworks as aesthetic forms that are organized around the binary code beautiful/ugly. Art is related to fundamental human abilities like creativity, phantasy, and imagination, it reflects world-views of a specific social period and its binary code is a value system.

Education is a system that confronts people with knowledge and enables and constrains them to produce certain world-views. The product of education is qualification, skillfull knowledge needed to solve certain problems.

Whereas systems like the mass media, education, and art recreate the human mind, recreational systems like sports and medicine have the function of recreating the human body. This shows that the cultural system aims at the recreation of body and mind of the human being. In its self-organization it not only recreates the human being, but it also produces collective world-view patterns and meaningful products and structures that influence the way people live, act, and think. In this respect culture is a whole way of life affecting social relationships as well as the human body and mind.

Culture has to do with mental production processes and social objectifications of mind. Hence it is obvious that culture has to do with knowledge. I will now take a closer look at this relationship.

2. Culture and Knowledge

All self-organizing systems are information-producing systems, all self-organizing social systems are knowledge-producing systems (Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2004). Knowledge is neither a thing nor a cognitive entity, it is a dynamic social process, a active productive relationship between knowledgeable human beings (ibid.). It is the manifestation of information in social systems that involves the interpretation, evaluation, and usage of data and can be found in various subsystems of society. Knowledge is a threefold process of cognition, communication, and co-operation (ibid.). It has both subjective and objective dimensions. Subjective knowledge are processes of cognition, objective knowledge are objectified forms of knowledge that are constituted in social proceses of communication and co-operation (ibid.). Both levels (the subjective and the objective one) interact and produce each other mutually. Knowledge is a process of constructive reflection: Certain stimuli in society trigger social changes in a social system, an event causes creative interaction processes in the system that result in emergent novelty, hence one can say that the fluctuation is reflected within the structure of the system in a complex, nonlinear way.

Some cultural theories argue that culture is the totality of knowledge patterns of a social group (see e.g. the definition by Huxley in section 1.2.). If this is assumed, one must also assume that either all social systems are cultural in nature or that non-cultural systems are not based on knowledge. The first option means a too broad usage of the term culture that erases the difference between culture and society, the seond option ignores that all social practices and structures are based on knowledge processes. Subjective ideas and their objectifications are a foundation of all social processes. Economic and political structures and practices are just like cultural ones based on knowledge. Hence culture should not be described as the only knowledge system in society, but as a specific knowledge system.

All human labour is based on a dialectical interconnection of mind and body. Hence all labour is both mental labour and manual labour. But nonetheless a distinction between mental labour

and manual labour and the products of such different labour processes can be made: the first is mainly based on cognition, reflection, logical operations, etc., the second on the human production of physical energy. All goods, traditional machines as well as the computer as a new machine are an objectification of human knowledge, their technological structure is based on human knowledge. Traditional machines such as the assembly line have manual labour and raw materials as their input, in a transformation process they produce goods that are an objectification of manual labour as an output. These are traditional industrial products. The input of a computer is mental labour that is transformed by binary operations, as an output cultural products that are an objectification of mental labour are produced. Writing a book or an article is a mental production process, the book is a cultural product, an objectification of cognitive ideas, reproducing the book with the help of a printing press is an industrial process that helps to multiply the cultural product. Cultural products are objectifications of subjective knowledge that are the result of mental labour processes. They include goods like books, videos, films, music, artworks, software, etc.

Social structures are totalities of durable and institutionalized behaviour. They store and fix knowledge and hence they simplify actions and communications because the foundations of these processes don't have to be produced permanently, they can be achieved by making use of structures. Hence by storing knowledge, social structures reduce social complexity. Structures are carriers of knowledge, they are the foundation of temporal and spatial extension of social systems. Social structures make possible a continuity of social reproduction across space and time, they result in the temporal and spatial distancing of social relationships without the loss of continuity. Structures also produce specific forms of contiguity and hence they dissolve distances by reembedding social relationships that are disembedded in space-time. Social structures are a foundation of action and communication, they enable a certain degree of mobility, they mediate, organise, and co-ordinate social relationships and communications. Social structures as social storage mechanisms are objective/objectified social knowledge. Such structures can be found in ecology (natural resources), technology (machines), economy (property), polity (power), and culture (collective ideas, world-views, rules, etc.). Hence we can speak of objective ecological, technological, economical, political, and cultural knowledge as types of objective social knowledge (Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2004) that are produced in self-organizing social processes that relate subjective knowledge by communication and co-operation.

Cultural structures are the manifestations of objective social knowledge in the cultural subsystem of society. Collective norms, values, rules, world-views, traditions, morals, and ethics as well as cultural products store knowledge about the social world and reduce the complexity of the social world. Hence they are just like all other social structures a capacity for action, they enable social practices. Objective cultural structures are meaningful objectifications of subjective knowledge that are produced by mental labour. The difference between cultural structures (collective norms, values, rules, world-views, traditions, morals, and ethics as well as cultural products such as books, software, theories, artworks, etc.) and other social realities is that the first are a direct objectification of creative mental processes. Non-cultural social realities (like in the economic or political realm of society) are not directly cultural realities, they acquire only a cultural character when they enter processes of social signification, i.e. when they are related to the realm of world-views, norms, values, morals, ideology, and ethics.

That cultural structures are social storage mechanisms has been noted by thinkers like Karl Mannheim and Niklas Luhmann. A cultural work is the "result of the communal experiential contexture stored up in it" (Mannheim 1982: 89). For Kluckhohn (1949) culture is among

other things a “storehouse of pooled learning”. For Robert Artigiani values, ethics, morals (VEMs) are social information. For Niklas Luhmann culture is the “social memory” of society (1998: 586ff). Culture would be the appropriation of the past for determining possibilities for the future, it would condition forestall considerations of how to change accustomed behaviour and would be a sorting mechanism for forgetting and remembering in society (ibid.). Culture would reflect and observe self-descriptions of society (880). I object to Luhmann’s arguments that culture is not *the* social memory of society, but one of several social storage mechanisms in society.

Cultural knowledge is a threefold process of cognition, communication, and co-operation. When a social system organizes itself, it starts from the cognitive knowledge (i.e. mental states) of the involved actors. By communication these actors co-ordinate their subjective knowledge and mutually enhance their knowledge. This communication can result in co-operative processes, i.e. in a co-ordination of activities that results in emergent qualities of the social systems. These emergent results are produced by synergies that arise from the interaction of the agents and the co-ordination of their subjective knowledge, emergent qualities of a social system are an objectification of the knowledge of the involved actors and of the co-operative dimension that arises from their communication. There can be no social self-organization and no social system without subjective knowledge because all social activity is based on active, knowledgeable human actors. That’s why purely objective concepts of knowledge are insufficient. And there can be no social self-organization and no social system without objective knowledge because artefacts and social structures that store knowledge about the system are a foundation of all organizations. That’s why purely subjective concepts of knowledge are insufficient. An integrated notion of social self-organization is based on both subjective and objective aspects of knowledge, it is based on a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity. Subjective knowledge results in and is based on objective knowledge, objective knowledge results in and is based on subjective knowledge.

When two human systems interact (see fig. 2), they enter an objective relationship, i.e. a (mutual) causal relationship is established. A portion of subjective, systemic knowledge (“*cognition*”) is communicated from system A to system B (and vice versa, “*communication*”). The cognitive structural patterns that are stored in neural networks within the brains of individual human agents can be termed subjective knowledge. Human actors are knowledgeable beings. Communicating knowledge from one system to another causes structural changes in the receiving system. If there is a knowledge relationship between the two systems, it is determined that there will be causal interactions and structural effects. The structure of the systems (structural, subjective knowledge) changes, but we don’t know to which extent this will actually be the case, which new subjective knowledge will emerge, how knowledge structures will be changed etc. There are degrees of autonomy and freedom (=chance). If structural changes in system B take place and are initiated by system A, this means an objectification of subjective knowledge of A in B from the point of view of A. From the point of view of B it means subjectification of objective knowledge from its environment. In a communication process, this also takes place the other way round. As a result of communication it cannot only be the case that an objectification of knowledge in some of the involved systems takes place, it can also be the case that due to the synergies between the systems new qualities (knowledge) emerge in their shared environment (“*co-operation*”). Structural, subjective knowledge of the involved systems is co-ordinated, synergies arise and hence something new is produced commonly in a self-organization process. The new structure or system that arises is an objectification of (parts of the) subjective knowledge of the involved systems. Knowledge in self-organizing social systems has cognitive (subjective), communicative (new subjective knowledge (=cognitive structures) emerges in systems due to

interaction) and co-operative aspects (interaction results in synergies that cause the emergence of new, objectified knowledge in the shared environment of the involved systems).

This threefold process takes place in all subsystems of society. In cultural processes and the cultural subsystem, communication and co-operation primarily reflect mental labour, worldviews, norms, and values. The produced objectifications are cultural structures in the sense that they are meaningful objectifications of mental labour and reflect individual and social worldviews. The production of collective cultural structures is based on cognitive knowledge structures that are externalized and objectified in social processes of communication and co-operation. These collective structures that are the manifestation of objective social knowledge in the cultural realm and hence can be termed objective cultural information in turn influence subjective cognitive processes, i.e. the world-views of individual human beings. This is a dialectical process of the externalization of the internal and the internalization of the external. Hence cultural self-organization can on the informational level be described as a mutual productive relationship of subjective knowledge and objective cultural knowledge (fig. 3).

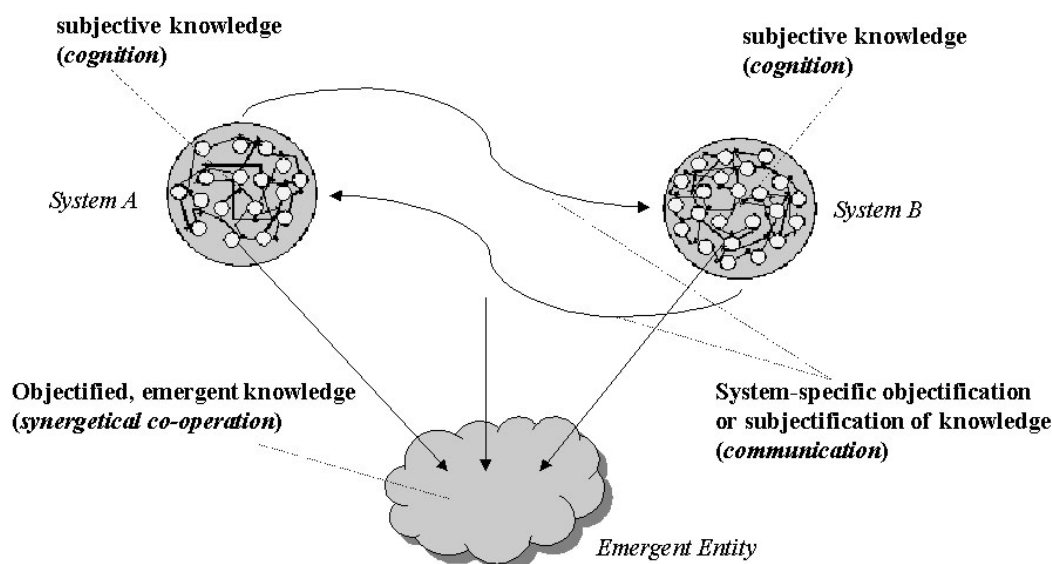


Fig. 2: A model of knowledge as a threefold process of cognition, communication, and co-operation in social systems



Fig. 3: The informational level of the re-creation of culture.

Besides knowledge also notions like “meaning”, “symbols”, “signs” are frequently employed when one speaks about culture. Hence I will now try to show that such semiotic concepts are very important for a dialectical cultural theory.

3. Signification as the Cultural Production of Meaning in Society

Collective cultural structures are meaningful structures and the products of mental labour. The process of signification has a wider social importance than the self-organization of culture as a subsystem. All social realities are interpreted in cultural processes by which they gain certain meanings. Hence the cultural subsystem is related to and structurally coupled to all other subsystems of society (ecology, technology, economy, polity). The process of signification has a general social relevance and should hence be described in some more detail. What I have described in section one is how collective world-views, rules, norms, values, etc. are constituted. These processes have in section 2 been further described on an informational level. What will follow now is a description of how existing collective cultural structures are used in order to give meanings to social realities, events, practices, structures that stem from all subsystems of society.

The process of the social production of meaning deserves special attention, here semiotic concepts are of importance. According to Peirce a sign is a triadic relationship between an object, its symbolic representation (representamen), and the assigned meaning (interpretant) (see fig. 4). “A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen“ (Peirce 1931ff: 2.228). “A Sign is a Cognizable that, on the one hand, is so determined (i.e., specialized, *bestimmt*,) by something other than itself, called its Object, while, on the other hand, it so determines some actual or potential Mind, the determination whereof I term the Interpretant created by the Sign, that that Interpreting Mind is therein determined mediately by the Object” (Peirce 1998: 492).

In comparison to Ferdinand de Saussure’s binary semiology Peircian semiotics has the advantage that the object is part of the sign system. This more easily allows a materialistic interpretation by assuming that in cultural processes of signification a complex relationship between the material-social and the material-ideational/symbolic realm of being is established by human beings in social processes.

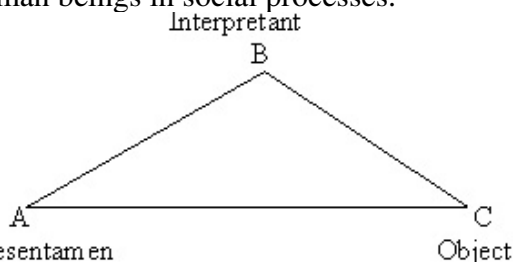


Fig. 4: The sign as triadic relationship in Peircian semiotics

For reasons of clarity I would like to speak of a sign as a triadic relationship between an object, a symbol, and meanings. The objects are realities of the social world, practices, events, systems, and structures of the human world. In cultural processes such entities are during the course of social processes represented as symbolic systems, i.e. collective meaningful social structures. In processes of interpretation meaning is assigned to collective social structures and meaningful symbolic systems emerge that form novel parts of social reality. The interpretant is itself a new object of reality and sign system that can be represented and interpreted. Hence the production of meanings is a permanent endless process that has been called semiosis by Peirce. It should be added that semiosis is not simply a cognitive process, but that it takes place on both an individual and a social level. Individual semiosis is the foundation for social semiosis, culture is the process that establishes a productive mutual

relationship of self-organization between both levels. Semiosis is a dynamic process, the meaning of a sign is produced in the process of interpretation. “The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact, it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing can never be stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing more but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series“. (Peirce 1931/58: 1.339).

Self-organizing processes are dialectical processes (Fuchs 2003e). I will now try to show that semiotic processes are dialectical processes. If this is indeed the case, then it is consequent and consistent to try to combine the concept of self-organization, dialectical principles, and semiotic principles. Semiosis is a dialectical process in the sense that a Something (an object) and an Other (a Representamen) refer to each other in such a way that a new meaningful sign system emerges that is again a new Something in the social world that enters the cultural process of interpretation. Peirce describes an endless process of the emergence of interpretants. This process is one of dialectical sublation (*Aufhebung*). This can be seen e.g. by the fact that Peirce made one definition of semiosis in direct analogy to Hegel’s definition of the dialectical process. Peirce: A sign is “anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum* ... If the series of successive interpretants comes to an end, the sign is thereby rendered imperfect at least« (Peirce 1931/58: 2.303)”. In Hegel’s dialectic *Logic* Something is only what it is in its relationship to Another, but by the negation of the negation this Something incorporates the Other into itself. The dialectical movement involves two moments that negate each other, a Somewhat and an Another. As a result of the negation of the negation, “Something becomes an other; this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*” (Hegel 1874: §93) Being-for-self or the negation of the negation means that somewhat becomes an other, but this again is a new somewhat that is opposed to an other and as a synthesis results again in an other and therefore it follows that something in its passage into other only joins with itself, it is *self-related* (ibid.: §95).

In cultural self-organization (fig. 1), the dialectical process of social semiosis forms the bottom-up-process of the emergence of collective cultural structures, whereas the top-down-process is a dialectical process of individual semiosis where collective cultural structures function as objects that are individually interpreted and signified. In bottom-up-processes human actors enter social relationships and in a process of social semiosis establish collective sign systems. These systems enable and constrain individual semiosis.

One important question for cultural studies is the one that concerns the relationships of symbol and object to meaning. This is the question of how the production and consumption/reception of cultural products are related. There are three possibilities for this relationship, a deterministic one, an indeterministic one, and a dialectical one. Determinists argue that the meaning of a cultural good is fully determined in production. The most famous of such accounts has been provided by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (1944/88, cf. also Adorno 1941). In late capitalism all cultural forms would be commodities that manipulate the masses and produce false consciousness. “Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1944: 131). “The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product. All the agents of this process, from the producer to the women’s clubs, take good care that the simple reproduction of this mental state is not nuanced or

extended in any way“ (ibid.: 135). There would be a “necessity inherent in the system not to leave the customer alone, not for a moment to allow him any suspicion that resistance is possible“ (ibid.: 150). For the audiences of mass culture there would be no room “for imagination or reflection“ and “sustained thought“ (ibid.: 134). Mass culture would have a standardized form that invokes standardized reactions, nothing fundamentally novel would emerge both in the cultural form and in thinking (Adorno 1941). The product of capitalistic mass culture would be “deceived masses“ (142). Human beings are here seen as beings that are made passive and stupid by the fetishistic character of cultural commodities in a capitalist world. There one and only possible meaning that can emerge in the cultural interpretation of such commodities would be “false consciousness“ that doesn’t question capitalism. This is a one-dimensional and deterministic account. Contrary to Horkheimer/Adorno Walter Benjamin² stressed that mass culture activates human phantasy and hence has a progressive social function. “Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. [...] The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. [...] With regard to the screen the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide“ (Benjamin 1935). Benjamin’s account is optimistic, but similarly deterministic as the one of Horkheimer and Adorno. In both accounts the commodity character already determines the form of interpretation. „Signification, which is the only function of a word admitted by semantics, reaches perfection in the signal“ (Horkheimer/Adorno 1944/88: 174). For Horkheimer/Adorno the only significance of mass culture is “to defend society“ as it is, for Benjamin it signifies emancipation from capitalism.

The most famous indeterministic account has been given by Jean Baudrillard (1983) who argues that in the information society symbols are detached from reality in such a way that anything can symbolize every possible meaning. He conceives what he calls hyperreality or simulation as an unlimited universe of meanings that collapses the relationship of object and meaning. Simulation “is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal”. Simulation would be opposed to representation. “The latter starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent. [...] Conversely, simulation starts from the utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference”. The hyperreal image “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum”. The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1996) has argued that it is undetermined how a communication is interpreted by a receiver, hence communication would be uncertain. Such accounts are relativistic and don’t take into account that social development is not purely accidental because there are certain regularities in society (such as domination, class and power structures) that cause a certain continuity and a limited variety. Hence not all interpretations are equal likely, some or more likely than others, and some are even very unlikely.

A dialectical approach assumes that the content of cultural media and cultural products have contradicting effects, they can and frequently are interpreted in different ways. Such an account is based on a dialectic of chance and necessity. For me the most important achievement of British Cultural Studies is that they have shown that meaning is contested, that there are always different possible meanings of cultural facts, and that there are dominant, negotiated, and oppositional meanings.

² Angela McRobbie (1994) has shown that Benjamin is of great importance for Cultural Studies because the idea of multi-acculturality has been anticipated by his idea that cultural products are shaped by a dialectic of dream state and wish images.

The reality of society is represented in meaningful forms. The production of meaning is a social process and in capitalism it is a contested process of class struggle. There is a struggle over meaning where certain groups try to impose dominant meanings that are challenged by others which assign different meanings to objects. The meaning of objects always depends on the social and historical context, meanings are never ahistorical or transcendental. The fact that the production of meaning is social and contested means that the relationship of object and meaning is not linear, but complex and nonlinear. It involves a certain degree of indeterminism. The fact that different meanings can be ascribed to the same object has been called articulation of meaning by Stuart Hall, multiaccentuality by Valentin Volosinov, polysemy by John Fiske, and heteroglossia by Mikhail Bakhtin.

There is not one single meaning of cultural objects, meaning is contested and formed in social processes and in multidimensional class struggles. Hence meanings are relatively open, there can be different parallel or opposing/conflicting interpretations of texts. "In capitalism the social context of a sign's use is typically one of social struggle, so the meaning of the sign becomes part of that social struggle" (Fiske 1996: 127). Meanings are social and historical, they are determined by the social context of the production and use of sign systems, they change along with the historical and social change of society. Such arguments are based on Richard Hoggart's (1957) assumption that there is a "capacity of the human spirit to resist; to resist from a sense, even though it is not usually defined, that there are other things which matter and which are to be obeyed". If discourse is considered language in social use and a terrain of social struggle, then culture is "the constant circulation and recirculation of discursive currents, [...] [the] constant process of discursive circulation, recirculation, and countercirculation, [...] the generation and circulation of meanings" (Fiske 1999: 7f+121). The struggle of alternative or opposing meanings in the cultural realm of modern society is a double movement, a dialectic of containment and resistance (Hall 1981), homogenization and difference (Fiske 1987). Hall stresses that culture is neither wholly corrupt, nor wholly authentic, but deeply contradictory. Meaning would not be immanent in a produced form, but be produced in the constantly changing cultural field of force of the practical relations of cultural power and domination. Symbolic cultural systems are not determined by their production process, both production and use are of importance and determining their significance. Meaning is not imposed, but is multidimensionally produced in contested social struggles, hence signification is not a consumption process, but itself an active production process. "Because the production of meaning/pleasure occurs in the consumption as well as the production of the cultural commodity the notion of production takes on a new dimension that delegates it away from the owners of capital" (Fiske 1987). Linking semiotics to society and social struggle shows that power has both a social and a semiotic dimension, signification both empowers and constrains people, there are forms of semiotic power in society (ibid.).

Stuart Hall (1999) has pointed out that the coding and decoding of the meaning of messages are shaped and influenced by discourses, i.e. by knowledge from routines of technological infrastructure, relationships of knowledge production, and institutional frameworks. Coded messages would be significant, meaningful discourses. Subjective aspects that influence coding and decoding would be very important and hence one couldn't assume an automatic identity of encoded and decoded meaning. There can be no absolute identity between coding and decoding, alternative readings are always possible. There is a certain degree of indeterminism at the side of the recipient. But this is not a full indeterminism as in accounts of the media such as the ones of Baudrillard and Luhmann. Hall mentions that there are dominant/hegemonic codes that try to ensure that recipients decode message in a certain intended manner. E.g. employing emotional images of violence, disruption, arrests, etc. is a form of dominant encoding that makes use of the recipients' fears and emotions in order to

increase the possibility that the forms of decoding and reading/interpreting a text remain strictly limited (for an example concerning the war in Iraq see Fuchs 2004b). Hence there are three possible relationships between reality and the meaning of symbolic content that represents a certain portion of reality. Different interpretations exist in parallel and even in opposition and antagonism to each other.

✧ Dominant meaning: “Any society or culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organised into dominant or preferred meaning. [...] We say dominant, not ‘determined’, because it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one ‘mapping’. But we say ‘dominant’ because there exists a pattern of ‘preferred readings’; and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalised. [...] When the viewer takes the connoted meaning from, say, a television newscast or current affairs programme full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded, we might say that the viewer is operating inside the dominant code. [...] The dominant definitions, however, are hegemonic precisely because they represent definitions of situations and events which are ‘in dominance’ (global). Dominant definitions connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world: they take ‘large views’ of issues: they relate events to the ‘national interest’ or to the level of geo-politics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways. The definition of a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy - it appears coterminous with what is ‘natural’, ‘inevitable’, ‘taken for granted’ about the social order.” (Hall 1999: 512+515+516).

✧ Negotiated meaning: “Decoding within the negotiated version contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules – it operates with exceptions to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to ‘local conditions’, to its own more corporate positions” (ibid.: 516).

✧ Oppositional meaning: “Finally, it is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He or she detotalises the message in the preferred code in order to retotalise the message within some alternative framework of reference. [...] One of the most significant political moments [...] is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading” (ibid.: 517).

Subcultures are an expression of the antagonistic character of modern cultures, they are formed as distinctive meaningful systems that represent the search for alternative identities that challenge dominant meanings. They are not automatically a symbolic expression of opposition, but they are articulations of discontent that are themselves contradictory in nature and frequently express dominant, negotiated, and oppositional meanings. E.g. hip hop as a distinctive subculture organized around practices of djing, breakbeats, spraying, rap, and breakdance articulates the opposition of blacks in the US with racist oppression, but in certain

forms where it takes on antisemitic, sexist, and homophobic meanings it is also an expression of dominant meanings and the antagonistic articulation of dominant, negotiated, and oppositional meanings. Subcultures express both blocked and preferred meanings (Hebdige 1979). Subcultures are of specific importance in youth culture where the transition towards a flexible regime of capitalist accumulation and the individualization of society has produced various subcultures such as Punk, Rave, Hip Hop, Skating, Indie, Alternative, Hardcore, Grunge, Post Rock, Techno, Heavy Metal, New Metal, Gothic, Electro-Pop, Industrial, New Wave, Ska, Drum'n'Bass, etc.

It seems realistic to me to conceive the relationship of production/encoding and reception/decoding of texts dialectically by assuming that social relationships in modern society are whole ways of social struggle that are reflected in the symbolic realm as symbolic struggles and hence constitute a limited plurality of hegemonic/dominant, negotiated, and oppositional meanings that are assigned to social realities in such processes of material and symbolic struggle. The causality of this relationship is one of dialectical determinism or conditioned chance: The social reality of the modern world, i.e. antagonistic social relationships, condition a number of possible conflicting meanings of cultural forms, there is a variety of possible meanings conditioned by class and power relationships, the real meanings are determined in active social processes. Figure 5 shows a in my opinion realistic account of the relationship of production and consumption of cultural goods. It shows that there is neither simply one possible meaning of an object, nor an unlimited variety, but a conditioned variety of n meanings that is both multidimensional and limited.

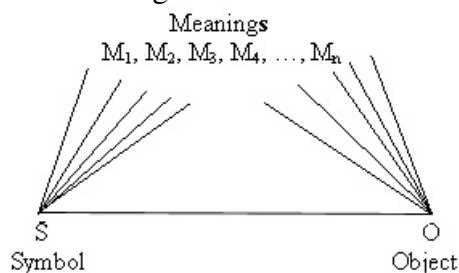


Fig. 5.: Conditioned chance as the causality of the relationship of the reality and meaning of cultural forms

Cultural products are mental products, i.e. products of mental labour that are significant signs. Herbert Marcuse (1937) has stressed the dialectical character of culture, certain cultural goods in the commodity world stabilize injustice and have an ideological character, but at the same time they are positive signifiers in the sense that they convey the picture of a order that is better than the existing one, inspire fantasy and hence act as anticipations of a better world. Cultural goods are antagonistic signifiers, they immanently signify structures of domination, but at the same time as a sort of anticipative and transcendental material function they can point beyond the realm of domination towards a realm of freedom.

The mass media are socio-technological systems where cultural products are produced and consumed (Fuchs 2003f, Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2003). Concerning the consumption process, there can be different interpretations and forms of usage. Also concerning the production process, the media can be shaped and designed in different ways. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1970) has distinguished between repressive and emancipatory media use. The age of the Internet shows that both forms exist in parallel and even as antagonisms, they form two tendencies of media use in informational capitalism.

Repressive media use	Emancipatory media use
Centrally controlled program	Decentralized programmes
One transmitter, many receivers	Every receiver a potential transmitter
Immobilization of isolated individuals	Mobilization of the masses
Passive consumer behaviour	Interaction of participants, feedback
Depoliticization process	Political learning process
Production by specialists	Collective production
Control by owners or bureaucrats	Social control through self-organization

Tab. 2: Two forms of media use (from: Enzensberger 1970)

It is important to show now how what has been said thus far in the sections 1, 2, and 3 is related.

The analysis of culture as a knowledge system helps us to grasp the fact that the production of individual and social meaning that has been described in section one of this paper in more detail as a dialectical self-organization process is a process of cognition, communication, and co-operation. The bottom-up-arrow in fig. 1, i.e. the process of the emergence of collective cultural structures, can be considered a threefold process of cognition, communication, and co-operation on the knowledge level. This process is related to fig. 4 and 5 in the sense that the production of cultural structures is a symbolic representation of social relationships and social reality that gains different meanings as soon as as it is used in the social world as a new social reality and hence is embedded into social struggles, social conflicts, class and power structures. Fig. 2 and 3 describe the knowledge level of the production process of cultural structures, whereas fig. 4 and 5 describe the unity of production and consumption/usage of cultural and social structures as dialectical semiotic processes. The top-down-arrow in fig. 1, i.e. the process of the emergence of subjective knowledge, is the process of consumption of collective cultural structures. Here as shown different forms of interpretations are possible (dominant meanings, negotiated meanings, oppositional meanings). In informational terms this is the process that relates to how the results of communication and co-operation processes in turn influence and change cognition. In fig. 4 and 5 the bottom-up- and top-down processes of emergence present in fig. 1 and fig. 3 are merged into an overall model of the production and consumption of meaningful social structures. This overall model of signification shows how social realities are interpreted, the objects of this process are not only cultural structures, these can be all sort of social structures and practices (also technological, economic, political, etc. structures and practices). Signification as a cultural process has importance in all social processes, cultural products just like any other product can have different meanings in society when they are considered within the framework of the semiotic model of signification.

In short: Semiotic processes of signification occur in all self-organizing social processes (fig. 4+5). All social system are self-organizing systems that operate as a mutual productive interconnection of subjective and objective knowledge. This is a threefold process of cognition, communication, and co-operation (fig. 2). The self-organization of the cultural subsystem of society produces collective cultural structures (fig. 1) that just like all other social structures enter the dialectical process of semiosis and hence gain meaning (fig. 4+5). The self-organization of the cultural subsystem can on the informational level be described as a mutual productive relationship of subjective knowledge and objective cultural knowledge (fig. 3). Fig. 2, 4, 5 are more general in character, they occur in all social systems and show that all social systems have cultural aspects, fig. 1 and 3 are more specific in character, they describe the self-organization of culture as a subsystem of society. The process of signification is a cultural process where the collective cultural structures that are produced in processes of cultural self-organization (fig. 1, 3) are socially applied in order to give meanings to existing social realities in all areas of society.

That cultural consumption produces a variety of symbolic meanings shows that culture is not a static, one-dimensional system, but a dynamic system. Cultural development has to do with the question whether culture is a static or a dynamic process and a continuous or a discontinuous process. I will now try to show that the evolution of culture is based on a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity.

4. The Evolution of Culture

Geertz argues that culture evolved continuously, “step by infinitesimal step” (Geertz 1973: 48). The Australopithecus would not have suddenly developed into the Homo sapiens, but would have slowly and steadily acquired some elements of culture such as toolmaking and hunting. There would have been an overlap of “over a million years between the beginning of culture and the appearance of man as we know him today” (ibid.: 47). Opposed to this view are critical point theories that argue that culture appeared suddenly at a certain point in time (e.g. Kroeber 1948). This dual opposition can be resolved if one conceives the evolution of culture as dialectical. According to such a view culture developed neither purely continuously, nor purely discontinuously, but over a very long period of time more and more basic cultural elements have been accumulated and changed the essence of the Australopithecus, at a certain point of time quantity turned into quality and the Homo sapiens with the new quality of developed culture emerged.

The synchronous mechanism of self-organization described above can be called the self-reproductive form of self-organization. Self-reproductive systems organize themselves by permanently producing and reproducing their components and their unity. This is a dynamic, creative process, the system permanently creates itself and produces new emergent qualities. But there is also another type of self-organization, the diachronic one that can be described as order from noise or order through fluctuation (Von Foerster 1960, Nicolis/Prigogine 1989, Prigogine 1980). Phases of self-reproduction at certain moments are followed by phases of instability where certain ordered patterns of the system break down, fluctuations and chaos and intensify themselves. From this disorder new order emerges that is partly unpredictable. A number of authors has tried to conceive sociological models in analogy to the principle of order from noise (Laszlo 1996, Jantsch 1975, 1979, Wallerstein 1991, 1998; Mueller-Benedict 2001, Fuchs 2004a). Applying this general philosophical principle to society means that the overall self-reproduction of society is not a smooth, permanently stable process, it is in constant flux and from time to time enters phases of crisis. These are periods of instabilities where the further development of the overall social system is not determined.

From time to time, a social system enters crisis and phases of instability due to social contradictions. The self-reproduction of a social system takes place permanently. Self-reproduction results at a certain bifurcation point results in order from noise, it is predetermined that each social system or certain aspects of it will at a certain point of time collapse, but the exact point of time, the exact causes, and the exact outcome (i.e. the new form of order) are largely undetermined. The old structures condition a field of possibilities, a certain number of possible alternatives, but it is not determined which alternative path will be realized. Diachronic social self-organization is shaped by a dialectic of chance and necessity.

Such a notion of dialectical, diachronic self-organized development can be applied to the cultural realm in order to explain fundamental cultural change. In culture there is both continuity and variation of world-views, traditions, norms, and values, enculturation and deculturation. In processes of enculturation education ensures that traditions and habits are

passed on from older to younger generations, the process of enculturation assures a certain continuity of culture. In processes of deculturation, dominant collective values are challenged by alternative ones. Due to the fact that society changes, also values, habits, and traditions change to a certain extent and at a certain speed. Fundamental cultural change can be due to the development of cultural or social antagonisms that change the ways of life. It can be caused internally culturally or externally by political, economic, or technological factors, or as a combination of several influencing factors. Culture is a relatively autonomous system that is in constant interaction with the other subsystems of society. Cultural development is based on a dialectic of enculturation and deculturation, continuity and variation. In society and in each single social system there are certain rules of conduct and behaviour that ensure the continuity of cultural practice, but these rules are challenged by alternative or opposing rules that might gain dominance. Cultural development is caused by relationships of collective value patterns that challenge and negate each other, by the successful transmission and learning of old and new cultural patterns. Once a new pattern is established it is challenged by alternative cultural patterns.

Culture doesn't consist of endless static ideas, all ideas and world-views are related to social reality and form a part of it and change historically. Already Karl Marx spoke about the historical character of culture: "The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with the material productivity, produce also principles, ideas, and categories, in conformity with their social relations. [...] Thus the ideas, these categories, are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are *historical and transitory products*" (Marx 1847: 130).

Karl Mannheim argues that culture has a historical character, there would be a relativity and transitoriness of every historical cultural manifestation, culture would have a processive and social character (Mannheim 1982: 42). When Mannheim speaks of the dynamic character of culture he means that it develops dialectically: There would be the "sudden new existence of a new style", a spiritual cultural entity would "amid its continuity, abruptly turn[s] into a different one" (Mannheim 1982: 127). "A new world-view is not dialectically distinguishable from its predecessors because it offers completely different fragments of experience, but because, at some point in time, the new aggregation is abruptly differentiated from the other" (ibid.: 127f).

Capitalism is an antagonistic social formation that is based on divisions into social groups that compete for economic (property: money, commodities), political (power: social relationships, origin), and cultural capital (qualification, education, knowledge). Political capital is "a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability that is often essential in winning and keeping the confidence of high society, and with it a clientele, and may be drawn on, for example, in making a political career" (Bourdieu 1986: 122). Political capital "is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1983: 248f). Entities like titles and qualifications have like money a social value that is attached to them, they are a "measure of rank or order" (Bourdieu 1990: 131) and make agents with the same qualifications interchangeable. They enter a relation of commensurability. There are three types of cultural capital: embodied one (attached to the body, its internalization is a durable process, it costs time that must be invested, it can't be passed around and transmitted easily; e.g. qualification and education, it is embodied in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body); objectified one (cultural goods, e.g. books, instruments, machines, paintings; can be transmitted to others

materially; for its acquisition one is in need of embodied cultural capital); and finally institutionalized one (academic qualification, degrees and titles, legally protected) (Bourdieu 1983: 243ff). Academic qualifications “are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital” (Bourdieu 1977: 187). Educational capital as an aspect of cultural capital “expresses, among other things, the economic and social level of the family of origin” (Bourdieu 1986: 105). The social position of an actor depends on the volume and composition of capital (i.e. the relative relationship of the three forms of capital) that he owns and that he can mobilise as well as the temporal changing of these two factors (Bourdieu 1986: 114). The main classes of society are a result of the distribution of the *whole* (i.e. economic and political and cultural) capital. This results in a social hierarchy with those at the top who are best provided with cultural capital, and those at the bottom who are most deprived. Within the classes that get a high, medium or low share of the total volume of capital, there are again different distributions of capitals and this results in a hierarchy of class fractions.

This stratified class structure produces social struggles that aim at accumulating capital of certain groups at the expense of other groups (cf. Fuchs 2003d). These divisions are at the heart of the cultural evolution of modern society. Hence cultural development has both internal (the antagonistic logic of the accumulation of cultural capital) and external (the antagonistic logic of the accumulation of economic and political capital) causes. The cultural antagonism is one between unity and plurality. Dominant groups try to ideologically impose their world-views upon other groups in order to accumulate more capital and enlarging their sphere of influence and their social system. They aim at creating a unity without plurality that is frequently challenged by the dominating groups who themselves aim at a reversal of hegemony, i.e. a radically negated new unity without plurality, or separation (plurality without unity). The stratified structure of capitalism that is the result of the antagonistic logic of accumulation is opposed to a unity in plurality because it separates social groups and makes them having to compete against each other in the race for capital.

The capitalistic process of cultural self-organization is one of competition, accumulation, and separation. Fundamental cultural evolution is caused when suppressed world-views and values gain importance at the expense of dominant ones. It is determined that any dominant world view will come to an end and will be superseded and sublated by another world-view, but it is undetermined when and why exactly this will take place and how the new dominant cultural patterns will look like. The emergence of fundamentally new cultural values is not simply due to internal cultural causes, but due to the development of the totality of social antagonisms and the interaction of internal and external antagonisms of the cultural system. A cultural revolution doesn't necessarily collapse the whole social formation, it can be the case that there is a paradigmatic change in ideology (e.g. from mass consumption norms to individualized consumption norms and from collectivity to individualization) that isn't accompanied by a change in economic and political domination, but serves existing economic and/or political groups in order to restabilize their domination.

When we talk about cultural dynamics the question arises what the central forces are that shape the evolution of modern culture. Modern society is capitalist in nature, hence one can also describe it as a capitalistic society. Speaking of capitalism and culture on the one hand points to the question of how base and superstructure are connected, on the other hand it points to the question of the dynamics and driving forces of capitalist culture. I will now try to show that a dialectical approach can be helpful in conceiving modern culture and the relationship of base and superstructure in a complex, nonlinear, nonreductionistic way.

5. Culture, Materialism, Capitalism

The question of how culture evolves is related to the question of how culture is related to other subsystems of society. This is the question of the relationship between base and superstructure. In idealistic approaches culture is the product of mental activities, in materialistic approaches it is a product of material production. In crude materialistic approaches culture is seen as mechanically determined by economic production, the “superstructure” is assumed to be a linear consequence of the “base”. A more realistic and complex materialistic position assumes that matter is the totality of being in the universe and that society is a material totality that consists of ecological, technological, economic, political, and cultural realms of being that are different, but interconnected. Together they make up that which can be considered as social being or society. Culture as the realm of human ideas and their objectifications is neither internally nor externally determined, but socially determined. Hence the position of Cultural Materialism that I want to put forward argues that all our realities are socially constructed and constituted, i.e. all products and forms of human existence are material in the sense that they have a social character. This means that culture is a relatively autonomous system, it has its own practical and structural logic which in modern society is a logic of accumulation and heteronomy, and it is connected to other social processes that stem from the ecological, the technological, the economic, and the political spheres of human existence. Culture is neither autonomous nor externally determined, it is a system that is based on external and internal social determination.

The superstructure (i.e. culture) is not the mechanic reflection, i.e. a linear mapping, of the base (i.e. the relations and forces of production), it can't be deduced from or reduced to it. Orthodox Marxism for a long time didn't realize this. That the base is not the mechanic reflection of the superstructure has for a long time not been realized by Idealism. All human activity is based on producing a natural and social environment, it is in this sense that the notion of the base is of fundamental importance. We have to eat and survive before we can and in order to enjoy leisure, entertainment, arts, etc. The base is a precondition, a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the superstructure. The superstructure is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the base, the base is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the superstructure. This means that both levels are recursively linked and produce each other, economic, political, and social practices and structures trigger creative cultural processes, cultural practices and structures trigger creative economic, political, and social processes. The notion of creative reflection grasps the dialectic of chance and necessity/indetermination and determination that shapes the relationship of base and superstructure. There isn't a content of the superstructure that is “predicted, prefigured and controlled” by the base, the base “sets limits and exerts pressure” on the superstructure (Williams 2001: 165).

If one rereads Marx and bears in mind that our material reality is our social reality, a crude deterministic reading can be avoided.

“The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life“ (Marx/Engels 1846: 26). “Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all“ (Marx/Engels 1846: 30f). “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal

expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance“ (Marx/Engels 1846: 46).

This doesn't mean that ideas of groups are homogenous and can be deduced from economic relationships. Material in society means social, the social and the physical is the foundation of ideas, not their mechanic determination. There are degrees of freedom of interpretation in society. A contemporary interpretation of Marx shouldn't assume that the economic determines the cultural superstructure, but that the superstructure is determined by the capital structure of society. Capital in my usage of the term that is based on Bourdieu's concept of capital doesn't mean economic capital, it has economic, political, and cultural forms and hence is a broad sociological term. Hence that the superstructure is materially-socially determined means that there is a great degree of freedom in culture because it is shaped by the total distribution of economic, political, and cultural capital in society and the division into classes and class fractions that results from it.

The form of Cultural Materialism that I want to put forward assumes that basic social and economic production processes constrain, but don't mechanically determine, superstructural ideational practices and structures. They are a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for culture. Economic and political capital (property and power) have specific enabling and constraining effects on culture. Culture influences economy and polity in processes of downward causation, but generally one can say that producing and deciding are preconditions for value-based judgement, whereas values and morals are not necessarily a precondition for economy and polity.

Base and superstructure are not dualistically separated, Herbert Marcuse in this context argues that culture forms an integral whole of social life that includes the areas and ways of life we find in the areas of ideal (the mental world) and material reproduction (Marcuse 1937: 62). “Affirmative culture” would be a modern ideology that separates the mental from the material and conceives the first as an ahistorical higher order of the Fair, the Just, and the Beautiful. This ideology would assume that happiness can be attained as a cognitive state of mind and that hence it must not be attained as a social reality by material practice and social change.

Marcuse (1965) argues that this separation between a material and a mental sphere has traditionally been accomplished by a dualistic separation between civilization and culture where the first refers to the realm of necessity, social necessary labor and actions where man can not be himself, whereas the latter refers to a higher dimension of human fulfilment and autonomy where the struggle for existence has come to an end. In this dualism civilization would be characterized by material labor, the working day, the realm of necessity, nature and operational thinking; culture by mental work, holiday, free time, the realm of freedom, mind and non-operational thinking. Traditionally culture would have had transcendental goals that anticipated the realm of freedom. But technological civilization would tend to destroy these goals of culture. So culture would become affirmative. A necessary space for the development of autonomy and opposition would be locked by society.

In late capitalism culture would be absorbed by civilization in such a way that culture as entertainment is accessible for most people, has a one-dimensional character that substitutes its critical dimension, but at the same time technological progress would open up a progressive cultural potential because a realm of free time for all, a sort of leisure society beyond necessity, would be made possible by the gains in productivity (Marcuse 1964, 1965). The dualism between civilization and culture would be sublated by late capitalism in an

assimilation of labor and relaxation, failing and enjoyment, art and household, psychology and management (Marcuse 1965). “This liquidation of *two-dimensional* culture takes place not through the denial and rejection of the “cultural values,” but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale“ (Marcuse 1964: 57). Late capitalist culture would be both affirmative and containing a liberating potential.

Edward P. Thompson has stressed that in modern society culture is related to class struggle. Classes would have their own form of culture and consciousness, forms of interpreting experiences and objectifying these experiences in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms (Thompson 1963). Culture would not just as being stressed by Raymond Williams be a whole way of life, but also a “whole way of conflict”, a whole way of struggle (Thompson 1961).

For John Fiske (1996) culture doesn't mean the aesthetic ideals of form and beauty or a timeless human spirit, it would be political and would have to do with the “generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies” (Fiske 1996: 115). Capitalist society would be a society divided by axes like class, gender, race, nation, age, religion, occupation, education, political allegiance, etc. Social relations would be the site of contestation and struggle. That culture is political means that it is a site of social struggle. “In the domain of culture, this contestation takes the form of the struggle for meaning, in which the dominant classes attempt to ‘naturalize’ the meanings that serve their interests into the ‘common sense’ of society as a whole, whereas subordinate classes resist this process in various ways and to varying degrees and try to make meanings that serve their own interests” (ibid.: 116). Popular culture “is the arena of consent and resistance” (Hall 1981: 453).

The antagonisms of modern society that are due to the logic of accumulation result in class struggles. Capital structure and the practice of conflict are the driving forces of the development of modern society. Pierre Bourdieu has elaborated a very useful theory that can help us in explaining the self-organizing dynamics of modern culture (cf. Fuchs 2003f). He suggests that humans belonging to the same class or class-fraction don't have identical, but homologous life-styles and tastes. He has elaborated the concept of habitus in order to grasp these common patterns of thinking and behaviour (cf. Fuchs 2003d). By being confronted with tastes and schemes of perception of other classes and class-fractions, specific life-styles of a class or class-fraction emerge (Bourdieu 1986: 170f). A life-style can be seen as a system of classified and classifying practices and distinctive signs. ”Life-styles are thus the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified (as ‘distinguished’, ‘vulgar’ etc.)” (Bourdieu 1986: 172). Just imagine some daily situation, you will find numerous gestures, manners, carriages and social practices. All of these entities are distinctive signs, an expression of habitus. Life-styles are closely related to the conditions of social existence, i.e. the class structure of the modern world.

People, families and groups in modern society commonly strive for upclassing and if it becomes necessary they struggle against downclassing. Reconversion strategies are employed by individuals and families in order to improve their position in social space and are reflected in social transformations which modify the volume of the different class fractions and the structure of their assets (Bourdieu 1986: 135). There is a dialectic of downclassing and upclassing (Bourdieu 1986: 163): people in a certain class or class-fraction strive towards being part of a leading group or an upper class(-fraction), they have as their past or as the space where they do not want to belong, the group immediately below and as their possible

future or as the space where they want to belong, the group immediately above. The maintenance of order of the whole system, “of the whole set of gaps, differences, ‘differentials’, ranks, precedences, priorities, exclusions, distinctions, ordinal properties, and thus of the relations of order which give a social formation its structure, is provided by an unceasing change in substantial (i.e., non-relational) properties” (Bourdieu 1986: 163). This dialectic results in class struggles, these are material (strikes, protests, refusal of work) and symbolic conflicts.

Symbolic struggles are fights over symbolic capital and tastes that shall establish distinction between classes in order to ideologically secure the domination of certain groups. “Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. [...] Taste is the practical operator of the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs. [...] Taste, a class structure turned into nature, that is, embodied, helps to shape the class body” (Bourdieu 1986: 56+174+190). Symbolic capital depends on publicity and appreciation, it has to do with prestige, reputation, honour etc. It is economic, cultural or social capital in its socially recognized and legitimized form. There are symbolic as well as material dimensions of all three types of capital. Symbolic capital is a “capital of honour and prestige” (Bourdieu 1977: 179)³. Accumulating symbolic capital requires considerable labour and time devoted to making and maintaining relations and to material and symbolic investments. Symbolic struggles are cultural struggle in the sense that they make use of signification processes in order to produce signs that draw borders, erect a social hierarchy, and produce distinction. Hence the cultural process of signification as outlined in section 3 is of large importance in capitalism because it constitutes a symbolic dimension of class struggle that is not just imaginative, but has real material results. By producing new tastes as form of symbolic struggle, profits in distinction (“feeling justified in being (what one is)“, Bourdieu 1986: 228) are produced. Because symbolic capital tends to devalue, new symbolic goods and ways of using them have to be produced frequently.

There are strategies of groups for distinguishing themselves from the group below and identifying with the group immediately above which they recognise as the possessor of the legitimate life-style. Groups, classes and class-fractions hence try to symbolically distinguish themselves, their tastes and life-styles from others. This results in symbolic struggles (Bourdieu 1986: 244-256), the devaluation of objects and an endless drive for novelty. “Struggles over the appropriation of economic or cultural goods are, simultaneously, symbolic struggles to appropriate distinctive signs in the form of classified, classifying goods or practices, or to conserve or subvert the principles of classification of these distinctive properties” (Bourdieu 1986: 249). The possessors of symbolic, distinctive properties or goods are threatened permanently with popularisation due to the struggles for upclassing. This results in the generation of demand for new tastes which define themselves negatively against other tastes and the dispossessed (Bourdieu 1986: 251f, 256). Taste and identity are at the heart of symbolic struggles and are employed by the dominating classes and class-fractions to stigmatise the dominated classes and class-fractions. Class struggles of the dominating against the dominated are different today than 150 years ago, they rely less on direct, physical violence, there is a “shift from forms of rough violence to forms of soft, symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1993: 171). But also the forms of struggles of the dominated such as strikes not only have a physical, but also a symbolic dimension (Bourdieu 1993: 173ff). Cultural forms like language, music, clothing, artworks, furniture, styling, food, drinks, toiletries, books, newspapers, magazines, sports, records, toys, body care, cosmetics, appearance, manners, etc.

³ In this definition we again find Bourdieu’s dialectical conception of the relationship of objective conditions of existence (structures) and the actions of human beings because he says that symbolic capital produces the clients as much as they produce it (see also Bourdieu 1990: 118).

are symbols that signify class differences in modern society and are used as forms of class distinction. Distinction is a principle that is at the heart of the antagonistic cultural development in modern society, it produces cultural classes and symbolic struggles.

Fundamental changes in world-views can result from symbolic and material class struggle when they either shift the balance of power in such a way that new classes or class-fractions gain dominance or when ruling classes employ new strategies of symbolic class struggle in order to secure their position by producing new cultural distinctions. Hence fundamental cultural change can both be disintegrative or integrative, it can destabilize or stabilize the existing class structure. Cultural change that operates with the help of the logic of symbolic struggle, distinction, exclusion, competition, etc. is heteronomous in character and typically for the capitalist social formation. This means that as long as the logic of distinction and capital accumulation is at the heart of society, social and cultural change will always aim at reproducing the class structure (although there might be deep changes in the social structure). Hence the most fundamental cultural change would be one that eliminates the logic of distinction and symbolic accumulation. Symbolic accumulation doesn't mean that dominant classes accumulate meanings at the expense of dominated classes who lack meanings. All social classes permanently accumulate symbolic capital, i.e. tastes and life-styles that make a difference, that is used as a weapon in the struggle for the accumulation of economic, political, and cultural capital, i.e. they permanently aim at transforming symbolic capital into material capital. Symbolic capital is accumulated by both dominant and dominated classes in a hegemonic field of active symbolic struggle that is articulated with the field of material struggle, the outcome of social struggles determines the social hegemony of certain meanings and social groups.

Culture is essentially linked to world-views: "A world-view (of an era, a group, etc.) is a structurally linked set of experiential contextures which makes up the common footing upon which a multiplicity of individuals together learn from life and enter into it" (Mannheim 1982: 91). Mannheim stresses that world views are expressed in cultural forms. Similarly Raymond Williams says that the dominant structure of feeling is expressed and embodied in cultural artefacts (Williams 2001: 33).

The discussion on culture has shown that world-views are present in all aspect of life because all goods and relationships have significations, they are distinctive signs that express world-views and the material reality of classes. That cultural forms in modern society are signs that produce symbolic difference and symbolic class struggle means that culture has in this social formation an ideological character. Culture fulfills "a social function of legitimating social differences" (Bourdieu 1986: 7). This is not to say that ideology is the mere reflection of economic relationships of production, but that ideology is a cultural practice of signification linked to all areas of social production (economic, political, cultural) that produces difference, tastes, and distinction in order to reproduce the class structure of modern society. Hence ideology doesn't have an economic, but a social function, it is a cohesive factor that secures the principles of accumulation, class division, competition, and exclusion. Roland Barthes (1972) has shown that in modern society culture functions ideologically and produces myths, it not only produces ordinary meanings on the level of language in everyday life, but second-order signifieds/interpretations on the level of myth are frequently inscribed into signs. Myth would interpellate the subject, make itself look neutral and innocent, naturalize certain interpretations, give a natural image of bourgeois society, and present symbolic constructions as facts. "In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world

which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves“ (Barthes 1972: 155).

Louis Althusser (1971) has defined ideology as a system of ideas and believes that dominates the consciousness of a human being or a social group and is a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Ideology calls human beings as subjects, this is a process termed “interpellation” by Althusser. Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects and makes them become subjects (members of families, churches, associations, parties etc.). An interpellation takes place in the name of an absolute subject (god, leader, state, boss, guru etc.). The individual is interpellated as a free subject so that it voluntarily submits to the will of the absolute subject. Like Barthes, Althusser wants to show that interpretations often don't represent reality, but how certain groups want others to see reality in order to dominate them. Althusser is right in showing that ideology is a social construction that aims at stabilizing relationships of domination. But the problem with his concept of ideology is that he sees human beings as passive bearers of structures, not as active agents who can and do resist domination materially and symbolically.

Althusser (1971) has distinguished the “repressive state apparatus” (government, administration, army, police, courts, prisons) from the “ideological state apparatuses” (religion, school, family, legal system, parties, trade unions, media, culture). Hence ideology for Althusser is a political phenomenon, society is conceived as consisting of economy and polity. This puts forward a very broad conception of the nation state that results in the fact that everything that has a non-economic character is considered as a state-run institution or practice, society is considered as economy + state and hence culture is fully reduced to ideology and the state. I think that there is a difference between politics and culture, the first is organized around power and collective decisions, the second around world-views, values, norms, traditions and life styles. Culture is a separate, relatively autonomous self-organising system of society that is based on its own structures, institutions and material practices. It consists of institutions such as education, religion, mass media, health, art and science. Ideology operates both in and through politics and culture, politics and culture both have public and private aspects, they overlap and are structurally coupled, but nonetheless have different priorities.

In stressing the cultural dimension of class struggles Immanuel Wallerstein (1990) describes culture as the ideological battleground of the capitalist world-system. Traditionally culture would have been described as either collective behaviours, values, and beliefs of certain groups that are different from other groups or as differentiation (e.g. between base/superstructure, material/symbolic, popular practice/higher arts) within a certain group. Both concepts of culture would be capitalist ideologies that are used as covers to justify the interest of some persons against the interests of other persons within society or between societies. Culture in capitalism would be ideology, “the justification of the inequities of the system, [...] the attempt to keep them unchanging in a world which is ceaselessly threatened by change. [...] Since it is obvious that interests fundamentally diverge, it follows that [...] the very construction of culture becomes a battleground, the key ideological battleground in fact of the opposing interests within this historical system” (Wallerstein 1990: 39). Universalism, racism, and sexism would be the key ideologies of the capitalist world-system.

Structuralistic thinkers like Althusser, Barthes, and Wallerstein have shown that modern culture functions as ideology, but it should be added that ideology is a site of struggle between different meanings that try to win active consent (hegemony). Not only dominant, but also

oppositional codes function as ideologies in modern society, they both interpellate subjects and try to invoke certain preferred meanings. Ideology does not map reality, but is a social construction that shows how certain groups want to define reality in order to make others see reality the same way. Someone who favours a certain ideology takes part in certain practices (going to church, meetings, consumption of information and culture etc.). These practices show that ideologies have a material existence and are not confined to the ideational realm. Ideologies divert attention from social divisions and social stratification. But ideology is not something that is simply imposed upon dominated classes by the dominators, it is actively produced and reproduced by all individuals and social classes, it is a relatively autonomous principle that secures cultural accumulation and distinction and as a process of signification that has overall social importance it secures accumulation in all subsystems of society. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony helps in describing ideology not as a passive structural imposition on the masses, but as an active production process. Gramsci stressed that superstructures cannot be reduced to the economic base and that culture involves the "creation of (new) world-outlooks" and morals of life (Gramsci 1980). Hegemony is "the 'spontaneous' consent of the masses who must 'live' those directives [of ideology, CF], modifying their own habits, their own will, their own convictions to conform with those directives and with the objectives which they propose to achieve" (Gramsci 1971: 266). The concept of hegemony has been frequently stressed by British Cultural Studies in order to show that culture is a site of class struggle where hegemony is actively produced, reproduced, and challenged. Hegemony as a concept that doesn't reduce the masses to passive cultural dupes and bearers of structures shows that culture is an ideology in the form of dominant codes, but it enables alternative readings, oppositional codes and practices. Culture is an integrative self-organization process that consists of processes of bottom-up-construction and top-down-incorporation of collective meanings, rules, and values, Gramsci's concept of hegemony helps to conceive the relationship of actors and structures in cultural theory dialectically. "The value of the Gramscian theory of hegemony is that of providing an integrating framework which both sets of issues [the structuralistic stress on imposed culture and the culturalistic stress on constructed and spontaneously oppositional culture] might be addressed and worked through in relation to each other" (Bennett 1986: 222).

The question of how culture and nature are related has been traditionally answered in different ways. I will now try to deal with this problem in a dialectical way.

6. Culture and Nature

Animal behaviour is largely based on instincts, social behaviour on self-conscious, active, knowledgeable practices that allow choices and anticipation. In the animal world the meanings of signs are biologically determined and signs can't be recombined in order to form new meanings. In the human world the meanings of signs are socially determined and signs can be recombined in order to form more complex sign systems. Humans can invent new meanings and signs, animals are much more conservative and adaptive in their usage of signs, they hardly produce any new signs and do so only if they are compelled by nature to do so.

For Claude Lévi-Strauss (1981) the human being is both biological and social. He has conceived the relationship of nature and culture dualistically, seeing culture as everything that is not nature and that is opposed to the latter. Culture would be non-instinctive and based on norms and rules, whereas natural aspects of the human realm would be spontaneous, undetermined, and universal. Such a dualistic conception only sees the differences between nature and culture, it is blind for common aspects and the interactions of both realms.

Reducing society and culture to nature is dangerous as the fascist instrumentalization of Social Darwinism for facilitating the annihilation of certain groups that are considered as biologically inferior has shown. Biologism/Naturalism doesn't acknowledge the distinctions between nature and culture, it reduces culture to nature.

Projecting society into nature results in anthropomorphism: natural systems are conceived in human and social terms. E.g. the Gaia hypothesis assumes that all human and natural systems are alive and hence have intrinsic values and rights. Human rights are extended to the natural realm in a process of logical projection. Such arguments also don't see the distinction between nature and culture, it conceives both realms as identical. As the arguments put forward by ecofascism show such a projection can be very dangerous. E.g. Peter Singer argues that all persons understood in the sense of a person as a conscious thinking being have a right to live, other beings have not. Hence certain animals would have a right to live, whereas certain human beings such as disabled newborn infants, hemophiliac infants not wanted by their parents or adopters, any young infant not wanted by its parents or adopters, and all human beings who do not know they are persons. Singer argues in favour of euthanasia of such human beings. "Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often it is not wrong at all" (Singer 1993: 191). "Deep ecologists" like David Foreman argue that starvation and disease are "Gaian" solutions to overpopulation. "Human suffering resulting from drought and famine in Ethiopia is tragic, yes, but the destruction there of other creatures and habitat is even more tragic" (Foreman 1991). In an interview Foreman said that "the worst thing we could do in Ethiopia is to give aid [to the starving children] – the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let people there just starve" (cited from Bookchin 1988). Such ecofascist arguments are antihuman in nature, they don't see the differences between nature and human culture, they project human rights and human qualities like self-consciousness into nature that is considered as one whole living organism ("Gaia").

Speaking of the duality of nature and culture means to assume a very broad concept of culture that includes a wide range of social practices and structures. E.g. Marvin Harris (1997) puts forward such a broad concept of culture, culture here includes technologies, productive and reproductive activities, social groups and organizations; as well symbolic, ideational, artistic, playful, religious, and intellectual practices and structures. Hence there is nothing left outside of culture (except pure nature) within society and culture means society. No clear distinction between culture and society can be maintained. Therefore I think it is advantageous to assume that society is the broader concept, that we are confronted with a dialectic of nature and society, and that culture forms a specific self-organizing subsystem of society that is based on a mutual production of subjective ideas and objectified ideational, meaningful forms.

The dualistic division between nature and culture has frequently been ideologically employed for arguing that certain groups that don't have a Western culture are uncivilized and uncultivated and hence need to be adapted to Western ideas. Such assumptions that define Western society as culture and other societies as non-culture are ideologies that have during the course of human history been frequently employed as justifications for domination, exploitation, colonialism, and warfare.

When we speak about nature we always speak about systems that are observed and changed by human beings, nature is part of society, for human beings there can be no observation of and encounter with nature from without society. The relationship of nature and society/culture is neither exclusive nor inclusive in character, i.e. nature and society are neither fully different nor fully identical. Nature is the totality of systems in the universe and their interactions, it is material and organizes itself on various levels, i.e. it consists of various developing

interconnected system types. Systems of one type are interconnected and connected to systems of other types, hence nature is relational and dynamic in character. Society is the realm of human activity and interaction, it forms one specific, small part of nature. But for human beings this small part of the universe forms their overall context of activity. All human activity and observation takes place within society, there is no position of humans external to society. Nature as physical realm of activity of human labour, production, and communication is itself a part of society, in transforming and observing nature in economic, technological, cultural, and scientific processes, the human being integrates nature into society. Hence there is no relationship between nature and human beings external to society, all metabolic and observational processes that establish a relationship between nature and human beings function within society. Nature as human realm of activity is one subsystem of society that can be termed ecosphere. Nature has produced the human being and society as part of it, but the human being integrates nature as a subsystem of society into its own sphere of activities. Nature as part of society can be termed ecosphere. Hence when we speak about “nature and society” we speak about society as the total realm of activity on the one hand where we focus on social interactions between human beings and about the ecosphere as the interaction processes between humans and ecology and the interaction processes between physical systems that are observed by human beings.

In the production of his life which includes the metabolism between society and nature and societal reciprocity, man as the universal, objective species-being produces an objective world (*gegenständliche Welt*) and reproduces nature and his species according to his purposes. All human beings are naturally societal, within the human realm nature is social in the sense that it is being changed and appropriated by human beings. Within nature there are qualitative differences which allow us a division into levels such as physical-chemical, the living and societal. In this relationship frequently only the physical-chemical and the living is seen as “nature” opposed to human society. We stress the unity in which the diversity is sublated, hence also preserved, nature and society are dialectically related (Fuchs/Schlemm 2004). Societality is our nature, nature is part of our society.

A dialectical view on nature/society assumes that nature is the foundation of society, that there is a continuous metabolism between nature and society, and that society has emergent qualities that distinguish it from nature. Marx pointed out that man like animals lives from inorganic nature, he must remain in a continuing physical dialogue with nature in order to survive. Nature can be considered as man’s inorganic body in the sense that nature is “a direct means of life“ and “the matter, the object, and the tool of his [man’s] life activity“ (Marx 1844: 516). Animals produce only their own immediate needs, “animals produce one-sidedly, whereas man produces *universally*; they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need; they produce only themselves, while man reproduces the whole of nature; their products belong immediately to their physical bodies, while man freely confronts his own product. Animals produce only according to the standards and needs of the species to which they belong, while man is capable of producing according to the standards of every species and of applying to each object its inherent standard; hence, man also produces in accordance with the laws of beauty“ (Marx 1844: 517). In the production of his life which includes the metabolism between society and nature and societal reciprocity, man as the universal, objective species-being produces an objective world (*gegenständliche Welt*) and reproduces nature and his species according to his purposes. With the human being, history emerges: “the more that human beings become removed from animals in the narrower sense of the word, the more they make their own history consciously, the less becomes the influence of unforeseen effects and uncontrolled forces of this history,

and the more accurately does the historical result correspond to the aim laid down in advance“ (Engels 1875: 323).

Society and culture are sublations of nature, nature and society/culture are dialectically connected. Friedrich Engels (1875, 1876) has stressed that the disembedding or emergence of society and culture from nature was a dialectical process: The breakage of immediate production started with the erect posture in walking which resulted in the specialization of the hand which implies tools, tools imply production as human activities that transform nature. A differentiation of certain bodily forms can result in other organic differentiations. The specialisation of the hand resulted in labour and the utilisation of nature. The emergence of labour and production resulted in a co-evolution of society and consciousness. The genesis of man is due to a dialectic of labour and human capabilities (hand, language, increase of brain volume, consciousness etc.) which have resulted in developments such as hunting, stock farming, agriculture, metal processing, navigation, pottery, art, science, legislation, politics etc. Hence there was a dialectical co-evolution of society (especially categories such as labour and production) and human abilities. This dialectical view that argues that the emergence of culture is based on a dialectic of brain and body as well as of society and human abilities. This dialectical view is still topical in modern anthropology (Geertz 1973: 48, Harris 1989: 39f). Man has “created himself” (Geertz 1973: 48).

For Sigmund Freud culture is “the whole sum of achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes - namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations” (Freud 1953: 85). Freud’s main hypothesis about culture is that culture is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts. (ibid.: 92). Human beings would have to permanently negate their own nature, i.e. their natural instinct for sexual pleasure, in order to materially produce their own life. Hence culture restricts sexuality, it delays satisfaction, and permanently contradicts the pleasure principle (the human being strives for the maximum realization of happiness and desires). Hence the reality principle to a certain extent restricts the pleasure principle in the sense that the human being must master his body, nature, and social relationship in the form of labour in order to survive. Freud on the one hand sees nature and society as opposed systems, but on the other hand he is right in pointing out that nature exists within the human being in the form of basic instincts.

Freud has shown that nature is sublated in culture in such a way that human instincts form a biological dimension of the human being that is sublimated in a way that makes culture possible. Herbert Marcuse (1956, 1957) has argued that Freud would naturalize alienated culture by arguing that the permanent subjugation of pleasure and desires and their transformation into cultural practices that enable productivity are a cultural necessity. Freud would argue that suffering is a natural pattern of human beings and society. “The notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory” (Marcuse 1956: 17). Marcuse says that in capitalism the reality principle is repressive: the human being would be conditioned to subordinate pleasure and material participation to alienated labour and the domination of capital. The reality principle would manifest itself as a repressive performance principle, Thanatos would dominate Eros and would be externalized in the form of aggressions, i.e. the domination of nature and man by man. Modern technology due to its high productivity would open up the possibility for overcoming the repressive reality principle because it enables a realm of freedom where alienated labour is sublated and where the instincts that have in capitalism been transformed into labour can now be positively transformed into pleasure in the form of a maximum of free time. In such a society suffering would come to an end.

7. Conclusion

As a conclusion I want to formulate a number of sets of hypotheses that form the core of my foundations of cultural theory. These hypotheses neither form a whole theory, nor are they uncontested, but they surely form a legitimate position that shall stimulate conflict and discourse. They are preliminary results of an ongoing work.

H1. Culture is neither an individual or collective state of mind nor an artefact, but a dynamic process of cognition, communication, and co-operation that produces meaningful structures that signify a whole way of life and struggle.

H2. Culture is a self-organizing system where permanently subjective knowledge and objective collective knowledge patterns produce each other in order to produce subjective and collective meanings.

H3. All social realities are permanently signified in cultural semiotic processes that are determined by social contexts and struggles and hence produce an antagonistic conditioned plurality of meanings, each of these meanings can be dominant, negotiated, or oppositional in nature.

H4. In modern society cultural development is shaped by multiaxial social struggles and their relationships to a multiaxial field of capital structure that is made up of economic, political, and cultural capital.

H5. Base and superstructure are both socially constructed and hence material in nature, they produce each other mutually, the base is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the superstructure, it enables and limits the variety of superstructural forms. The superstructure is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the base, the base is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the superstructure.

H6. Cultural struggle is an active process, an ideological struggle for hegemony in the modern world, it produces competing tastes and life-styles that form a symbolic capital that functions as motor of variety and continuity in modern society. Modern culture is an antagonistic process of the accumulation of symbolic capital. Fundamental cultural change can both be disintegrative or integrative, it can destabilize or stabilize the existing class structure.

H7. Symbolic capital is accumulated by both dominant and dominated classes in a hegemonic field of active symbolic struggle that is articulated with the field of material struggle, the outcome of social struggles determines the social hegemony of certain meanings and social groups.

H8. Modern cultural forms are ideological in nature because they are signs that produce symbolic difference and symbolic class struggle that serve material interests and construct mythological and imaginative meanings that want to make others see reality not as it is, but as certain groups want to define them. Modern culture functions as an ideological imposition, but to this structuralistic notion should be added that ideology is a site of struggle between different meanings that try to win active consent (hegemony), it is actively produced and reproduced by all individuals and social classes. Not only dominant, but also oppositional codes function as ideologies in modern society, they both interpellate subjects and try to invoke certain preferred meanings.

H9. The dualistic separation between nature and culture, the reduction of culture to nature, or the projection of nature into society are dangerous ideologies. Nature and society are dialectically related, society is a disembedded totality that has emerged from nature and has emergent qualities. Nature in society is socially constructed and incorporated. Society and culture form a dialectical sublation (Aufhebung) of nature.

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