

Matthew Arnold, E. B. Tylor, and the Uses of Invention¹

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Briefly, the word culture with its modern technical or anthropological meaning was established in English by Tylor in 1871, though it seems not to have penetrated to any general or "complete" British or American dictionary until more than fifty years later – a piece of cultural lag that may help to keep anthropologists humble in estimating the tempo of their influence on even the avowedly literate segment of their society (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:9).

IN THE absence of history, men create myths which explain the origin of their most sacred beliefs. Knowing this, should anthropologists then be surprised that, in the absence of a history of anthropology, an element of myth has crept into the story they tell of the origin of their central concept? Traditional account would have it that Edward Burnett Tylor created a science by defining its substance – culture. But story recognizes also that Tylor did not invent the word, that it had then and continues to have now a congeries of "humanist" meanings in addition to its "correct" anthropological meaning (Williams 1960; Cowell 1959:237-398). The crucial differences in meaning (from the anthropological point of view) would seem to be in the area of valuation:

The [Matthew] Arnold-[John] Powys-[Werner] Jaeger concept of culture is not only ethnocentric, ...it is absolutistic. It knows perfection, or at least what is most perfect in human achievement, and resolutely directs its "obligatory" gaze thereto, disdainful of what is "lower". The anthropological attitude is relativistic, in that in place of beginning with an inherited hierarchy of values, it assumes that every society through its culture seeks and in some measure finds values, and that the business of anthropology includes the determination of the range, variety, constancy, and interrelations of these innumerable values (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:32).

In the anthropological creation story, the two culture concepts are seen in competition for dictionary and general intellectual precedence, which outside the anthropological ethnos has perversely been awarded to the false or outmoded humanist meaning. From out of story history gradually emerges; a preliminary inquiry into the history of the culture idea in English and American anthropology suggests that it did not leap full-blown from Tylor's brow in 1871, and that much of the lag in its penetration beyond anthropology has been more apparent than real.

"Culture or Civilization, 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: I, 1). For over thirty years after this "sharp and successful conceptualization" in 1871, Tylor's "classic" definition seems to have been without successor. One might think that "the length of this interval inevitably raises the question whether an isolated statement, so far ahead as this of all the rest ..., can have been actuated by the same motivations ..." but in Tylor's case the question was not raised (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:149-151). Nevertheless, close consideration of Tylor's definition in the context of his work and time does in fact suggest that his idea of culture was perhaps closer to that of his humanist near-contemporary Matthew Arnold than it was to the modern anthropological meaning. And insofar as their usages differed, it can be argued that in certain ways Arnold was closer than Tylor to the modern anthropological meaning.

Let us begin with the definition itself. "Culture or Civilization" – in this very synonymy, which some modern renditions obscure by an ellipsis of the last two words, Tylor begs the whole question of relativism and in effect makes the modern anthropological meaning of "culture" impossible. The concept of a plurality of civilizations had existed since the early 19th century (Febvre 1930), and is at least implicit in portions of Tylor's work; but when he went on in this same passage to speak of the "civilization of the lower tribes as related to the civilization of the higher nations" (1871: I, 1), it is clear that he meant degree rather than type or style of civilization. "Civilization," for Tylor as for Lewis Henry Morgan, was the highest stage

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in an explicitly formulated sequence of progressive human development which began in “savagery” and moved through “barbarism.” Inherited from the late 18th century (Teggart 1925; Bock 1956; Hodgen 1936), this sequence – and the “hierarchy of values” it implied – was central to Tylor’s ethnology (e.g. Tylor 1881:24). If he was less disdainful than most of his contemporaries of what was clearly “lower,” it is obvious that Tylor had no doubt that European “civilization” was, though not perfect, “at least what is most perfect in human achievement.” True, he was at much pain – indeed as we shall see it was his central purpose – to prove that savagery and barbarism were early manifestations or grades of civilization. But in all major areas of human activity, “culture” reached its full flowering only in the third stage.

Although evident in the definition itself, the real meaning of Tylor’s “culture” is better understood in the light of the intellectual background and somewhat polemical purpose of his major work. Tylor’s two most important books, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865) and *Primitive Culture* (1871), were products of the decade of the 1860’s, and can only be understood in terms of the intellectual and anthropological controversies of these years, which were roughly the interval between Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. The publication of the *Origin* in 1859 focused a whole range of developing knowledge in the biological and historical sciences on the question of the origin and antiquity of mankind and of human civilization (see, e.g. Ellegard 1958: 24, 97, 101, 293, 332). Indeed, it is perhaps fair to say that “anthropology” in the broad sense was the central intellectual problem of the 1860’s. The recently accepted researches of Boucher de Perthes in pre-historic archeology; archeological investigations of ancient historic civilizations; developments in comparative philology; the study of the physical types of mankind; the sociological and historical theorizing of writers like Comte and Buckle; as well as more than two decades of organized activities in general “ethnology” – these varied researches which had been the preoccupation of scholars for some decades back into the first half of the 19th century became suddenly terribly and interrelatedly important (Penniman 1952:60-92).

If anthropology was the central intellectual problem of the sixties, an important aspect of this problem was that at issue in the debate between the degradationists (or degenerationists) and the developmentalists (or progressionists).

Although this discussion became a part of the contemporary debate over Darwinian evolution, it had other and earlier roots. The idea that European civilization was the end product of an historic progress from a savage state of nature, that the development of all human social groups (composed as they were of beings of a single species with a common human nature) necessarily followed a similar gradual progressive development, and that the stages of this development could be reconstructed in the absence of historical evidence by applying the “comparative method” to human groups co-existing in the present, by the end of the 18th century had come to form the basis of much Western European social thought (Bock 1956; Teggart 1925). Although this theory continued to be widely accepted right on through the first half of the 19th century, several currents of thought and experience in this period tended to undermine it (Hodgen 1936:9-36).

Among these was the “polygenist” argument that the races of men were aboriginally distinct and permanently unequal species. By 1863, James Hunt and John Crawfurd, the presidents of the competing English anthropological associations, whatever their many other personal and theoretical differences, were both ardent polygenists (Crawfurd 1863; Hunt 1865). Indeed, the conversion of British physical anthropologists to Darwinism was delayed for a decade or so by its *prima facie* monogenist implications (Hunt 1868:77; Stewart 1959:12-17). Polygenism was heterodox; but the currents of romantic doubt affected the orthodox as well, with no less serious implications for the 18th century view of the course of human social development and for social theorizing based on the comparative method. Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, had argued in his 1857 lecture “On the Origins of Civilization,” that all experience proved that “men, left in the lowest, or even anything approaching to the lowest, degree of barbarism in which they can possibly subsist at all, never did and never can raise themselves, unaided, into a higher condition (quoted in Tylor 1865:160-161).” And indeed, where people were found in savagery, it was because they had degenerated from an originally higher culture which had been conferred upon man by “divine intervention” (as summarized by Tylor 1871:1,34). Whately was not alone in arguing the degenerationist point of view, and throughout the 1860’s the issue of degenerationism and progressionism was the subject of widespread and even acrimonious

debate among English intellectuals (Hodgen 1936:26-34; Ellegard 1958:31-32, 301 ff.; Eiseley 1961:297-302).

It is in this framework that Tylor's early work must be considered. Whether it derived from the German social evolutionist ethnologist Gustav Klemm, from the high priest of positivist sociology Auguste Comte, from his archeologist friend Henry Christy, from historian Henry Thomas Buckle, or simply from his enculturative milieu, it is clear that Tylor's anthropological thought was part of the 19th century positivist incarnation of the progressionist tradition which Whately attacked.² In 1863, Tylor reviewed the evidence of European accounts of "Wild Men and Beast-Children," concluding that they offered little help towards the solution of a problem of "some importance to anthropologists": the establishment of "the lowest limit of human existence." The problem was in fact central to progressionist theory, and much of Tylor's later work is foreshadowed in his concluding remarks: "The enquirer who seeks ... the beginnings of man's civilization must deduce general principles by reasoning downwards from the civilized European to the savage, and then descend to still lower possible levels of human existence ... (1863: 21, 32)." If Whately's argument were accepted, the whole framework of assumption underlying Tylor's downward reasoning would be destroyed.

Two years later, Tylor turned to the work of shoring up theoretical timbers weakened by the currents of early 19th century doubt. Not only did he devote a central chapter to Whately and the "Growth and Decline of Culture," but the "Concluding Remarks" of his *Researches* told "distinctly for or against some widely circulated Ethnological theories...." They suggested in the first place "that the wide differences in the civilization and mental state of the various races of mankind are rather differences of development than of origin, rather of degree than of kind." The "mental uniformity" of mankind was shown by the difficulty of finding "among a list of twenty items of art or knowledge, custom or superstition, taken at random from a

² The lack of any real biography of Tylor inhibits discussion of the sources of his thought. R. R. Marett's book (1936) is not intended as biography and offers little more on the sources of Tylor's anthropology than a reference or two to Klemm and Quetelet. Tylor acknowledges a debt to Waitz and Bastian in the preface to *Primitive Culture*, and to Christy on page 13 of *Researches*. On the influence of Comte (see Teggart 1925: 110 ff. and Bidney 1953: 190). The influence of Buckle is evident in the first pages of the *Researches*.

description of any uncivilized race, a single one to which something closely analogous may not be found elsewhere among some other race, unlike the first in physical characters, and living thousands of miles off (1865:361-363)." It is hard to appreciate the heat which once emanated from the now scattered ashes of long dead controversies, but the "ethnological theory" to which Tylor referred was "polygenism," and its place in his summary suggests the importance which the controversy between monogenists and polygenists had in anthropological circles in the 1860's. For Tylor, the issue was particularly important: without a common human nature, all historical reconstruction based on the assumption of the psychic unity of mankind was necessarily invalid.

The rest of Tylor's five major conclusions bore on the problem of progress. On the question of the state of primeval man, he argued on the one hand that while the present condition of savages was the product of a complex history, it seemed close enough to that of primeval man to provide a basis "to reason upon." On the other, he speculated about the early "mental state" of man in terms foreshadowing his subsequent theory of animism (1865:368-370). On the general course of human history, he argued that while there had apparently been "local" degeneration among "particular tribes," his "collections of facts relating to various useful arts" showed that "in such practical matters at least, the history of mankind has been on the whole a history of progress." All things considered, the progressionist position was more "reasonable" than the degenerationist (1865: 363-365).

Having concluded that the development of man was generally upward from a primitive condition of savagery, Tylor suggested that "the question then arises, how any particular piece of skill or knowledge has come into any particular place where it is found. Three ways are open, independent invention, inheritance from ancestors in a distant region, transmission from one race to another; but between these three ways the choice is commonly a difficult one" (1865:365). At this point, Tylor seemed clearly inclined to favor the latter two alternatives as both the more likely and the more fruitful for the reconstruction of the actual history of mankind. But as a number of other writers have noted, there is a change in emphasis between the *Researches* and *Primitive Culture*: the argument for progress and from independent invention is more central to his purpose in the second book

(Andrew Lang, as quoted in Smith 1933:168-169; A. C. Haddon, as quoted in Bidney 1953:200; Teggart 1925:114; Hodgen 1936:36 ff.; and Smith 1933: 116-183; cf., however, Lowie 1937:72-80 and Bidney 1953:198-201). This can be at least partially explained by the intensification of the controversy between developmentalists and degenerationists in the late 1860's. And more importantly for present purposes, I would suggest that this change in emphasis bears on the development of the culture concept.

Tylor's *Researches* were not the only contribution to the degenerationist-progressionist debate published in 1865. The same year saw the appearance of Sir John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times, as illustrated by ancient remains, and the manners and customs of modern savages*. Lubbock, who was explicitly Darwinian, was an ardent and total progressionist: "the most sanguine hopes for the future are justified by the whole experience of the past"; "Utopia," far from being a dream, was rather "the necessary consequence of natural laws...." (1865:490-492). In 1867 and 1869, Lubbock carried his defense of progressionism (which in 1868 came under the further attack of the Duke of Argyll) before the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Dundee and Exeter (Lubbock 1868:1-23). Each time the advocates of both positions were heatedly participant; and at least on the second occasion Tylor was present (Anonymous 1868; 1869a).

The discussion was by no means limited to anthropological circles; in 1869, an article summarizing the current status of the controversy appeared in *The Contemporary Review*. Stressing the distinction between industrial, intellectual, and moral progress (which distinction for Lubbock can hardly be said to have existed), it attacked Lubbock for his failure to consider the role of migration and contact. Since Whately had not denied savage progress *per se*, but only *unassisted* savage progress, the real issue was not *whether* savages could rise, but rather under what circumstances they had done so. More importantly, the implications for reconstructions based on the comparative method were here made devastatingly clear: "It was indeed an attractive thought to convert a survey of contemporary races into a chronological history of their successive stages" – but if the Eskimo and the Patagonian were the end-results of degeneration rather than the starting-points of progress, then

the whole attempt collapsed. Though discussion would undoubtedly continue, certain points had already been firmly established: there was a crucial distinction between the "origin of industrial arts and the origin of moral culture. It is one thing to find out ... the methods by which man learnt to subdue the earth; it is another to discover the influences through which he learnt to subdue his spirit Spiritual progress is a very different thing from material, and can only be comprehended by the light of very different laws, *which lie beyond the jurisdiction of science* We have reasons which science has no right to challenge for resting satisfied that they are traceable to a direct divine communion as their source" (Hannah 1869:160-177, my emphasis).

It was to answer this position, if not this writer, that Tylor wrote *Primitive Culture*. Its essential purpose was to refute the degenerationist argument that man's spiritual or cultural life was not governed by the same natural laws of progress as his material life and was therefore not a subject for scientific study. Written to show that "the phenomena of culture" as well as the arts of life were the products of progressive development, it sought to demonstrate that knowledge, custom, art, and even religious belief had developed by a natural process out of roots in primitive savagery (1871: I, Chaps. 1 and 2, *passim*). "The history of mankind is part and parcel of the history of nature," and "our thoughts, wills, and actions accord with laws as definite as those which govern the motion of waves, the combination of acids and bases, and the growth of plants and animals" (1871:1,2). It was not accidental to Tylor's purpose that over half the book was devoted to the evolution of religious beliefs, where more than anywhere else one might have expected a development by "divine communion."³

Tylor's somewhat polemical and markedly nomothetic purpose had, however, certain

³ Cf. Hodgen (1936:passim), on whom I have drawn. Tylor spoke of his subject as "mental evolution," and a quotation from the Duke of Argyll in Ellegård (1958:317) suggests its relation to the Darwinian controversy. Argyll defined the peculiarly human characteristics as "the gift of articulate language, – the power of numbers, – the powers of generalization, – the power of conceiving the relation of man to his Creator, – the power of foreseeing an immortal destiny, – the power of knowing good from evil, on eternal principles of justice and truth." Compare these to the foci of *Primitive Culture*; Tylor was showing that these, too, were evolutionary products. For a suggestively different, but I think unsatisfactory, interpretation of Tylor's relation to the controversies of the 1860's (see Smith 1933: 116-183, especially 168 ff.).

consequences which are important for an understanding of the development of the culture concept. In his *Researches* Tylor had been interested in historical *process* as well as evolutionary *sequence*, and indeed the book is as “diffusionist” as it is “evolutionist.” But by 1871 Tylor’s primary purpose was the establishment of a progressive *sequence* of stages in the evolution of mental phenomena, and this commitment involved a subordination of his interest in the three alternative *processes* (independent invention, inheritance and transmission) by which any cultural element might come into the life of a specific group. Most of the traditional evidence for Tylor’s diffusionism is taken from the *Researches*; much less from *Primitive Culture*; none of it from *Anthropology* (1881), the latest and most frankly popular of his major works, which is essentially a series of chapters demonstrating the *fact* and *course* of progression in various areas of life.⁴ Tylor continued to allow considerable role to diffusion; it is in *Primitive Culture*, after all, that one finds the classic diffusionist epigram: “Civilization is a plant much oftener propagated than developed” (1871: 1,48). But if the degenerationist argument that savages had never progressed *without assistance* were to be refuted, then the evidence of independent invention was obviously much more to the point. The evidence of diffusion was at best neutral and perhaps even damaging to the progressionist case, since *a priori* it can be seen that diffusion would only act to obscure the essentially self-generative stages of progressive development which it was Tylor’s primary purpose to establish (1871: I, 1, 6, 14, *passim*).

The method by which these stages were to be reconstructed and arranged in a “probable order of evolution” was the long-utilized and recently questioned comparative method, which Tylor explicated at some length in the first chapter of *Primitive Culture*. As employed by Tylor, it had at least two important implications

for the culture concept. On the one hand, it forced the fragmentation of whole human cultures into discrete elements which might be classified and compared out of any specific cultural context and then rearranged in stages of probable evolutionary development; on the other, it presupposed a hierarchical, evaluative approach to the elements thus abstracted and to the stages thus reconstructed.

“A first step in the study of civilization is to dissect it into details, and to classify these in their proper groups. Thus, in examining weapons, they are to be classed under spear, club, sling, bow and arrow, and so forth; ... myths are divided under such headings as myths of sunrise and sunset, eclipse-myths, earthquake-myths, ...” etc. (1871: I,7-8). Tylor went on to discuss the diffusion of such cultural elements from area to area; but after a six-page detour into the consideration of historical process, he returned to the central progressionist point: “It being shown that the details of Culture are capable of being classified in a great number of ethnographic groups of arts, beliefs, customs, and the rest, the consideration comes next how far the facts arranged in these groups are produced by evolution from one another” (1871: I,13). Tylor went on to argue on a number of grounds, including the evidence of material progress and the now famous doctrine of “survivals,” that these comparatively derived sequences were in fact historical sequences, and that we could thus “reconstruct lost history without scruple, trusting to general knowledge of the principles of human thought and action as a guide in putting the facts in their proper order” (1871: I,14). At one point in this discussion, Tylor spoke of the total relationship of the cultural details collected in any given locality: “Just as the catalogue of all the species of plants and animals of a district represents its Flora and Fauna, so the list of all the items of the general life of a people represents that whole which we call its culture” (1871: I,7-8). But at no point in either *Primitive Culture* or *Anthropology* did he concern himself with such a cultural whole as an organized or functionally integrated or patterned way of life, nor does he use the word “culture” in the plural form. Tylor was concerned rather with discrete cultural elements and with the stages in the development of a single human culture which he derived from them. When he spoke of “the culture” of a group, or, as in this case, of “its culture,” it is clear in almost every instance that he meant “the culture-stage” or the “degree of culture” of that group.

⁴ In arguing the role of diffusionism in Tylor’s work, Lowie (1937:72-80) cites the *Researches* about four times as often as *Primitive Culture*. Bidney (1953) cites each three times; neither writer cites the *Anthropology* on this point. While Tylor wrote specifically diffusionist studies throughout his life (one “On American Lot-Games, as Evidence of Asiatic Intercourse before the Time of Columbus” was published as late as 1896), in general the titles and descriptions of his writings in the bibliography compiled by Barbara W. Freire-Marreco (1907) conform to the interpretation offered here on the basis of his three major works: the defense of progressionism early became and remained through his life the dominating theme of his ethnological work.

“In taking up the problem of the development of culture as a branch of ethnological research,” the first thing Tylor had to do was find “a means of measurement” against which he could “reckon progression and retrogression in civilization”

Civilization actually existing among mankind in different grades, we are enabled to estimate and compare it by positive examples. The educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life. The principle criteria of classification are the absence or presence, high or low development, of the industrial arts, ... the extent of scientific knowledge, the definiteness of moral principles, the condition of religious belief and ceremony, the degree of social and political organization, and so forth. Thus, on the definite basis of compared facts, ethnographers are able to set up at least a rough scale of civilization. Few would dispute that the following races are arranged rightly in order of culture: – Australian, Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, Italian (1871:I,23-24).

What is this but an implicit formulation of the “inherited hierarchy of values” of humanist culture? True, Tylor went on to suggest that “if not only knowledge and art, but at the same time moral and political excellence, be taken into consideration, it becomes yet harder to reckon on an ideal scale the advance or decline from stage to stage of culture” (1871: I, 25); but this was simply a caveat as to the difficulties of evaluation. His conclusion is straightforwardly, if humanely, ethnocentric: “Savage moral standards are real enough, but they are far looser and weaker than ours.... That any known savage tribe would not be improved by judicious civilization, is a proposition which no moralist would dare to make; while the general tenour of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage, but also *better and happier*, and that the barbarian stands between” (1871:I,28, my emphasis).

The point is simply that cultural hierarchism is not incidental but crucial to Tylor’s ethnology. The refutation of the degenerationist separation of man’s moral culture from his material progress *required* that the progressionist scale include “moral principles” and “religious belief.” True, it demanded that savage morality be *real* morality, and thus introduced a kind of relativism into the realm of values; but it demanded at the same time that savage morality, however real, be *inferior* to the morality of civilized peoples. If the culture of savages was “real culture,” it was at the same time partial,

inferior or “lower” culture. David Bidney, pointing to Tylor’s use of such phrases as “uncultured man” and “cultured modern man,” has suggested that Tylor shifted “constantly from the positive and relativistic to the normative and moral sense of the term [culture]” (1953: 195). But there were no serious inconsistencies in Tylor’s usage; they were all *fundamentally* normative, as indeed the peroration of his magnum opus suggests: “The science of culture is essentially a reformer’s science” (1871: II, 410).

To say that his “culture” was normative and fragmented does not exhaust the uses Tylor made – or failed to make – of his invention. It has been suggested that Tylor’s “culture” was, “in essence, very similar” to the English social Darwinist Walter Bagehot’s “cake of custom” (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 4). But Tylor’s “culture” was not, like the “cake of custom,” an accumulation of social tradition passed on from generation to generation, acting through the mechanisms of unconscious imitation to determine and unify the behavior of a social group (Bagehot 1867:20, 24 ff., 71 ff.). Culture, for Tylor, was only slightly developed beyond its earlier English verbal sense of “cultivation”; it had to do primarily with change and progress, not continuity or stasis. If he considered “inheritance” one of the three ways by which cultural elements came to a specific group, he had only the vaguest sense of its actual process; in fact, it seems occasionally to have been almost physical in the Lamarckian sense, as indeed the cake of custom became for Bagehot (1867: 22, 78, 80). The historical or hereditary element in civilized life Tylor called “survival *in* culture” (1871: I, 63 ff.). The phrase served to distinguish unconscious and irrational inheritances of the past from “cultured” behavior, which was above all conscious and rational. Tylor’s errors in the analysis of religious phenomena are well known (Maret 1936:66, 108 ff., 168; Lowie 1937:84-85); they arise from his tendency to explain all contributions to culture in terms of conscious, rationalistic processes. Primitive man reasoned soundly from false premises; as knowledge increased, premises became sounder and progress might become systematic reform.

Had the experience of ancient men been larger, they would have seen their way to faster steps in culture. But we civilized moderns have just that wider knowledge which the rude ancients wanted. Acquainted with events and their consequences far and wide over the world, we are able to direct our own course with more confidence toward

improvement. In a word, mankind is passing from the age or unconscious to that of conscious progress (Tylor 1881 439-440; cf. 1871:11,410).

So also Bagehot's "cake of custom" tended to break down in the "age of discussion," which freed men for the achievement of "verifiable progress" (1867: Chaps. 5 and 6, *passim*). Both men shared an ideal of civilized man's creative rational capacities much like the humanist concept of culture. But Bagehot's "cake of custom," though part of a current of social psychological thinking which was to flow into the modern anthropological culture concept, was not in any sense the equivalent of Tylor's "culture," which lacked any significant social psychological content.⁵

At this point perhaps we should draw together the threads of this discussion of the uses of invention. Beyond the first page of *Primitive Culture*, Tylor's culture concept loses in its actual usage much of the significance which modern anthropologists have attributed to it. Noting the absence of so many of the elements crucial to the modern anthropological usage – relativity, integration, meaningful historicity or behavioral determinism (cf. Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 159-199) –, one cannot help wondering in what sense Tylor "defined" the concept. On the other hand, why did Tylor give the word such prominence in the title of his most important book? Had he, as Kroeber and Kluckhohn thought, "wavered between culture and civilization and perhaps finally chose[n] the former as somewhat less burdened with connotation of high degree of advancement ... (1952:147)"? The discussion so far would suggest that this was not the case. Here again, it may help to look at intellectual currents of the 1860's.

In the last half of this decade the humanist idea of culture became something of an issue in English intellectual life. During 1867 and 1868 the essays which were to form the substance of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* were published in *The Cornhill Magazine*. They provoked such a lively discussion that when they

were reprinted in 1869 the reviewer in *The Contemporary Review* thought it unnecessary to deal with their substance, since it would already have been familiar to "the majority of our readers" (Anonymous 1869b:150; cf. Wilson 1932:xxi). In view of what we have already seen of the nature of Tylor's culture concept, it should hardly be surprising that it was in some respects quite similar to Arnold's. Even on the level of sheer enumeration (and Tylor's concept hardly gets beyond this [Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 43]), once we go behind Arnold's "sweetness and light" (1869: 72) to those aspects of human life which were involved in the "pursuit of perfection," we come up with a list very near the elements in Tylor's definition: "art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as ... religion" (1869:47). Taking into consideration Arnold's obvious concern for morality and manners (or customs), the remaining differences in enumerative content (even, I would suggest, Arnold's failure to mention language) can be explained better as by-products of Tylor's ethnographic focus, than of any fundamental difference in conceptual orientation. Beyond this, both men conceived culture in normative terms, though their standards of evaluation were not the same. And finally, both Arnold and Tylor saw culture as a conscious striving toward progress or perfection, "by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world and through this knowledge, *turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits...*" (Arnold 1869:6, my emphasis). If the phrase is Arnold's, the sentiment is exactly that of the last page of *Primitive Culture*, where Tylor defined the "office of ethnography": "to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction" (1871:II,410).

The differences between Tylor's and Arnold's uses of the term "culture" are no less revealing than their similarities. For Arnold, "culture," in mid-Victorian England if not at all times, was quite a different thing from "civilization." Civilization was outward and mechanical; culture was above all an "inward condition of the mind and spirit." It was therefore fundamentally "at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us" (1869:48-49). And if it sought perfection, Arnold's culture did not find it in a simple upward historical progress so much

⁵ Reasoning only from the language of Tylor's definition, a quite different view of his contribution is possible. Thus Otto Klineberg spoke in 1935 of culture as a "way of life" and went on to paraphrase Tylor: "it includes all the capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of a particular society" (as quoted in Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:50). But Tylor did *not* say "a particular society." Remove the qualifying adjective, read the definition in the context of a single evolving human society, and most of the apparent social psychological content disappears.

as in isolated moments of cultural flowering, “when there is a national glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive” (1869:69). For Arnold, England in the sixties was emphatically not one of these moments. As the title of his book suggests, he offered “culture” to his age as an alternative to an anarchy which threatened it. Tylor, however, saw his own time as “an age scarcely approached by any former age in the possession of actual knowledge and the strenuous pursuit of truth as the guiding principle of life” (1871 :11,408). The difference is crucial; it suggests a basis in the sociology of knowledge for the anthropological idea whose history we are sketching.

Since it is the sociology of Tylor’s knowledge which immediately concerns us let us take Arnold’s ideas as given. For whatever reasons in his own enculturative experience, Arnold was a severe critic of urban industrial society, and of the politically Liberal, religiously Nonconformist and culturally “Philistine” middle class which had largely made and largely ruled it (Trilling 1949). Indeed, the perfection that Arnold’s “culture” aimed at was largely the perfection of the Nonconformist middle class. One of the most important of the “stock notions” upon which it would turn a “stream of fresh and free thought” was the Liberal “fetish” of free-trade, whose mechanical worship had produced, along with the “indefinite multiplication” of manufactories, railroads, population, wealth, and cities, the grinding poverty of one twentieth of the English people, whose children were “eaten up with disease, half-sized, half-fed, half-clothed, neglected by their parents, without health, without home, without hope” (1869: 194). But both in background and conviction Tylor was part and parcel of the Nonconformist, Liberal middle class. If as Nonconformist he could not go to Arnold’s Oxford, the victories of 19th century Liberalism eventually allowed him to teach there. And when ill-health forced his early retirement from the business offices of his Quaker father’s brass foundry, a “modest competency” made possible the travel which led him into anthropology (Marett 1936: 13). Tylor had no apparent qualms about free trade; he ended his discussion of tile evolution of commerce with a sentiment which must have warmed old John Bright’s heart:

There is no agent of civilization more beneficial than the free trader, who gives the inhabitants of every region the

advantages of all other regions, and whose business is to work out the law that what serves the general profit of mankind serves also the private profit of the individual man (1881 :286).

Tylor was not so alienated from middle-class civilization that he must define culture as its anodyne. Quite the contrary, his identification was so thorough-going that he made culture and civilization one by definition.

Conjectural intellectual biography is a dangerous undertaking at best, but I would suggest that Tylor wrote *Primitive Culture* and chose its title in the context of Arnold’s polemic, and that his addition of “culture” to his earlier definition of civilization (1865: I) was in a sense an answer to Arnold as well as to the degenerationists. That Tylor was aware of Arnold’s argument is suggested not only by its contemporary notoriety, but by a passage in *Primitive Culture* itself:

It may be taken as man’s rule of duty in the world, that he shall strive to know as well as he can find out, and to do as well as he knows how. But the parting asunder of these two great principles, that separation of intelligence from virtue which accounts for so much of the wrong-doing of mankind, is continually seen to happen in the great movements of civilization (1871: 1,25).

Though Tylor does not so label them, these “great principles” would seem to be “two forces” central to Arnold’s thinking: Hellenism and Hebraism, “rivals dividing the empire of the world between them, not by the necessity of their own nature, but as exhibited in man and his history” (Arnold 1869: 129). According to Arnold, these “two disciplines” lay their main stress, “the one [Hellenism], on clear intelligence, the other [Hebraism], on firm obedience; the one, on comprehensively knowing the grounds of one’s duty, the other, on diligently practicing it; the one, on taking all possible care ... that the light we have be not darkness, the other, that according to the best light we have we diligently walk....” (Arnold 1869: 137). Like Arnold, Tylor felt that excellence in knowing and in doing did not always go together; but as we have seen already he went on to conclude that in the long run there was a general upward progress in both: civilized man was not only “wiser and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier....” The point here is simply that Arnold’s polemic on culture fitted quite well with the degenerationist argument: both assumed a distinction between civilization and culture; both called into question the assumption that progress in virtue went hand

in hand with progress in technique. Writing largely in answer to the degenerationists, Tylor might well have felt called upon to deal with Arnold at the same time.

At this point we are in a position to formulate more precisely Tylor's contribution to the culture concept in Anglo-American anthropology. Far from defining its modern anthropological meaning, he simply took the contemporary humanist idea of culture and fitted it into the framework of progressive social evolutionism. One might say he made Matthew Arnold's culture evolutionary. To do so was no small contribution. As a literary historian pointed out to me, Matthew Arnold could never have called a work *Primitive Culture*: the very idea would have been to him a contradiction in terms. To argue that culture actually existed among all men, in however "crude" or "primitive" a form, may be viewed as a major step toward the anthropological concept, especially insofar as it focused anthropological attention on manifestations of culture which on account of their "crudity" were below the level of conscious cultivation where "civilized" culture was to be found. Furthermore, the evolutionary approach contained at least the germ of an idea of cultural plurality: one way (although perhaps not the most direct) to the idea of different cultures was through the concept of stages of culture. Perhaps more importantly, cultural evolutionism implied a kind of functionalism in the realm of morals and values which, if it was not the same as modern anthropological relativism, was a major step toward it. That certain primitive beliefs represented stages in the evolution of their civilized counterparts implied also that they served similar functions in the control of behavior, that the social purposes of a moral standard might be accomplished in any number of ways. If all these ideas were by no means original with Tylor, they are nonetheless central to the evolutionary ethnology which he did much to define. But to put humanist culture in an evolutionist framework was hardly an unqualified advance toward the modern anthropological meaning. It involved a good deal of sideward and backward motion as well.⁶

⁶ For a quite different interpretation of Tylor's contribution, see Murphree (1961). Although in many respects an excellent contribution to our understanding of evolutionist ethnology, it seems to me that Murphree's essay reads into Tylor's culture a consistent theoretical elaboration which it simply did not have.

If the logic of Darwinism led to complete relativism in the realm of values, the mid-Victorian mind was largely insulated from the full effects of this relativism by an "inherited hierarchy of values" deeply rooted in European social thought and buttressed on every hand by the visible evidences of European material progress and world dominion (cf. Houghton 1957: 13-18). If, unlike Arnold, Tylor saw cultural perfection only at the top of an endless evolutionary ladder, he was on the whole sure that each step up that ladder advanced us toward perfection. The cultural inferiority of those on lower rungs he never seriously doubted. And if he envisioned further progress *in* civilization, his system defined no future *stage*; European civilization was in this sense the goal of all cultural development, — but anthropological relativism depends not only on a functionalist view of values in general; it requires also a certain attitude toward the values of one's own culture. Today, this attitude may be no more than simple critical detachment; but as an historical development I would argue that it involved, if not disillusion, at least a rejection of contemporary values and an alienation from contemporary society which Tylor and Lubbock and probably most of the evolutionist ethnologists simply did not feel. It involved a distinction between "culture" and what was still ultimately an ethnocentric concept of "civilization." Arnold felt this alienation and made this distinction, and if his idea of culture harked back to an older Romantic absolutism with which Tylor had no sympathy, it was nevertheless closer in a number of respects to the anthropological idea of culture than was Tylor's. Although Tylor thought rather more in terms of evolutionary product and Arnold of individual process, both men conceived culture in normative humanist terms as a *conscious* "cultivation" of the capacities which are most characteristically human. But while Tylor took humanist culture and fragmented it for purposes of analysis, Arnold's culture (as the opposition in his title suggests) was, both for the individual and for society, an organic, integrative, holistic phenomenon. Tylor's analytic evolutionary purpose forced him to place great emphasis on the artifactual manifestations of culture, on those objects of "material culture" which were easily and convincingly arranged in hierarchical sequence; Arnold's culture, like that of most modern anthropologists, was an inward ideational phenomenon. For Arnold much more

than for Tylor culture was a “way of life”; it asked one to

Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; ...observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it (1869:52)?

And although here perhaps I am pushing the point, it seems to me that Arnold, precisely because he saw culture inwardly, ideationally, and integratively, was perhaps closer than Tylor to seeing the relationship between culture and personality. Human beings shared a capacity for various types of development; calling himself Philistine, Arnold felt he might have been a Barbarian aristocrat:

Place me in one of his great fortified posts,... with all pleasures at my command, with most whom I met deferring to me, everyone I met smiling on me, and with every appearance of permanence and security before and behind me,-then I too might have grown, I feel, into a very passable child of the established fact, of commendable spirit and politeness, and. ...a little inaccessible to ideas and light ... (1869: 106-107).

Thus a number of elements of the modern anthropological idea of culture which were present, if only in germ, in the Arnoldian humanist idea of culture were pushed into the background by the evolutionist focus on the demonstration of progressive sequence; they did not fully reemerge as foci of serious anthropological investigation in Britain or the United States until the twentieth century. These differences in foci suggest a final comparison between Tylor and Arnold which bears heavily on the development of the culture concept. Both men had contacts with German thought. But the taproot of Tylor’s thinking is in the tradition of the French Enlightenment and British empiricism: in the very first pages of *Primitive Culture*, we find Tylor hastening to “escape from the regions of transcendental philosophy and theology, to start on a more hopeful journey over more practicable ground” (1871: I, 3). Arnold, on the other hand, is in the tradition of English Romanticism and of German transcendental philosophy; his revulsion from “Jacobinism,” “Benthamism,” Comtean positivism and all other “mechanical” system-making is plain on every page of *Culture and Anarchy* (Arnold 1869:66, 68, *passim*). Both traditions contributed to the development of the modern culture concept. If Tylor’s provided the impetus for the scientific

study of civilization, Arnold’s contains the roots of culture as an integrative, organic, holistic, inner manifestation, whether in the humanist or the anthropological sense. If Tylor’s 19th century evolutionary positivism was a necessary stage in the growth of modern relativism, it was only in a later reaction against that positivism and its civilization, only in the minds of men who felt an alienation similar to that of the Romantics, that a fully anthropological relativism could emerge. By that time, developments in anthropological theory and practice had laid the basis for the modern culture concept. Not surprisingly, its formulation was the work of anthropologists with closer contact than Tylor to the Germanic tradition.⁷

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⁷ I refer, of course, to the students of Franz Boas, whose own contribution to the development of the culture concept received inadequate appreciation by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952:151). In the second half of the earlier longer version of this paper (see footnote 1) I have sketched what seem to me the outlines of Boas’ contribution. I hope to elaborate this outline in a future longer work; here I would simply suggest that it was the critics of evolutionism who developed the modern anthropological concept of culture, which unlike Tylor’s, is plural and branching rather than singular and unilinear.

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