

CULTURE

Lecture Notes

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These are my lecture notes on the subject of 'culture'. Use them for references, ideas and pointers for useful discussion. As you should see, there are different possible ways to understand the word, culture. Two of the most important concern the relationship between culture and nature:

1. The more conventional idea of the relationship between the two, which was developed when the first theorists began to define culture in the 19th century, is that culture is a condition that humans acquire by rising above nature – and their nature.
2. Or culture is a product of human nature as essential as, say, an animal or plant culture.

The relevance of the discussion of culture to the topic of the study of cultural astronomy and astrology is this: are the claims of astrology, or astronomy or cosmology for that matter, to be taken as inherently true, or are they culturally determined? Astrology is particularly vulnerable in this respect because it lacks a modern rationale and so is subject to criticism on the grounds that it can't demonstrate its 'truth' in a modern, that is, scientific, manner.

However, science is also vulnerable to such criticisms. Because the dominant discourse, as expressed in the media, in western society is heavily 'pro-science' (though many scientists would dispute this statement) the serious academic critiques of scientific claims are little known outside academia. However, within academia, there have been powerful voices from post-modernists and feminists in particular, for whom the claims of modern science are the product of power relations within society (such as domination by middle-class, white, secular, male, patriarchal, western modernisers), rather than any true insight into the nature of reality. In other words, such critics claim that the questions that scientists ask are framed and interpreted according to cultural assumptions. The debate between what is 'true' and what is 'culturally determined' therefore occurs across the intellectual arena.

Cultural Astronomy/Astrology/Cosmology

What do we mean by the terms Cultural Astronomy, Cultural Astrology and Cultural Cosmology?

For example, do we look at cosmology, astronomy and astrology **in** culture - i.e. as part of culture.

Or **as** cultures - i.e. as cultures in themselves?

- Can we then identify sub-cultures within cosmology, astronomy and astrology?

- Do astrology, astronomy and cosmology have existence as a set of absolutes and objective truths independent of culture?
- If 'western culture' exists as a recognisable entity, can or does it have an attitude to sub-cultures, such as astrology.
- If astrology/onomy are cultures, or complexes of cultures, how do they portray the world?
- In western culture, what is astrology's relationship with the modern world?

Defining Culture

Culture is very difficult to define. As Terry Eagleton, a leading Marxist theorist, wrote,

"Culture" is said to be one of the two or three most complex words in the English language, and the term which is sometimes considered to be its opposite - nature - is commonly awarded the accolade of being the most complex of all.¹

Later in the same book he added,

It is hard to resist the conclusion that the word "culture" is both too broad and too narrow to be greatly useful. Its anthropological meaning covers everything from hairstyles and drinking habits to how to address your husband's second cousin, while the aesthetic sense of the word includes Igor Stravinsky but not science fiction. Science fiction belongs to "mass" or popular culture, a category which floats nebulously between the anthropological and the aesthetic.²

Eagleton concluded that Culture has several main meanings.³

- As civilisation - a grand narrative of human self-development

Then as a response to the failure of the above:

- A utopian critique
- A way of life
- Artistic creation

One of the key modern theorists is **Raymond Williams**. He wrote that in attempting to understand the continuous development of words and language 'I found myself preoccupied by a single word, culture'. He added that 'Culture

¹ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 1.

² Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 32.

³ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, P. 20

is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'.⁴ (Clearly Eagleton was paraphrasing Williams in his similar statement).

He suggests three definitions for the word:

I – Meaning associated with Education (including religion), derived from the 18th century: of a spiritual and aesthetic development.

II - Meaning associated with society, suggested by Herder and Klemm: 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general.'

III – Meaning associated with art: 'culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film.'

(Raymond Williams, *Keywords, A vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp 12, 87, 90).

Clifford Geertz, a noted anthropologist gave a definition of culture which may suit some views of astrology as a symbolic system. He wrote that

Culture is 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form'.⁵

Mary LeCron Foster, former Lecturer in Anthropology at California State University followed Geertz, and argued that

Without symbolism there could be no culture...Culture is not itself formed of symbols, but of the meaning that lies behind and unites symbols. This meaning only exists in the minds of participants in culture, but it is acted out through the manipulation of symbols, which objectify meaning.⁶

Making the debate specific to astronomy and astrology, David Pingree, one of the most notable of modern historians of astrology stated

For the sciences I study are those related to the stars, and they include not only various astral omens, astrology, magic, medicine, and law... All these subjects, I would argue, were or are sciences *within the contexts of the cultures* in which they once flourished or are now practiced.⁷(my italics)

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Keywords, A vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985., p. 25. https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/9573_019598ch01.pdf

⁵ Geertz, Clifford, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in Religion as a Cultural System, in: Banton, Michael P. (ed.): *Anthropological approaches to the study of religion*. London/UK 1966: Tavistock and New York: Frederick A. Praeger Press, 1966, p. 3.

⁶ Mary LeCron Foster, 'Symbolism: The Foundation of Culture', in Tim Ingold (ed.), *The Companion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (London, 1994), pp. 366-95, on p. 366.

⁷ Pingree, David, 'Hellenophilia versus the History of Science', *ISIS* 1991, Vol. 83, p. 554.

Terry Eagleton, on the other hand, is doubtful as to whether scholars in western culture can understand other cultures. His point is that westerners always use their own culture as a baseline for interpreting other cultures. It is now recognised by many anthropologists that anthropology has tended to measure other cultures as, for example, exotic or uncivilised, using western culture as the standard for normality or civilisation. Eagleton used space aliens as an example, and one we may use in view of its relevance to cultural astronomy:

Whatever these empathetic errors, it is true that Western culture shows a lamentable failure to imagine other cultures. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the phenomenon of aliens. What is really sinister about aliens is just how unalien they are. They are dismal testimony to our inability to conceive of life forms radically different from our own. They may have bulbous heads and triangular eyes, speak in a chillingly robotic monotone or emit a strong stench of sulphur, but otherwise they look much like Tony Blair. Creatures capable of travelling for light years turn out to have heads, limbs, eyes and voices. Their spacecraft can navigate black holes but tend to crash in the Nevada desert. Despite being built in galaxies inconceivably remote from us these ships leave ominous burn marks on our soil. Their occupants take a curiously familiar interest in examining human genitals, and tend to deliver vague, waffling messages about the need for world peace, like a UN Secretary-General. They peep into kitchen windows in their inconceivably alien fashion, and take an excited extra-terrestrial interest in false teeth. In fact, as immigration officers might do well to note, creatures with whom we can communicate are by definition not alien. The real aliens are those who have been sitting in our laps for centuries without our noticing.⁸

Eagleton's point is that aliens, as imagined by believers in alien visitation to Earth, are like different versions of humans.

For many people, though, it is obvious what culture consists of. Referring to what he saw as archetypal patterns, the psychologist James Hillman wrote that 'To study human nature at its most basic level, one must turn to culture (mythology, religion, art, architecture, epic, drama, ritual) where these patterns are portrayed'.⁹

Essentialism

'Essentialism' (sometimes known as 'substantialism' or 'universalism') proposes that there is something essential to humanity, or to life in general, which cannot be reduced to context and which may be influenced by, but is not generated by, culture. That is, there is a real underlying 'essence'

⁸ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, pp. 49-50.

⁹ Hillman, James, *Archetypal Psychology* (London, Spring Publications, 2013 [1981]), p. 14..

underpinning the entire world. Culture is a manifestation of this underlying essence or substance.

This essence may consist of the laws of physics. It is sometimes conceived as being psychic or psychological,

The tradition of essentialism in the western world is traced to Plato and his notion that there are 'Ideas' or 'Forms' (later known as 'Archetypes' which underpin all human psychology. Leading modern essentialists in the Platonic tradition include C. G. Jung and religious historians influenced by him, such as Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell.

Essentialism is challenged on a number of grounds. For example, apparently universal phenomena may not be as similar as they seem. Local variations are dominant and challenge the idea that there are universal patterns.

The First Theorists

The notion of culture as 'high' culture, and distinct from nature was articulated by **Matthew Arnold** in his book *Culture and Anarchy*. The material was first published in 1867-8, and then published as book 1869. In the preface, which was added in 1875, Arnold wrote that culture is 'the best which has been thought and said'.¹⁰

E.B. Tylor (1832-1917) is the first great name in anthropology (the study of the anthropos (Greek = man)) and *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871, is one of his two great books, the other being *Anthropology* (1881). It was Tylor who first clearly isolated - in English at least - the concept of culture in its scientific sense, defined it, and constituted it as the core of anthropology:

Culture, or Civilisation, 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.¹¹

Tylor believed culture is acquired by humans as they transcend nature. Culture and nature are therefore fundamentally different.

He also believed that there are universal laws governing human nature and society, and his contribution to the goal of discovering these was to examine the evolution of 'lower tribes' into 'higher nations'. The evolutionary model of cultural development is now unfashionable amongst most anthropologists, who would argue that 'primitive' people possess practices and belief systems which are no more 'primitive' than modern ones, and that modern people have

¹⁰ Matthew Arnold, Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, 1875.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4212>
<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4212/pg4212.html>

¹¹ Tylor, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture*, 3 Vols., New York: Harper Torchbooks 1958 [London: Murray 1871], Vol. I, 'The origins of Culture', p. 1.

similar practices to those of 'primitive' people. The evolutionary model, though, remains popular amongst scientists and other scholars who believe that science is a higher mode of inquiry and understanding than any other, and that all other explanatory models are errors, relics of previous, inadequate and primitive modes of understanding. For example, the survival of astrology in modern western culture is interpreted by some scientists and sceptics as an anachronistic hang-over from primitive cultures.

There have been many critics of Tylor, among who was Walter Taylor. James F. Deetz wrote that,

Of the many definitions of culture put forth since E. B. Tylor, the one I prefer, and find most useful in my work is that of Walter Taylor, in his 1948 *Study of Archaeology*. Taylor sees culture as a mental construct, not directly observable, but understandable through its various objectifications, be it ritual practice, social structure or the material world. It is that set of plans and concepts used by any group, national, ethnic or tribal, to order its existence, to make sense of it, and to come to a happy and effective accommodation of the outside world, social as well as environmental. Certainly it serves an adaptive function, but more than that, for those "psychological encounters" can only come about if there is an underlying coherence to a culture's way of coping with the world.¹²

Cultural Anthropology

In the 19th century culture was often synonymous with race. However, **Franz Boas** (1858-1942) critiqued the notion of race as a meaningless category by demonstrating the influence of environmental factors on physiology in a major study of immigrants to the USA. Boas and his students at Columbia University then established the discipline of Cultural Anthropology.

Cultural Anthropology emphasises a number of central features:

- Cross-cultural comparison: cultures can be understood by comparison with other cultures
 - Holism: the assumption that cultures must be known in their entirety
 - Cultural relativism: each culture can be understood on its own terms
- Social Anthropology:

Social Anthropology

Social Anthropology developed in the UK under **A.R. Radcliffe-Brown** (1881-1955), as a critique of Cultural Anthropology. Radcliffe-Brown argued that:

- The idea of culture is an abstraction, a construction of anthropologists not necessarily related to the complexity of real conditions. Instead,

¹² The Plymouth Colony Archive Project: *Cultural Dimensions of Ethnicity in the Archaeological Record* by James F. Deetz, Keynote Address, 28th Annual Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology, Washington, D.C., 1995
<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/users/deetz/Plymouth/JDeetzmem6.html> Accessed 15 Jan 2008.

anthropologists must therefore study actual social structures – such as family relationships - and human behaviour

Radcliffe-Brown argued that

You cannot have a science of culture. You can study culture only as characteristic of a social system...If you study culture, you are always studying the acts of behaviour of a specific set of persons who are linked by a social structure.¹³

Instead he defined Social Anthropology as follows:

I conceive of social anthropology as the theoretical natural science of human society, that is, the investigation of social phenomena by methods essentially similar to those used in the physical and biological sciences. I am quite willing to call the subject “comparative sociology” if anyone so pleases.¹⁴

The idea of Culture, with a capital ‘C’ doesn’t exist in Social Anthropology. However, many would argue that the difference between cultural and social anthropology now hardly exists.

Culture and Nature

The question of the relationship between culture and nature is inherent in the etymology of culture. The word culture is derived from the Latin *colere*, meaning cultivating, inhabiting, worshipping, protecting nature: husbandry or the tending of natural growth. To cultivate, as an *activity* is therefore to manipulate nature.

Therefore, are astronomy and astrology a means of cultivating the heavens, or of cultivating a relationship with the heavens?

Culture is also related to *cultus* or cult. Do modern astrologers, perhaps, join a cult?

If culture and nature began as synonyms, meaning the same, they then came to be antonyms, with opposite meanings, in Tylor’s work. In the post-modern theory have they become synonyms? Eagleton wrote:

If the word “culture” traces a momentous historical transition, it also encodes a number of key philosophical issues. Within this single term, questions of freedom and determinism, agency and endurance, change and identity, the given and the created, come dimly into focus. If culture means the active tending of natural growth, then it suggests a dialectic

¹³ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *A Natural Science of Society* (Glencoe, ILL, The Free Press, 1957), p. 106.

¹⁴ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe, ILL, The Free Press 1952), p. 189.

between the artificial and the natural, what we do to the world and what it does to us.¹⁵

We can then ask questions such as:

- Is to be cultured to express human nature or to transcend it?
- Is it spontaneous or carefully arranged?
- Is to be cultured to follow rules?

Eagleton continued:

The Idea of Culture' automatically suggests opposition to nature: a 'double refusal' of organic determinism on the one hand and the autonomy of spirit on the other.¹⁶

But there is a paradox. Human beings are natural. Therefore, if human beings are cultured, there must be something in their nature which, as he says 'exceeds and undoes it'.

Therefore culture as a word 'faces both ways'. It suggests a division within ourselves between that within us which constitutes the raw material for refinement, and that which cultivates and refines.¹⁷ Nature then achieves a double meaning both as the stuff of the world and that which encourages the anarchic forces which are the opposite of culture. In this sense, as Eagleton says, 'Culture is thus a matter of self-overcoming as much as self-realisation. If it celebrates the self, it also disciplines it, aesthetic and ascetic together'.¹⁸

Over the last two decades anthropologists have increasingly challenged the culture-nature divide as being a parochial ethnocentric in that it assumes that humans create culture, and through culture they act on nature.

A leading figure in this movement is Phillipe Descola, and his book *Beyond Nature and Culture*.

You will find a useful summary of Descola's ideas here:

<http://somatosphere.net/2013/philippe-descolas-beyond-nature-and-culture.html/>

There are also two useful You Tube videos, if you have the time (for later – this is not a priority for this week):

15 Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 2.

16 Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 4.

17 Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 5.

18 Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 5-6.

Approaches to the Anthropocene: A Conversation with Philippe Descola and Bruno Latour

Oct 11, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDeGaYkhVSo>

How do civilizations distinguish between human and non-human? - Philippe Descola

May 7, 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuzETVSHrUI>

Culture and Civilisation

If we follow the view that culture separates humanity from nature, then culture becomes synonymous with civilisation. These feeds the 19th century views that culture characterises our humanity (i.e., as humans we strive to transcend nature). Culture is a kind of ethical pedagogy, or an ethical theory of education, in which we must be educated and cultivated in order to become good citizens.

And is culture then represented by the individual, or the state, in which we play our part as good citizens, a view Eagleton associates with the German writer Friedrich Schiller.¹⁹ This model can then be seen as an Enlightenment one, a grand narrative in which education brings humanity out of a nasty, brutish, natural condition. It could also, though, be seen as a Romantic idea in which education liberates our true, deeper, selves: under the German Idealist philosophers culture assumed some of its modern meaning as *a way of life*.²⁰ Ideas of culture as the transcendence of nature may therefore draw on both Enlightenment and Romantic philosophies. Eagleton argues that,

The origin of the idea of culture as a distinctive way of life, then is closely bound up with a Romantic anti-colonialist penchant for suppressed 'exotic' societies. The exoticism will resurface in the twentieth century in the primitivist features of modernism, a primitivism which goes hand in hand with the growth of modern cultural anthropology. It will crop up later, this time in postmodern guise, in a romanticising of popular culture, which now plays the expressive, spontaneous, quasi-utopian role which "primitive" cultures had played previously.²¹

Such ideas, Eagleton argues, then lead to a cultural relativism on which all cultures are considered equally valid and, in the sense that 'natural' and 'primitive' cultures are romanticised. This relativism is characteristic of post-modernism. However, he adds this is an essential bias: dissident or minority cultures are romanticised, majority ones castigated: e.g. lesbianism is celebrated, nationalism castigated.²²

¹⁹ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 8.

²⁰ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 12..

²¹ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 12.

²² Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 14.

Culture then becomes plural in the sense that a nation may contain many cultures. For example, sociologists discuss 'Mafia culture' or 'police canteen culture'²³ Others have investigated the culture of Bavaria or Microsoft or the Bushmen.²⁴ (pp. 20-1).

Discussion of such sub-cultures makes it

1. difficult to maintain the notion of culture as a grand narrative of personal or collective improvement and
2. impossible to define any idea of culture as normative – i.e. there is no 'normal' culture against which other cultures may be measured as primitive, exotic or deviant.

In recent years 'identity culture' has become seen as 'a sociable, populist and traditional way of life, characterised by a quality that pervades everything and makes a person feel rooted or at home'.²⁵ Current, and often competing, debates over women's, gay and trans issues which focus on personal identity are then examples of culture as lifestyle.

- An obvious question to ask in relation to such ideas is whether astrology constitutes an identity culture?

Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is said to occur when a dominant culture takes an activity, idea or artefact from a weaker culture and supposedly abuses it by changing it or removing its meaning and context. Astrologers have never been accused of cultural appropriation, but what happens when western astrologers adapt or invent forms of, say, Australian Aboriginal or Native American astrology?

Culture and Nature: The Ontological Turn

The Ontological Turn is the name given to a movement in anthropology which seeks to transform our understanding of the relationship between culture and nature. The standard position regards nature as constant and objective and culture as taking a variety of positions to nature. The ontological turn regards nature as also changeable. This does not mean that the laws of physics, as they operate in our world are denied (for example, if you drop a stone, it falls to the ground). What it does mean is that different cultures – and different species – experience the world in such completely different ways that they effectively live in different worlds.

²³ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 15.

²⁴ Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, pp. 20-1.

²⁵ Hartman Geoffrey, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, New York 1997, p. 211, cited in Eagleton, *Culture*, p. 26.

For example, in modern western culture it is usually assumed that people and objects have no direct connection. However, anthropologists have observed that in many cultures objects and people are connected through their physical, psychic or spiritual natures. Although anthropologists have never studied such ideas in relation to western astrology, they are central to western astrology (as too other astrologies, such as Indian). The nature occupied by astrologers is therefore not the same as that occupied by, say, western astronomers.

Instead of speaking of 'world views' in which people view a constant world differently, we may therefore speak of different 'worlds'

There are also implications for cultural relativism, which assumes that different cultures can have different but equal views about nature. However, if nature is not constant then cultural relativism has no meaning,

Reading on line:

Heywood, Paulo, 'The Ontological Turn', *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*, 2017,
<http://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ontological-turn>

Holbraad, Martin and Morten Axel Pedersen and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 'The politics of ontology: anthropological positions'. *Cultural Anthropology*, 2014 (available on-line: <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/462-the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions>.)

Sahlins, Marshall, The Western Illusion of Human Nature, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Vol 45 iss 3 (Summer 2006): 454-483,420.
 Open Access via the University Library

Peterson, Nicolas, 'Is the Aboriginal Landscape Sentient? Animism, the New Animism and the Warlpiri', *Oceania*, Vol. 81 no 2, (Jul 2011): 167-179.

Books

Descola, Phillipe, *The Ecology of Others* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2013)

This is a short introduction – highly recommended.

Descola, Phillipe, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University Press, 2013).

Holbraad, Martin and Morten Axel Pedersen. 2017. *The Ontological Turn: an Anthropological Exposition* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017)

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds*,

Popular Culture and Cultural Studies

Suggested reading: Paola Pugliatti, 'People and the Popular, Culture and the Cultural', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, no. 2 (2013), pp. 19-42, is available through the University library

Theorists of popular culture have tended to avoid the 'esoteric', 'supernatural' and 'superstitious', within which most of them would class astrology, even though some are now considering religion.

As a discipline, Cultural Studies tends to be influenced by the Marxist notion that popular culture is a means by which political elites maintain their power by feeding the masses a diet of consumerism and glamour which distracts them from their revolutionary potential. The belief that elites maintain their power not by force or terror but by manipulating culture was devised by the Italian Marxist **Antonio Gramsci** and is known as 'hegemony' (meaning leadership or power).

These ideas also owe much to the German sociologist, **Theodor Adorno** (1903-69). In his work *The Stars Down to Earth*, Adorno bitterly attacked belief in astrology as an indicator of fascist sympathies.²⁶ His argument was that people who suspend power of their lives to the stars are equally likely to suspend power over their lives to fascist dictators.

Together with Max Horkheimer, Adorno coined the term '**culture industry**'. The culture industry produces such products as movies, fashion clothes and pop music to lull people into obedience to the ruling class. The existence of such products means that the ruling class does not need to oppress people through the police or secret police. Instead it maintains its power through cultural hegemony – the control of cultural power. Adorno claimed that horoscope columns are part of the culture industry, in that they disseminate a false narrative that takes people away from the correct understanding of their political oppression, and therefore prevents them from challenging their oppression.

In Strinati's summary,

The culture industry deals in falsehoods, not truths, in false needs and false solutions, rather than real needs and real solutions. It solves problems 'only in appearance', not as they should be resolved in the real world...The power of the culture industry to secure the dominance and continuity of capitalism resides, for Adorno, in its capacity to shape and perpetuate a 'regressive' audience, a dependent, passive, and servile consuming public.²⁷

The academic discipline of Cultural Studies originated with the sociologist **Richard Hoggart**, who founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK, in 1964, and was its Director to 1968. He

²⁶ Adorno, Theodor, *The Stars Down to Earth*, London: Routledge 1994 [1953],

²⁷ Strinati, Dominic, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London: Routledge 1995, p. 64.

was also Assistant Director General UNESCO from 1971-5. His major book, *The Uses of Literacy*, published in 1957, dealt with the culture industry. It was critical of the idea that authentic/working class popular culture had declined in the face of the mass culture produced by the 'culture industry' (e.g. television). Hoggart believed in the authenticity of working class popular culture and was hostile to imported culture, of which a main example was the export of American popular culture to the rest of the world).

The seminal figure in the development of the discipline in the UK in recent decades is **Stuart Hall** (1932-2014).²⁸ In 1964 Hall joined the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and became the director in 1968, replacing Richard Hoggart. Hall's standard work is not available on line:

Hall, Stuart. 'Cultural Studies: two paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, 1980, Vol. 2, pp. 57-72.

A full bibliography is on line at

http://archive.org/stream/CultureStudies/stuarthall_djvu.txt

Drawing on Theodore Adorno, (who was a bitter critic of astrology) and Antonio Gramsci, Hall

1. saw culture as an 'industry' in which people are both producers and consumers
2. argued that meaning is negotiated between the intent of the producer and the social and class identity of the consumer; there are therefore no identifiable fixed meanings.
3. developed the notion of encoding and decoding: messages may be encoded into cultural products by the hegemonic powers, but people themselves decode them in ways which may not be intended by the encoders.
4. rejected Hoggart's notion of authenticity in culture.
5. believed that all cultures are mixed and that mixed cultures can be valuable.
6. was influential in developing notions of culture as a theatre of resistance – as a means for the working class to resist hegemony.

Following Hall, according to Gordon Lynch, there are now three key ways in which 'popular culture' has been defined in relation to a cultural; 'other':

1. popular culture as an opposing cultural form to *high culture* or the *avant garde*.
2. popular culture as a category that is defined in relation to both *high culture* and *folk culture*, or which is seen as displacing *folk culture*.

²⁸ Hall, Stuart. 'Cultural Studies: two paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, 1980, Vol. 2, pp. 57-72

Hall, S., 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London: Routledge, 1981.

3. popular culture as a form of social and cultural resistance against *dominant culture* or *mass culture*.²⁹

There has been a debate about the extent to which the discipline of cultural studies is postmodern in that it prioritises the interpretation of texts at the expense of statements about real conditions in society.³⁰

Reading about Hall's theories

Peck, Janice, 'Itinerary of a Thought: Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies, and the Unresolved Problem of the Relation of Culture to "Not Culture"', *Cultural Critique*, No. 48 (Spring, 2001), pp. 200-249
JSTOR

Barker, David and Bernard Timberg, 'The Evolution of Encoding Research', *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Close Studies of Television: Encoding Research (Summer 1989), pp. 3-14
JSTOR

Questions to ask about astrology:

- Is popular astrology a product of the culture industry produced by hegemonic powers which keeps the masses enslaved (Adorno)?
- Is popular astrology a product of the culture industry which enables a form of resistance to a scientific/religious hegemony which is hostile to it?
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Or do both those questions refer to horoscope columns?

- Is 'serious' astrology a form of resistance to a scientific/religious hegemony which is hostile to it, but which should be seen as a cosmology which predates modern science and monotheistic religion?

Popular culture reading

One useful article is:

Morgan, David, 'Studying Religion and Popular Culture: Prospects, Presuppositions, Procedures', in Lynch, Gordon (ed.), *Between Sacred and Profane: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, London: I.B. Tauris 2007, pp. 21-33.

Sub-Culture and Counter Culture

The idea of a **sub-culture** developed in the 1950s as a means of understanding youth and delinquent cultures. The term suggests a culture

²⁹ Lynch, Gordon, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell 2005, p. 3.

³⁰ Wood, Brennon 'Stuart Hall's Cultural Studies and the Problem of Hegemony', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Sep., 1998), pp. 399-414.
JSTOR

buried within a culture. This was refined into the idea of a culture which emerges in opposition to mainstream culture. The notion of a counter culture finds its origins in J. Milton Yinger's use of the word 'Contraculture'.³¹

The term '**counter culture**' was popularised by Theodore Roszak in 1969.³² Theodore Roszak, After Roszak's book it was common to describe the student protest/hippy culture of the 1960s as 'the' counter-culture'. By the 1980s it was common to talk about many counter-cultures, and a 'counter culture' consists of any group of people who self-consciously set themselves up in opposition to what they perceive as mainstream or dominant culture.

- We could ask whether astrology in the west constitutes a counter culture or a sub-culture, or whether it contains sub-cultures.

Theories of Cultural Exchange

1. Acculturation

- the result of the encounter between two cultures
- typically in the modern world through colonialism
- usually seen as one culture absorbing another
- for example, a colonised culture takes on the attributes of the colonial one.
- For example, Britain exports British ideas and fashions to India.
- We might consider the way in which western scientific astronomy has taken over the world; or the export of the western horoscope column to India and Southeast Asia

2. Transculturation

The theory was named by Fernando Ortiz, 1940. Ortiz wrote that

I have chosen the word **transculturation** to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.³³

³¹ J. Milton Yinger, 'Contraculture and Subculture', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, no 5 (October 1960), pp. 625-35.

³² Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the technocratic society and its youthful opposition*, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969

³³ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onis, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. p. 98

http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/s/a/sam50/readings521/ORTIZ_Counter-Engl.pdf

- Two cultures merge or mutually interact, influence each other and perhaps produce a third culture.
 - For example India exports fashions and religious ideas to Britain.
 - Explanations for transcultural phenomena may include
 - Cognitive, e.g. the human brain is hard-wired to produce similar perceptions regardless of cultural context)
 - Essentialist, e.g. patterns exist both within the human psyche and in life itself which generate ideas, models, beliefs, and experiences that infuse and shape cultures, rather than cultures generating ideas). (See Plato, week 2).
 - 'Intertextuality' – the subtle influence of texts on other texts
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- We might consider the exchange of astrological traditions between the west and India – or other cultural exchanges. For example, Britain exported its language and political institutions to India, and India exported religious and philosophical practices and ideas such as Buddhism, karma and reincarnation to Britain. British national food includes such as adapted India dishes as Chicken Tikka Masala