

Culture & Civilization: A Dialectical Relationship

Chatzipanagiotou Dimitrios
(University of Patras, Greece)

Abstract: This article aims to clarify the conceptual dimension between two concepts, civilization and culture. The reason for this reflection is based on the concept of interculturalism, a concept that contains as a key component, not only etymologically but also conceptually, the word “civilization”. Initially, the content of the concept of culture is approached with the dimension of time and at the same time it is sought to demonstrate the ideological frame, through the approach of various theories. Next, the conceptual dimensions of civilization are highlighted, in order to demonstrate precisely this dialectical relationship of the two concepts, a relationship that often provokes different approaches.

Key words: civilization, culture, relationship

In recent years, in the midst of complex political, economic and social changes at Greek and global level, the debate on interculturalism, its meanings and its contribution to the new structure of human societies has taken on great proportions and has occupied various places of the scientist, as indicatively of Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Linguistics, Pedagogy. This reflection is obviously not one-dimensional and depends on various parameters, such as — indicatively — on the ideologies, interests and goals of the interlocutors; for this reason, a strictly delimited and specific conceptual system cannot be adopted, presenting some universally accepted theoretical views on the issue of interculturalism.

Initially, any attempt to explore the concept of interculturalism, and therefore any conceptual attempt to approach the term “intercultural skill”, involves the word civilization; after all, the etymological view of the term — “through” + “civilization” — requires such action. Along with the above-mentioned term, the word culture has been introduced — and even more widely used — in modern Greek, which, as is easily understood by users of modern Greek, lacks derivatives; the question that arises is whether the Greek adjective “cultural” is identical with the English, German and French derivatives of the word culture (kulturell, cultural). Investigating, therefore, the conceptual correlation of the above two concepts — civilization and culture, it appears that this relationship is directly or indirectly related to important events, phenomena and processes that determined the social and political history of Europe.

Based on the above reflection, as early as the 15th and 16th centuries the words “civilize-civilized” are found in English and respectively “civilizer-civilize” in the French language which are etymologically derived from the third-person noun of the Latin language civis (civis in the general case), which means citizen and patriot. These

Chatzipanagiotou Dimitrios, Ph.D., Philologist, Teacher in a Senior High School, University of Patras. E-mail: hatzipanagio@gmail.com.

expressions, together with the corresponding derivatives in English and French “civility-civilite”, meaning decency and courtesy, are currently used by the upper class and royal families to denote, as preached or even they supposed, their inherent superiority over the rest of the social pyramid (Vourtsis, 1999).

Gradually, however, in the Age of Enlightenment, there was a strong criticism, mainly by intellectuals, of the aforementioned dominant social class, which now led to the creation and establishment of a new noun, civilization; a new way of studying and approaching human events. More specifically, “civilization” at this time in Europe is the multifaceted — indicatively we refer to the level of ethics, various sciences and society — course of progress of humanity towards perfection, which is realized by the development and adoption of knowledge and science and by “supervision-guidance” of correct speech (according to Aristotelian optics), the Logic. It is, in other words, the unwavering belief in the ability of man to improve any problematic situation. This notion of civilization as has been analyzed, was the intellectual arsenal of the European Enlightenment that eventually led to the French Revolution, but also of the Greek Enlightenment that formed the ideological socio-political frame of the 1821 revolution.

At about the same time in England and Germany, the German word *Kultur* is used, derived from the Latin verb *colo* (*colo-colui-cultum-colere*), which means to cultivate, heal, work; but it was used figuratively by the most famous Latin orator, Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero), as *cultura animi*, i.e., cultivation of the soul, and by the humanists R. Bacon (1215–1294) and T. Moor (1478–1535) as *cultura intellicti*, i.e., cultivation of the mind (Straub, 2007). Thus, with the last meaning of this culture, the term culture is now introduced in the 18th century in the rising social class of the bourgeois intellectuals (in German *Bildungsbürgertum*).

In Germany, then, intellectuals find refuge in spiritual values (in whatever art form they crystallize), thus capturing their own cultural stigma and ideal in the sense of culture; at the same time they express the radical opposition between true virtue, education and in the inner wealth on the one hand and on the petty, superficial and derived nobility on the other, as argued by the distinguished British critic, intellectual and theorist of Literature Terry Eagleton (Eagleton, 2001).

In support of the above, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), German philosopher, theologian, poet, establishes a more radical semantic approach to culture; techniques and knowledge, therefore the set of elements that constitute the distinct cultural identity of a people, a nation, a community, a race and an era (Fisch, 1992, p. 679). After all, he strongly influenced the artistic movement of Romanticism in Europe, which is considered as a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, insisting on emotion, imagination, nature, community and popular tradition.

After all, from this connection of place and culture came the notion of nation/state as a new form of organization of people and legally led to the idea that every nation and every cultural community is entitled to be a political entity (Vourtsis I., Manakidou E. et al., 1999). Thus, because of Herder’s view of peculiarity, of diversity in manners and customs, but also of the multifaceted dimension of the human species, “pluralism” — if we can misuse this terminology — that is, the perception, is now established that there are many local cultures. These ideas had another consequence; they influenced the given time period and the development of “historicism”, that is, the perception that each historical era is an autonomous cultural unit, resulting, due to the continuity of time, the development of evolution. It is now accepted that culture and civilization are represented by the cultural superiority of Europeans, which led to the strong development of European ethnocentrism, which mutated into colonial expansion in Asia and Africa. In other words, Herder’s conception of “many and different cultures”, based on different temperaments, was used as an ideological basis to support the moral and spiritual superiority of

the white race, to cultivate racial prejudices and a sense of racial superiority. of Europeans, and consequently to serve the colonial movement. At that time, after all, the British invoked the white man's burden, the French invoked their cultural mission (mission civilisatrice), while similar reports with strong signs of messianism and national mission were made by the Germans and Belgians.

It is worth noting at this point that the main representatives of Romanticism — for example, the German philosopher, theologian and poet Johann Gottfried von Herder — are highly critical of industrialization. The notion of the essential role of art and spiritual culture in general as a response to the diverse sufferings of industrial society and the notion of the gap caused by the latter between man and nature was widely accepted and led around 1850 to the gradual conceptual separation of the notions of civilization and culture. The consequence of all the above is that civilization is understood as scientific, technological and industrial progress, while culture is conceptually defined as aesthetic and spiritual cultivation, an antidote to the social conflicts of industrial society, with all the negative meanings.

In order to demonstrate the conceptual, semantic and scientific scope of the above terms, two researchers in Cultural Studies, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, from the early 1950s, have sampled over one hundred and sixty definitions and made an attempt to categorize them. We make a rough reference below: To descriptors, that is, those who reflect culture as a whole of social life, to historians, who regard it, that is, as a legacy inherited successively to the next generation, to “regulators”, who claim that culture is a strictly geodetic lifestyle that catalyzes the formation of a specific behavioral framework and offers the value code without any reference to personal human behaviors. Another category is psychological definitions, which consider culture to be a means of resolving differences and through which people can communicate, learn or satisfy their diverse needs; there are also genetic definitions that overemphasize the birth process of a culture and approach as a product of human interaction, feedback and its continuation through the transmission of data from one generation to another (Kroeber A. & Kluckhohn C., 1952).

Additional divisions, classifications, and categorizations were made by other researchers. Indicatively, the ethnologist Cushe (Cuche D., 2001, p. 23) points out two main trends in the scientific discussion of culture: The ecumenical/unifying and the divisive/differential conception of culture. The first concept is marked by the idea of the total unity of the human species and the second by the realization of diversity. These two concepts form the basis of the two ways of defining the concepts of culture and civilization in the Anthropological Sciences. Another classification of theories that analyze the concept of “culture” are the so-called micro-theories and macro-theories (Smith P., 2006, p. 10) which are related to the approach of culture as a semantic system and its relation to the general human action. According to this analysis, some researchers argue for the restrictive role of culture in human action, while others believe that the opposite is true, that is, they point to its ability to make this action possible.

Indicatively, the list of these theories includes the theory of Symbolic Interaction, the theory of Phenomenology and that of Ethnomethodology which give priority to the individual, while on the contrary the theories of Neo-Marxism, Functionalism and Doctrism emphasize the culture as a semantic system that regulates the action of subjects subjects (Smith P., 2006, p. 107). Indicatively we mention that Phenomenology has been greatly influenced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who advocated that, in order to understand both the real and the abstract world, we must not have as a starting point the comprehensible elements of experiences, but we must first analyze and process the components of these elements. He also believed that the human perceptual process has many stages, beginning with the senses, after transforming it into a mental image,

and as the last stage we consider the rendering of meaning. In conclusion, Phenomenology catalyzed, so that even everyday life is considered in cultural research as an equally important scientific field and culture is interpreted as an innate and catalytic element of action, which emerges and emerges from it and not as a sealed system which does not interact with her.

The approach of culture as a form of interaction contains some basic characteristics that can be roughly summed up as follows: People as intelligent and social beings are distinguished for their own sociability, they have direct awareness and experience of situations. At the same time, those individuals who have the ability to manage the relationships between them shape the social order, while the analysis of the functioning of society requires special methodological approaches that will determine social becoming through the conceptual approach of actors (Smith P., 2006). The expression of this view and the inspirer of the theory of symbolic interaction is the American sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900–1987), who believed that people are connected not only with each other but also with objects on the basis of common meanings, that individuals create social reality through collective and individual action and how the meaning of the various objects arises reasonably through the ways and perspectives that each is associated with the rest of his fellow human beings. Blumer's approach was influenced by the work of the philosopher, sociologist and psychologist G. H. Mead (1863–1931) — after all, Blumer was one of his most outspoken supporters — who emphasized the importance of the sense of self in human relations, development of the self and the objectivity of the world within the social sphere and believed that the individual mind can only exist in relation to other minds with common meanings.

An important scholar and theorist of the concept of culture and an emblematic representative of its universal view was the founder of British Anthropology, Edward Tylor (1832–1917), who gave the term culture a more neutral meaning, as something that refers to humanity in general. He argued, in other words, that the contribution of every people to the progress of culture is a reality and cannot be disputed. He was the first ethnologist to study cultural characteristics with a general and systematic approach, insisting on the study of culture in all types of society, giving the most special weight to the term "culture" and studying all its aspects and manifestations. He argued, in fact, that there was no difference in nature between the primitive and the civilized, but merely identified a difference in the degree of progress in the course of culture (Kroeber A. & Kluckhohn C., 1952).

Influenced directly by Tylor, American anthropologist Franz Boas argued that the fundamental difference between human groups is primarily a matter of cultural rather than racial approach. After conducting direct observational research and adopting statistical science as a valuable tool, he demonstrated in a study of an immigrant population in the United States the real change in human morphological characteristics due to the impact of the new environment; characteristics nor racial traits in behavior, but there are only differences in culture, which are acquired and not innate (Cuche, 2001). Consequently, Boas sought to attribute the difference and fundamental difference between human groups at the level of cultural rather than racial order.

Another conceptual, semantic, and scientific approach to culture is one that explores the ways and means by which human beings adopt, integrate, and experience their culture. So, starting from the assumption that every culture determines, or even imposes, a common way of behaving in all the people who take part in it, anthropologists and sociologists try to analyze the way in which culture manifests itself in individuals. With the help of Psychology and Psychoanalysis, the influence of culture on the individual is investigated, as well as the individual's reaction to culture. In particular, according to the above view, culture is considered as a homogeneous and coherent whole which seeks to be in complete unanimity with the goals it has set from the beginning and which are implemented by individuals mainly through the pedagogical institutions, which determine the strict

framework of action of individual behaviors in accordance with the dominant values inherent in the specific culture (Cuche, 2001, p. 64). What ultimately defines a culture is not the presence of specific features, but its overall orientation in this or that direction, “towards the more or less coherent model of thought and action” (Cuche, 2001, p. 65). In this way each culture imposes on individuals a specific model/framework of action for all aspects and aspects of life.

Margaret Mead, an American cultural anthropologist of the last century, investigating how a person perceives his culture and what influence the latter has on the formation of his personality, concluded that it is not interpreted by the specific biological features, but by the a special “cultural model” of a society, which also delimits the education of the child. Anthropologists interpret this process as civilization (German *Enkulturation*) (Raithel J., Dollinger B. & Hörmann G., 2009) and believe in the direct correlation between the formation of each personality, the imposed cultural model and upbringing. They themselves emphasize the alternating relationship — according to Aristotelian philosophy, that is, the point at which personality and culture “meet” conceptually. In other words, they investigated the method according to which the personality is formed through “primary institutions”, such as the family and the educational system. But also how, by contrast, each individual may be inconsistent with the culture of the group, creating “secondary institutions”, i.e., frameworks of differentiated values and attitudes, which can oppose or even nullify the primary institutions, contributing to change. and in the evolution of the culture status quo.

With the influence of structure or structuralism (from the corresponding English and French terms), that is, the theory that advocates how man can be perceived only through a network of symbolic relations — structures in which he participates without realizing it, culture is now considered a system structured like language. A pioneer in this approach was the French anthropologist and one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century, a pioneer of constructionism as a method of understanding human society and culture, Claude Levi-Strauss or Claude Levi-Strauss. He interprets cultural diversity through the unconscious categories and structures of the human spirit and demonstrated the independence of culture and the autonomous elements of cultural systems, as well as how they function by their own logic and norms, just like the language systems. According to Claude Levi-Strauss, in order to be able to understand and interpret culture, we must approach it behind its obvious meanings and emphasis. His views have come under fire for focusing mainly on the absence of individual reflection and also on his reference to a society that “behaves” mainly in functional terms, i.e., as a field of mobility, sociability and exchange, rather than a field of conflict and sovereignty (Smith, 2006).

Jürgen Habermas (1929), the principal successor of the Frankfurt School, sought the conditions for the development of a critical social theory for successful emancipation and saw society as a network of communication exchanges that lead — under certain conditions — to meeting the expectations of those who participate. they. Using the terms “biocosm” (meaning socio-political extensions) and “system” (with an economic-political meaning that often subjugates the biocosm), Habermas eloquently captures contemporary reality and considers culture — which is one of his fields of biocosm together with personality and society and identify every human action — is the vehicle through which individuals give meaning and interpret the world around them (Habermas J, 1997).

The French philosopher, sociologist and social scientist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) holds a remarkable position in the scientific discussion and investigation regarding culture. His research interests are found in various fields of science, such as education, popular culture, and the arts, while at the same time he developed many theoretical concepts that proved applicable in various fields of social research, such as reflective sociology, the six,

the cultural capital and the field; all these aforementioned conceptual contents are considered valuable for approaching the concept of culture. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital plays an important role in maintaining social inequalities, because social elites distinguish between the important and the commonplace and determine which cultural capital is acceptable and which is not, which has value and which does not. He further argues that cultural capital, as opposed to economic and social capital, takes a long time to conquer and is deeply ingrained in everyone's subconscious, which reasonably means that it does not change reasonably and may stand in the way of society's mobility (Smith, 2006, p. 219). It also addresses many key issues, such as highlighting the autonomous role of culture through cultural conflicts and intersections and the relationship between culture and the subject of action. In addition, his references to the *habitude*, to the way of life, as well as to the cultural capital contribute more deeply to the understanding of the conceptual breadth of culture.

In the postmodern era, although the term postmodernism is not universally accepted, it is now referred to as a stage of social development after modernism, with the main features being the post-industrial economy, structured mainly around services in the financial sector, tourism, consumption of cultural products, technology, and information technology. In this social context, Baudrillard argues that consumption is now also a class of meanings, such as language or kinship in historically earlier social entities (Baudrillard J., 2001). Legally, this challenges the most basic distinctions on which society and cultural thought are based, considering that the differences between culture and reality, between the signifier and the signified, no longer make sense.

In the Greek reality, on the other hand, the word culture is a linguistic loan which lacks derivatives, with the exception of the diminutives meaning "cultural" and "cultural". As recorded by G. Babiniotis in an article in a Sunday newspaper, the word culture was included in the Greek vocabulary in 1806 by Adamantios Korais, in order to render in Greek the corresponding French word, "civilization". In general, the word culture in the Greek language has not been systematically processed and applied, something that is evident from the lack of derivatives, as noted above. In conclusion, the term culture was rejected by most as a very narrow concept and thus the word civilization was introduced, which is given a broader meaning that encompasses both meanings (Babiniotis G., 2002, pp. 1441–1442). The management of these concepts in modern Greek can be problematic in practice, but it can also be seen differently, that is, from the positive dimension. The main practical problem, however, is that it becomes difficult to use semantic and distinguish foreign cultural definitions. In addition, there is confusion, as in many European languages the word civilization has been established to be associated with the material, technical and spiritual achievements of a nation, people or a particular social entity (indicatively we mention ancient Greek civilization or Aztec civilization, etc.) and is separated from the concept of culture which is mainly understood as a way of life. Thus, when using the term civilization in the Greek language, sometimes the conceptual meanings of civilization and sometimes those of culture are attributed to the concept.

For the concept of civilization, its analogy with an iceberg is very convenient. In particular, the interpretation of the concept "civilization" depends on the part of the "iceberg" that we deal with each time. Primarily, an abusively considered elitist approach to culture based mainly on the analysis of the products of art and science, including literature, painting, music, philosophy, etc. On the other hand, there is the approach to the civilization of everyday life, the which is demonstrated by everything we use in our daily lives, by our actions, by the way we think, feel and appreciate what we have in our possession and by the ways in which others differ from us.

One of the most comprehensive, concise and semantically structured definitions of civilization is that of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2007, p. 12), which interprets it as the "set of distinct spiritual, material, mental and emotional characteristics of a society or a social group ... [which includes] in addition to art and literature, way of

life, ways of coexistence, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. Reasonably, then, the theories and views that have been formed and supported about civilization/culture can be characterized as a living grid that constantly connects traditional and modern theoretical currents in an environment of constant reflection, which allows different readings, unpredictable developments, small and large epistemological sections and sequels [...] a range of various theories, which, however, revolve around the common axis of the study of practices and products, intangibles and materials, produced and produced by individuals and collective subjects (Boumbaris, 2006, p. 10).

Finally, the concepts of culture and civilization even today are often not conceptually separated, confusion is created and two tendencies are formed. The first argues that the contradictory approach to concepts is unnecessary and that values, morals and art are impossible to disconnect from knowledge, techniques and technology. The second argues that the two words may reflect the same basic conceptual content, but are not identical, as the word culture has more of a reference to individual progress, while the word civilization has a collective scope.

References

- Baudrillard J. (2001). *Das System der Dinge: Über unser Verhältnis zu den alltäglichen Gegenständen*, Frankfurt/N.Y.
- Cuche D. (2001). *Η έννοια της κουλτούρας στις κοινωνικές επιστήμες*, Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω.
- Eagleton T. (2001). *Was ist Kultur?*, München.
- Fisch J. (1992). “Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland”, Στο J. Fisch, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Stuttgart, pp. 679–774.
- Habermas J. (1997). *Η Ηθική της επικοινωνίας*, Αθήνα: Εναλλακτικές εκδόσεις.
- Kroeber A. and Kluckhohn C. (1952). *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, New York.
- Lázár I. et al. (2007). *Developing and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Guide for Language Teachers and Teacher Educators, Languages for Social Cohesion*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Raithel J., Dollinger B. and Hörmann G. (2009). *Einführung Pädagogik*, Wiesbaden.
- Smith P. (2006). *Πολιτισμική θεωρία*, Αθήνα: Κριτική.
- Straub J. (2007). *Handbuch interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kompetenz*, Stuttgart, Weimar.
- UNESCO (2007). *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, Paris: UNESCO.
- Βούρτσης Ι. and Μανακίδου Ε. κ. ά. (1999). *Εισαγωγή στον Ελληνικό Πολιτισμό: Η Έννοια του Πολιτισμού, Όψεις του Ελληνικού Πολιτισμού*, τ. Α. Πάτρα: ΕΑΠ.
- Βούρτσης Ι. Μ. (1999). *Εισαγωγή στον Ελληνικό Πολιτισμό: Η έννοια του Πολιτισμού, Όψεις του ελληνικού Πολιτισμού*, τ.Α'. Πάτρα: Ε.Α.Π.
- Μπαμπινιώτης Γ. (2002). *Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας*, Αθήνα: Κέντρο Λεξικολογίας.
- Μπουμπάρης Ν. (2006). “Εισαγωγή στην Ελληνική έκδοση”, Στο: Smith P., *Πολιτισμική Θεωρία, Μια εισαγωγή*, Αθήνα: Κριτική.