3.
The Metamorphosis of Culture

3.1.
Introduction

The idea of culture as an academic concept has metamorphosed since scholarly journals started hosting discussions about it in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the beginning, the concept operated in a discursive formation whose boundaries were constituted through opposing extremes. Usually taking the form of dichotomies, these extremes framed debates, for instance, about the content of culture, the methodologies applied to understand it, and the adequate disciplines that could claim it as its legitimate object of study. One could find a variety of suppositions about what culture was. However, by the middle of the twentieth century these extremes gave place to a relatively stable definition of culture as a pattern of behavior shared by a group of people in a specific geographical area delimited by State frontiers.

The main goal of this chapter is to describe the process through which this homogeneity was achieved, beginning with a brief presentation of the different brands of evolutionist theories that marked the thinking of culture in its "scientific" inception. This evolutionist gaze is then related to the omnipresent dichotomies that constituted the assertions about culture in the period: culture versus environment, culture versus race, culture versus individual. I argue that these debates orbited around the gravitational center of evolutionist theory and created the conditions of possibility for later culture area-based renderings of cultural phenomena. In turn, these renderings institutionalized the notion of patterns as a conceptual innovation applied to deal with culture as a scientific object. As I intend to demonstrate,

these novelties were essential to the emergence of the concept of configuration and the substitution of anachronous by synchronic approaches in the treatment of culture. Hence, the universal linear time that encapsulated earlier interpretations about culture gave place to the perception that different cultures belonged to particular spaces and should be studied according to the specific configurations that animated them. Ultimately, this movement completed what was necessary to authorize the treatment of culture as sovietologists applied it in the description of the Soviet Union.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section Two presents a brief summary of the repercussions of biological evolutionist theory in the social sciences as the backdrop within which the academic treatment of culture took over. Describing the anthropological evolutionist theory exposes the constraining character of this "selective adaptation" of a biological theory to the humanities. Section Three explores the dichotomies that constituted culture as a discursive formation and which are coterminous with the institutionalization of the social sciences. The transition from diachronic to synchronic approaches and the increasing number of statements to cope with the cultural phenomena are presented. This section also focuses on the political implications of an ideology that I consider extremely important to the understanding of why some of these statements were left behind: racism. Section Four elaborates the concept of culture pattern by emphasizing its synchronic and spatialized nature, as well as its dependency on the presupposition that a configuration animates its cultural totality. The political implications of fascism are also considered to explain why this rendering of culture became so preeminent. Section Five summarizes the main ideas presented in this chapter and paves the way for the next.

3.2.
Evolutionism and Culture

According to Barnard (2004, p. 15), anthropology emerged as an academic field in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Darwin's evolutionist theory sparked public interest in its potential to explain variations in the human species. However, as Kuper (2003) emphasizes, the

first reaction to Darwin's work was marked by only partial acceptance of his ideas. The monogenesis thesis statement that all different races came from the same ancestry (apes) was endorsed, but the mechanism of natural selection that propelled evolution was rejected. This halfhearted adherence to biological evolutionism was due to the accidental character of natural selection, which imposed constrains on the belief that evolution was based on progress and had a clear direction that, in turn, played an important role in maintaining Europe and its descendents as the leading group in the evolutionary process. In an attempt to preserve this assumption of racial privilege, Darwin later wrote that the stages of development in the human species could be traced through the different brain sizes amongst races, which would indicate the level of intellectual specialization Ross (2003, p. 359). This explanation of the assumed difference, then, was based in the notion of physical attributes of members of the same (human) species.

Simultaneously, Tylor offered the first account of difference among groups of humans based on the tenet of unequal cultural stages of development. Two notions, Unitarianism and the concept of survivors, buttressed Tylor's evolutionist theory (Moore, 2009, p. 9). Unitarianism is the belief that all human minds work in the same way, irrespective of racial characteristics or geographic location. It means that, "since human mental processes are universal, human societies have developed culture along similar trajectories, characterized by progress and expressed in the evolution of culture " (Moore, 2009, p. 10). However, this process of evolution does not occur at the same pace among different societies. This feature becomes clear, Tylor's evolutionist theory contended, when one realizes that vestiges of old cultural practices of western society can be found functioning at full-maturity in others. These vestiges are the "survivors", and they work as empirical data to establish a hierarchy between cultures. Obviously, the backdrop for this assertion is the notion that progress, understood as the correct use of technology to solve human problems, is the main principle applied to categorize levels of development. Hence, "just as specific cultural traits may be vestigial survivals of an earlier culture, entire societies may reflect earlier stages of human evolution" (Moore, 2009, p. 13). Tylor's

ordering of different cultures was based on the universal "law of the world" -- the capacity to adapt nature to satisfy man's needs -- which allows for the identification of three different types of societies: the savages, the barbarians and the modern educated nations (civilized).

The début of Darwin's evolutionist theory in studies about culture reflects the definite end of the debate during the first half of the nineteenth century opposing monogenesis and polygenesis. Both Darwin and Tylor accepted monogenesis, which implied the potential equality of all members of the species and the denial that races belonged to different human "sub-species." This apparent consensus authorized Chamberlain to begin his paper, published in 1906, with the assertion that the "anthropological investigations of the last thirty years have demonstrated the psychic unity of the human race" (Chamberlain, 1906, p. 115). Trust in monogenesis overemphasized temporal evolutionary schemes. Its most important consequence was therefore to neglect the spatial dimension. Tylor's undistinguished treatment of culture and civilization illustrates the point well. While in France and England the illuminist idea of progress united scholars around the study of universal evolution (civilization), German scholars were worried about the particularities of their way of life (culture)(Kuper, 2003, p. 359-360). According to Tylor's famous and often quoted definition, "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 *apud* Moore, 2009, p. 5). In juxtaposing civilization and culture, Tylor privileges one dimension of time which then serves as a standard to measure how groups of human beings are to be located in a scale of evolution.

Giddings' (1903) paper on the economic significance of culture is a good illustration of how Tylor's evolutionist scheme was applied. The author sought to answer whether "culture (was) an offshoot of industry, or has industry been evolved from culture?" (Giddings, 1903, p. 450). He concludes that culture precedes industry and, hence, that economic theories should pay more attention to the fact that before production – the main object of analysis

of classical economics – there is a long cultural evolutionary history of consumption. His main argument revolves around modern industry's dependence on scientific knowledge and technical skill. According to him, its origins could be traced back "into a maze of religious ceremonies and beliefs, back into the world of animistic ideas, and then yet farther back to those earliest forms of mimicry, of which language and manners were born." These earliest forms are allegedly the reason why "(m)odern industry (…) presupposes among its antecedents the whole cultural history of man considered as a mental preparation for his present task" (Giddings, 1903, p. 450). In trying to demonstrate that "modern industry presupposes the long historical evolution of culture" (Giddings, 1903, p. 451) he applies the same categories suggested by Tylor in classifying different cultures: he encounters economic functionality in the "totemistic taboos which are found everywhere in the later stages of savagery and the earlier stages of barbarism" (Giddings, 1903, p. 452) and affirms that the "so-called extractive industries are merely survivals of a primitive foraging economy" (Giddings, 1903, p. 456). These quotations illustrate how the author interprets historical data to validate the universal character of evolutionist assumptions. In a movement that de-spatializes history, historicism takes place within a temporal evolutionary scheme, and not in concretely located spatial situations.

Barnard (2004, p. 25) is right to relegate the revolutionary character of this universalism to "anthropology's darkest ages," although eugenic thinking until the 1950's shows that evolutionism could also get along with attempts to differentiate members of the same specimen. Anyway, the fundamental dichotomy between a universal human being and the diversity of cultures was a main preoccupation of those engaged in early "cultural studies." As Boas would have it:

> "We cannot close our eyes to the typical differences that do exist between the modes of thought and action characteristic of primitive society and of civilized society, and the question of their origin must be considered one of the great problems of anthropological research" (Boas, 1904, p. 243).

This quest conferred intelligibility to the debates that inaugurated scholarly production on culture in the beginning of the twentieth century. As they unfolded, a great transformation took place: the synchronic thinking associated with the spatialization of culture displaced the anachronistic character of the temporalized culture.

3.3.
Towards a spatialized culture

Due to the dominance of evolutionism, it was clear to the majority of practitioners that biological features such as the color of the skin, the size of the brain and the shape of the body could not explain cultural variations. In the words of Boas, "the difference between the type of primitive thought and feeling and that of our own appears to us rather as a product of the diversity of the cultures (...) than as the result of a fundamental difference in mental organization" (Boas, 1904, p. 243). However, the first half of the twentieth century was also tainted by eugenics. In the beginning of the 1920's Taylor (1921, p. 115) could empirically demonstrate the validity of monogenesis and certify that "the African Negro is the least evolved of the races of man, and ethnically the white negro half-caste is lower than the white," and justify this certification with the assertion that "possibly there may be something in the idea that the cranial sutures close too soon in the case of the Negro to admit of full expansion of the brain," an argument very similar to that deployed by Darwin fifty years earlier. The coexistence of evolutionism and eugenics demands a distinction between different individuals in the same species. As a way to underlie such difference, I call specimen-individual the universal human being of evolutionist thinking.

Consequently, the puzzling diversity of culture among members of the same species should be explained by something external to the specimen-individual. A careful reading of the literature indicates that the main "externalities" were categorized according to their "nature": they were either physical or non-physical. Among the physical externals, environment and race (as a kind of attribute that differentiates members of the same species) were the most common causes, while the social group and the psychological

individual were the non-physical. These four poles marked the discursive limits for scholarly thought about culture. In the beginning, the practitioners were genuinely prudent, and usually recognized that more than one cause could operate together. This meant that any explanation was more a question of emphasis than of ascertaining a strict causal relation. Hence, a certain level of overlapping was typically present. By the mid-1930's, however, the "social group" pole became predominant for two reasons. Firstly, one must consider that both the content of the debates and their form are relevant, because attempts to demonstrate the relative import of one of those poles carried with them different definitions of culture and different ways of approaching the concept. In this sense, a real disciplinary fight broke out over the legitimate boundaries delimiting the study of culture. Secondly, it should be noted that the main forces behind the transformation were the epistème of the period – marked by the deployment of empiricism to the study of social sciences – and the impact of different ideologies in the academic debates.

Mason's (1908) contribution exemplifies how the interplay between the definition of culture and adequate treatment dispensed to study it operated. In 1908, he defined culture as "all the artificialities of human life" and explained that it is "the story of this wonderful progress as written in what remains of the record of the past in two depositories - archeological relics, and the survivals of ancient activities in the hands of savages and the backward among civilized peoples" (Mason, 1908, p. 187). That the evolutionist framework informed this concept of culture is apparent in the way Mason defines progress, as "man's domination over nature". However, instead of just postulating the equality of all members of the species based on a specimen-individual, he qualifies the uniting feature of all human beings as the capacity to invent: "Men and women of all races and conditions, in all ages, were engaged in devising. In this respect, there has been an unbroken kinship of minds, savage and civilized, from first to last" (Mason, 1908, p.187). He recognizes though that individuals have different skills to invent: "(...) At first the reward accrued to the individual and stimulated others to copy; while to encourage this most precious and beneficent faculty the most enlightened nations grant exclusive patents and crown the inventor among

the heroes of the species" (Mason, 1908, p. 193). Since inventions are the artifacts of needs, and the artificializing of needs is culture, differences among cultures can be attributed to differences in talented inventors. That's why he assures his readers that "(…) to keep the notion of culture through invention in the foreground, it is necessary to insist on Nature's second rank" (Mason, 1908, p. 190). It is clear, then, that neither the environment nor the social group cause culture. If one considers also that devising is a quality of "men and women of all races and conditions," the origin of culture must be located in the psychological individual.

The author then proposed that the best way to approach culture should be through dividing the discipline in two subfields. He suggested that physical anthropology could be in charge of the material "archeological relics," while cultural anthropology could deal with the non-material "survivals of ancient activities." Although this general conception about culture is accords with the evolutionist parlance, his proposed division of anthropology carried with it a disruptive potential. First, the conceptual elaboration of the material dimension of culture offered a solid ground for the advance of the science of culture, so long as the empirical data collected by archeologists could be compared to the theoretical evolutionist framework that oriented cultural analysis. This movement was really necessary according to empiricism, especially if one takes into account that "the scientific study of culture is (was) yet in its infancy" (Mason, 1908, p. 194). For that reason, it seems that "artifacts" had a stronger scientific appeal. Moreover, even if both physical and cultural anthropology are circumscribed by "what remains of the record of the past", that division allows for a clear temporal distinction between one brand that depends on empirical objects "*already done*" and another that depends on "survivals" that are in the making. In this sense, physical anthropology is really restricted to the past, while cultural anthropology is devoted to two manifestations of the present: the achievements of the civilized people, for they are living in the present, both in their concrete existence and in the evolutionist scale of development, and the achievements of the non-civilized, who live in the present only in their concrete existence while being located in the past

according to an evolutionary view. Finally, once it is assumed that civilized and non-civilized people share the present in their concrete existence, it becomes possible to apply the knowledge obtained through cultural anthropology to understand the present (civilized), in a movement that runs contrary to the usual analysis from the present (civilized) to the past (non-civilized). Comparisons of what can be learned about civilized people through what is known about the non-civilized then became possible.

This definition of cultural anthropology might be seen as a tendency that lasted throughout that period. Obviously, it favors those renderings of culture that apply the distinction between material and non-material and give due emphasis to the latter. In this sense, the notion of culture as associations of ideas derived from habits shared by a group of individuals has gained preeminence, especially because the non-material character was colored with a certain subconscious nature (Boas, 1904). An important consequence of this definition is that habits depend on practices, and practices take place somewhere, which implies that different habits and associations of ideas occur in different places. This opened a conceptual venue for studying both "presents" — an opportunity seized with the introduction of the culture area concept to demarcate the limits between civilized and non-civilized in their concrete existence. Already in use since the beginning of the century, the concept became popular during attempts to demonstrate that convergence – two similar culture manifestations in different regions - might not be due to processes of diffusion, and that sometimes similarities were the result of independent developments (Goldenweiser, 1913; Wallis, 1917). The conscious elaboration about the culture area concept came later, by the end of the 1920's, when many papers were published to discuss its validity (Smith, 1929; Willey, 1931; Wissler, 1927,1928). In one of this works, culture area is defined as "(…) an empirical grouping of cultural data in which the unit of investigation and the principle of classification have been derived from direct observation of the facts and of their temporal and spatial distributions" (Smith, 1929, p. 421).

The concept conforms with the belief that observation and empirical data are necessary conditions of the advancement of the scientific study of

culture. According to Smith, this reliance forced American ethnologists to specialize in different geographical areas, thus reassuring the need to work within culture areas (Smith, 1929, p. 425). In practice, it reflected the institutionalization of one approach to culture instead of others. Its applicability was championed by scholars belonging to the social group pole of the cultural debate. Against environmental determinism, and sharing some of the aspects of Mason's treatment of culture, Goldenweiser defines culture as the result of invention and imitation, and recognizes that environmental causes "may favor or hinder the appearance in a group of inventors, innovators, reformers" (Goldenweiser, 1916, p. 631). But the whole of inventors, "individuals whose psychic caste tends toward originality," is limited by culture since "the specific contributions of the original minds of all times were determined by their cultural setting" (Goldenweiser, 1916, p. 632). According to him, "the uniformity of inventions at given periods and within restricted culture areas illustrates the same proposition," which "might serve to emphasize the folly of any attempt to interpret any culture in terms of environment alone" (Goldenweiser, 1916, p. 632-633). A similar position is held by Wallis, who affirms that man "(...) is more than a creature of the environment, or he is no human being," and explains that "what he has become is to be explained in part by nature, but much more by nurture" (Wallis, 1926, p. 706). This affirmation locates Wallis among those that believe that culture is the product of the social group, which is clearly implied in his assertion that "if we wish to predict what a people will do when they move into a new environment, it is more important to know the people than to know the place" (Wallis, 1926, p. 707). In this sense, he makes a distinction between geography of culture and physical geography. "The lines which mark out culture areas are not coterminous with those which delimit river, valley, mountain systems, plateaus, plains" (Wallis, 1926, p. 707).

The merger of the social group explanation and the culture area concept epitomized by the notion of "geography of culture" represents a break with the de-spatialization of culture promoted by evolutionist theory. It also represents the synchronization of a concept that had been for a long time treated through a diachronic framework. This synchronic-spatialized

version of culture has brought as a major consequence the problem of how to deal with different groups that inhabit the same area. This problem emerged when the culture area concept started to be applied to explain differences among the civilized people. For instance, Wissler held that "there (were) no important distinctions between primitive man and the remainder of the human family," and consequently that "the culture area lead (…) has universal validity" and "(…) should be present in contemporary culture and be equally potent in research therein" (Wissler, 1928, p. 895). In this sense, the concept of culture area had a normative impact in attesting that different people living in the same place could be treated as equals. The homogenizing effects of the concept can be inferred by the way Willey denounced its use in America. For him, it would force "day laborer and business man, banker and southern farm tenant (…) into the one picture solely because they all live on a continuous section of the map (…) the implication is that culturally these all are akin, (…) these all belong to one culture, and live in one culture area, which is not true" (Willey, 1929, p. 30). His remarks reinforce the thesis, though, that the concept operated to raise the question about the status of difference in America. This is the backdrop of the debate between the race pole and the social group pole during the period.

The most blatant contribution of the race pole comes from the already quoted study of Taylor. It is, for sure, one of the best examples of how eugenics and racism worked together. In his paper, the causes of diversity in culture are attributed mainly to physical characteristics of races. His conclusions are mainly based on an application of a cephalic index, which, he claimed, is the best "of all the coefficients which have been used to classify man" (Taylor, 1921, p. 55). Since the Mongol race was considered to have the higher cephalic index, he was able to predict that "the Mongol child should show criteria somewhat resembling those of the white adult. The white child (…) so resembles the Negro. The black child in some respects approximates to the apes" (Taylor, 1921, p. 56). Amongst scientific terms borrowed from the natural sciences - like brachycephalism, dolichocephalic, Pleistocene, etc. – the author inserts original metaphorical language to refer to inferior groups. For instance, when he mentions the effects of the climate over the

Eskimo's color, he assures that this group "has been bleached from the original red-brown color to a dirty yellow-brown" (Taylor, 1921, p. 58). His certainty about the validity of his findings allowed him to assert that "when public opinion is educated to regard them (those races with higher cephalic index) as our ethnic equals instead of as our inferiors, we may hope to see them thriving equally with the European nations" (Taylor, 1921, p. 116).

Scholars that did not rely on physical aspects alone to assure the race determinant of culture tended to recur to the notion of mental endowments to explain differences in behavior, in a movement that could be seen as an alliance with the psychological individual pole. In this sense, Allport (1924, p. 673) could assure his readers that "a slight difference in the mode of the curve of intelligence distribution for any race (and substantial racial differences have been found) might greatly affect the general level of ability to assimilate a new culture" and conclude, based on this reasoning, that "causation in social change lies fundamentally in the behavior of individuals" (Allport, 1924, p. 675). Woodard (1930, pp. 16-17) pushes the implicit argument to its limits, by affirming that "the social scientist cannot avoid a deep antagonism (...) to legislative measures which would stand in the way of applying to the full such biological knowledge as we may acquire as to how to obtain more of the superior variates and how to prevent the inferiors from ever being born." Although he does not state that inferiors belong to different races, he does suggest that acceptance of one group's success over another depends more on the variation of capacities among the individuals of the group (more geniuses than idiots) than on the comparison of the average intelligence of each group. According to him, this insight "opens the way to a theory of culture differences as due to the innate ability of the groups concerned -- the possible relation of race to culture" (Woodard, 1930, p. 16). But he does not go further in this venue, because "the racial factor is so entangled within itself and with other factors (...) that we can say absolutely nothing about it with certainty" (Woodard, 1930, p. 16). Rather, his eugenic theorizing serves the public interest by warning his readers that higher reproductive rates among incompetent people could bring the western civilization to a collapse, and endanger democracy, liberty, and progress.

The cautious attitude demonstrated by the race pole scholars' avoidance of explicit associations between eugenics and race – despite all indications that they would endorse it - is due to the politicized atmosphere surrounding academic debate about culture in the beginning of the 1930's. That was the time when the politics of discrimination against Afro-Americans definitely entered the arena. As Goldenweiser (1924, p. 132) put it: "the first and perhaps the major problem of America is that of the Negro. (…) Can we do anything deliberately to solve this problem? I do not know of any method by means of which it would be possible to make people change their attitude toward the Negro." His argument contra racial prejudice was directed against psychological tests applied to measure the mental endowments. According to him, "if the Negro really were as inferior to the white man as the tests seem to indicate, we could not live with him in this country. The Negro would be not much better than a monkey. If we could associate with him at all we should have to use him as a pet" (Goldenweiser, 1924, p. 128). He then concludes that racial prejudice is a projection of certain features shared by all human beings onto a specific group. Following the findings of anthropologists – those in a "position to look at the problem more objectively and critically" -- the psychic unity of all races attests "that for the purposes of a common historic life, of democracy, of idealism, of cooperation, the great races of the world (…) have all the necessary qualifications" (Goldenweiser, 1924, p. 130).

The pugnacity of his remarks is a good indication of how heated was the debate. But many others criticized eugenics in a more "appropriate" scientific jargon. In a behaviorist fashion, Kantor (1925) denies the existence of such thing as mental endowment in the individual and hence concludes that it does not exist for a group either. Hiller (1930) pointed to culture as the determinant of demography and denied that economic, racial or even mental endowment aspects could explain differences of birth rates. Bryson (1932, p. 192) also denied the correlation between incompetency (lack of intelligence) and fertility, but defended a correlation "between economic status and fertility." Krout (1931, p. 183) affirmed that "the white race, at any rate, is as thoroughly blended as is any other race!" and criticized the use of physical-based methods to rank races. Moreover, the category of race, he argued, "(…)

is a static and artificial unity, while historically it is an eternal becoming" and "seldom escape subjective bias." He contended that different developmental processes, in which migration and segregation perform the fundamental role, cause diversity in culture. In this sense, after a mixed group is established, "race distinction is posited as a necessary aspect of continuity and integrity in group life" (Krout, 1931, p. 189). Race is thus conceived as a "symbol of distinction" derived from the in-group necessity to differentiate from the out-group. In the same way, House (1936, pp. 1-2) held that difference among "racial groups are primarily of acquired traits - cultural traits - rather than of biologically inherited or racial traits in the strict sense" and proceeded to emphasize that, due to this scientific shift, "the investigation of problems of race relations has come to be conceived more and more as a task of research into facts of culture." Hawkins (1934, p. 41) summarized the point by assuring his readers that "the assumption of racial superiority on the part of a particular race is perhaps coexistent with the notion of group solidarity or group consciousness and grows out of the feeling of each member of the group that the combined strength of all its members is superior to that of any other."

Meanwhile, the social group pole imposed itself over the psychological individual pole. Curiously, its arguments were structurally similar to those applied by constructivists in the late 1980's about the relations between agent and structure. They were based on what I call the "generative power" of culture. Murdock's (1932) attempt to synthesize all contributions in a true "science of culture" is a good example of the basis upon which these arguments were built. He acknowledged that "culture consists of habits," but emphasized that cultural habits are group habits, "shared or possessed in common by the various members of a society, thus acquiring a certain independence and a measure of immortality" (Murdock, 1932, p. 204). This characteristic authorized him to hold that culture is super-individual. Its perpetuation is guaranteed by language, which "alone makes possible the transmission of folkways, the continuity and accumulation of culture, the very existence of a social heritage. Without language, man would be little better off than the animals" (Murdock, 1932, p. 212). This remark is crucial,

for some scholars argued that superior animals also had culture because they were able to reproduce behavior patterns through social contacts by imitation or tuition (Hart e Pantzer, 1925, 705). For them, monkeys and parrots were good examples of animals to be studied in the field of "animal sociology." However, as Case (1927, p. 907) made clear, "the real distinction does not seem to lie in the mode of its transmission, but in the nature of the thing transmitted." In this sense, he introduced a distinction between behavior patterns and culture patterns. Only humans have culture patterns, which "are massive objective complexes, rooted, of course, in the behavior patterns of individuals, but also super-individual, super-psychic, super-organic structures involving reflective and abstract thinking and doing, by means of tools and symbols" (Case, 1927, p. 908). Culture, in this rendering, has a generative power: it "shapes and is reflected in the personality and attitudes of members of a group" (House, 1936, p. 1). In the words of Willey (1929, p. 206), "the habits of any individual born and reared within the culture area will develop in conformity with the habits of those who have already matured within the area."

In a passage that summarizes the argument of this section, by the mid-1930's, Gillin (1936, p. 373) could affirm that, among the approaches to the study of culture, "the evolutionary approach, the rigid diffusionist approach, and the racial approach, in the technical meaning of these terms, are no longer taken seriously by students of the science in this country." In a quite pejorative way, Benedict (1932, p. 1) referred to some of them as belonging to the "anecdotal period of ethnology," emphasizing the precarious treatment of the cultural traits. According to her, there is "the necessity of investigating in what sort of a whole these traits are functioning," because the same traits can perform different functions in different cultures, due to the need to fulfill the demands of a certain order that emerges when they are integrated. Hence, cultural material "is made over into consistent patterns in accordance with certain inner necessities that have developed within the group." (Benedict, 1932, p. 2) According to Manganaro (2002, p. 152), the emphasis is "(…) upon specifically rendered discrete cultures, cultures rendered so distinctly and vividly that they not only come across as but are posed as

personalities." "A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action" that develops "in accordance with unconscious canons of choice that develop within the culture" (Benedict, 1960, p. 53-54). The belief buttressing such theoretical interpretation is that "the whole, as modern science is insisting in many fields, is not merely the sum of all its parts, but the result of a unique arrangement and interrelation of the parts that has brought about a new entity" (Benedict, 1960, p. 53). It is up to the anthropologist to decipher the "unconscious canons of choice" that belong to each culture.

3.4.
Towards a statist culture

Gillin's (1936) and Benedict's (1960) approaches were known as historico-functionalist, for both were concerned with the configuration of a specific culture through the analysis of its past and its functioning in the present. In this sense, like Benedict's "unconscious canons of choice," Gillin treated configuration as a "principle at work in cultures determining their peculiarities of pattern and internal organization, and giving unity to the whole (…)," and found "inner necessities arising from the peculiarities of the dynamic grouping under consideration" (Gillin, 1936, pp. 376-378). He added that, depending on the relation between the parts and the whole, they can be weak or strong, simple or complex, but assured his readers that every configuration is dynamic and has a structure that tends to a certain order. From the perspective of individuals, configurations have an apparent "compulsory nature (…) as a whole which governs their attitudes and habits," which "is best illustrated by the processes whereby individual attitudes and behavior are molded to such a degree that deviations from the culture pattern become unthinkable" (Gillin, 1936, p. 380 e 382). Although he acknowledged the existence of internal strains caused by differences among human beings, he believed that a stratified social organization, with classes, etc., would provide the equilibrium necessary to maintain the configuration. This would not be a conscious movement. Rather, the juxtaposition among patterns, structure and the direction of the culture would guarantee the

preservation of a specific configuration. This equilibrium would indicate the adequacy of the culture, and must be understood along behaviorist lines — "the view of inner necessity in culture involves no notion of group mind or of conscious motivation" (Gillin, 1936, p. 383).

The idea of "adequacy" resembles the notion of genuine culture. According to Sapir (1924, p. 410), genuine culture "is merely inherently harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory. It is the expression of a richly varied and yet somehow unified and consistent attitude toward life (…) a culture in which nothing is spiritually meaningless." This cultural manifestation takes place within the national environment, but it does not impose itself on individuals. "A healthy national culture is never a passively accepted heritage from the past, but implies the creative participation of the members of the community; implies, in other words, the presence of cultured individuals" (Sapir, 1924, pp. 417-418). Hence, it is possible to understand how genuine cultures are compared to "healthy spiritual organisms," and why they are endangered by "the remorselessly leveling forces of a common cultural heritage and of the action of average mind on average mind" that "tend to a general standardization of both the content and the spirit of culture" (Sapir, 1924, p. 422). The "spiritual freedom" conferred to the individual, as well as the use of it to fortify its own culture is what makes a culture genuine. In this sense, "the conception of the self as a mere instrument toward the attainment of communal ends, whether of state or other social body, is to be discarded as leading in the long run to psychological absurdities and to spiritual slavery" (Sapir, 1924, p. 424).

Due to the way that Sapir treats the relation between individual and group, it would be too risky to consider his emphasis on the "spiritual primacy of the individual soul" as an indication of individualistic tendencies in his theorizing. He believed that, for a culture to be genuine, the relation between individuals and group must be -- to put it in contemporary jargon -- one of co-constitution (Wendt, 1999). For this reason, his concept of genuine culture serves as a good example of how the notion of configuration presupposes an ontological choice in favor of "structure" over "agency." This priority can be noticed in the different ways that morality was treated. In a

genuine culture, agents are conscious of the moral motivation behind their actions. This makes nationalism — the great motivation for a genuine culture — the cause *and* the result of moral reasoning, and thus dependent on human decisions. However, the moral primacy of the nation is not always recognized because of obsession with the "(…) idea of subordinating all forms of human association to the state and of regarding the range of all types of activity as conterminous with political boundaries" (Sapir, 1924, p. 427). Sapir's comments on the conflict-laden atmosphere of the 1920's illustrate his rationale well. He wondered whether it could "exacerbate rather than allay national-political animosities and (…) strengthen the prestige of the state," but assured his readers that "this deplorable result cannot well be other than a passing phase" because the war has "paved the way for an economic and, as a corollary, a semi-political internationalism" (Sapir, 1924, p. 427). His belief in the emergence of a "genuine inter-national culture" in the period represents a clear extrapolation of the configuration concept to the "international" realm.

It is ironic, then, that in criticizing nationalism, Benedict (1960, p. 24) appealed to the importance of "individuals who are genuinely culture-conscious." But it also makes sense, since being culture-conscious means being someone "who can see objectively the socially conditioned behavior of other peoples without fear and recrimination," and not being conscious of one's own conditioned behavior (Benedict, 1960, p. 24). The main characteristic of a configuration is that individuals are unconscious of the "inner necessity" that keeps it alive. She illustrated this point by explaining the "nature of culture:" while the animals carry their patterns of behavior in their germs, the humans transmit them through social processes. "An Oriental child adopted by an Occidental family learns English, shows toward its foster parents the attitudes current among the children he plays with, and grows up to the same professions that they elect. He learns the entire set of the cultural traits of the adopted society, and the set of his real parents' group plays no part" (Benedict, 1960, p. 25). As this example illustrates, the whole imposes itself over the parts in a manner that leaves no room for moral

reasoning. That is the nature of culture when it is approached through the concept of configuration.

The dominance of the functionalist approach guided scholars in their explorations about culture. Two themes are worth mentioning in this regard. The first is the tendency to attribute psychopathologies or problems of adjustment to culture. Horney asked if the recurrence of similar traits in neurosis does not suggest "the question of whether and to what extent neuroses are molded by cultural processes in essentially the same way as "normal" character formation is determined by these influences" (Horney, 1936, p. 221). After presenting an elaborate scheme with the mechanisms of neurosis, she attributed tendencies that she encountered in "her" culture, such as the emphasis on competition and attitudes towards failure and success, as its cause. She then generalized her findings, assuring her readers that "the differences in neuroses typical of different cultures may be understood to be conditioned by the amount and quality of conflicting demands within the particular culture " (Horney, 1936, p. 230). Some tried to establish causal relations between cultural conflicts (i.e., when one individual or group of individuals is in contact with a different culture) and incidences of criminality, even acknowledging that correlations were difficult to prove and positing many methodological problems (Sellin, 1938). Others theorized that education could be an antidote to combat the disaggregating effects of cultural conflict. "Education itself is a process of leveling down and of smoothing off the differences among people having a common culture pattern to which they have not all made satisfactory accommodation" (Duncan, 1939, p. 460).

The concept of "culture lag" is the second example. A culture lag was thought to happen when new material aspects are introduced into a culture and its parts adapt these to their non-material dimension at different rates. Woodward recommended moderation in the use of this concept, for the privileged role conferred to material aspects in explanations of changes in the non-material could represent a return to evolutionism. "After we have kicked the concept 'progress' out of the front door we should find it returning in scientific disguise by a rear entrance" (Woodard, 1934, p. 390).

Nonetheless, he stressed that the functionally oriented notion of maladjustment (here in a different sense than that one offered above) was worth keeping to indicate the period of time necessary to finish the adaptation process in the whole culture. This conception was based on his belief that "the culture of a group is a functionally interrelated whole; changes in one part eventually bring repercussions in the most distant parts of the culture; and in the process there are maladjustments and aggravations of the strain toward integrated consistency" (Woodard, 1934, p. 394). From an attitudinal perspective, Cantril (1935, p. 377) held that new material traits "will be rapidly accepted if they are consistent with existing attitudes and are therefore found to have positive value," while those that are not "will be rejected or are less likely to be introduced." In relation to new non-material traits, he asserted that because such traits "necessitate a change of value rather than a mere extension in the range of inclusiveness of a value, they will be accepted slowly, if at all" (Cantril, 1935, p. 377). His conclusions were based on his observation that attitudes are "cumulations of specific thought processes stimulated by cultural surroundings," and that the "influence of culture attitudes in determining individual attitudes seems sociologically unquestioned" (Cantril, 1935, pp. 378-379).

All these contributions shared the same presupposition that the whole was predominant in relation with the parts of a specific culture, even within the context of different disciplinary fields, such as psychoanalysis, criminology, sociology, social psychology and education. Moreover, these contributions were applied understandings of contemporary society, which meant that the space in which culture patterns and configurations developed was delimited by State frontiers. The conjunction of these two aspects — the dominance of the whole in a State demarcated territory — raised the issue of the relation between authority and culture.

This relation is present, for instance, in Thurnwald's attempt to rehabilitate the notion of progress in a configurational setting. He explained that the improvement in means of communication "enabled kings and despots to hold sway over minor chieftains, to control the economic situation of the larger area, and to weld states together. Consequently, there were

established larger cultural units (...)" (Thurnwald, 1936, p. 610). Due also to effects of progress, these cultural units passed through social, political and cultural transformations. "Italy and Germany changed their political constitutions, and Russia changed its cultural arrangement in recent years by rapid industrialization" (Thurnwald, 1936, p. 611). But the most striking feature was that "a change in one of these systems implies alterations of more or less consequence in the others" (Thurnwald, 1936, p. 611). The relation between authority and culture is also present in Woodard's proposal of a "new classification of culture." He divided culture into three categories, the aesthetic, the inductive and the control (or authoritarian) culture. The authoritarian culture contained "all those items which have a prescriptive force and a controlling or conforming influence on the members of the group" (Woodard, 1936, p. 90). Among other features, it included "patriotic emblems, the insignia and official vestments of the offices of authority, or coercive or conformative symbols or objects of any kind" (Woodard, 1936, p. 90). He proceeded to analyze the control culture in detail, and concluded that it is marked by the need of "a certain minimum of group-wide uniformity and predictability of behavior within the group in order for the group to function as such in those aspects in which it must function as a whole (say in conservation, war, trade or diplomacy), in order to have internal workability and order, and in order that the individual within it shall be able to build up a set of consistent habits and attitudes" (Woodard, 1936, p. 94). There is no space for knowledge built through scientific induction; all of its non-material aspects are rationalizations of the dominant ideology. Authoritarian culture is anathema to inductive culture, wherein "the immediate source of the values, beliefs, and attitudes involved is observation and experiment on the natural-world reality, the realm of identifiable cause and effect" (Woodard, 1936, p. 96). For this reason, inductive culture tends to overcome control culture, "since it flows from the natural-order reality as progressively approached by the inductive method" (Woodard, 1936, p. 98). For both authors, it seems that the State is the space where culture patterns are instantiated, and that the relations of power inside this space affect the contours of the cultural configuration. But Woodard is explicit about the

political motivations that oriented his endeavor: "We may then see that it is better, through (...) the retention of democratic forms, to have a certain amount of chaos, (...) rather than, through coercive imposition of the control mores, to gain the immediate and superficial effects of 'law and order'" (Woodard, 1936, p. 100). Hence, through comparison between two different political regimes, liberalism and fascism, culture is definitely juxtaposed with the limits of the State.

It does not mean that, from that moment on, culture was determined solely by the limits of that juxtaposition. Surely, the concept was still applied to "primitive cultures." But the advent of fascism and the ensuing Second World War pressed scholars to explain the causes of the conflict. Among many scholars studying culture, the conjunction of the pattern of culture and the behavior of the State was the framework offered. It seems that conformity between the premises of fascism and belief in the preponderance of the whole over the parts, then dominant in the study of culture, was a decisive feature for that outcome. In this regard, Thompsom's denunciation of the Nazi party's cultural politics is a good illustration. He concluded in an interpretation of one of Hitler's discourses on culture, addressed in 1935, that for Nazis, "it is the business of the state to foster such artistic production as will demonstrate native cultural resources. It is the business of culture to aid in impressing on the public mind the aims of the National Socialist movement" (Thompson, 1936, p. 407). This idea was made explicit by Nazi philosophy, which opined that "every great period and every great national conception take their departure from the same source that gives rise to cultural creations." Hence, National Socialism believed in "the unity of culture and the state as being based on and directed by a definite attitude toward life" (Rosemberg apud Thompson, 1936, p.409)

Another reason that contributed to the conjunction between culture and the State was the urge to use the knowledge about difference offered by cultural studies in the planning of war. In this sense, knowing the enemy through the lenses of culture would reassure Generals that their decisions were being made based on the latest scientific findings. The recruitment of Ruth Benedict to work for the Office of War Information (OWI) represents

this movement very well. There she "was assigned the problem of discerning patterns in strategic cultures for general guidance in dealing with their governments and providing specific knowledge that would predict behavior under conditions expected in the course of the war" (Young, 2005, p. 103). According to Young (2005, p. 103), OWI required her "advice on propaganda broadcasts to enemy troops, on how to ease relations between American troops and civilian populations of allied or occupied nations, on interpreting intelligence data on enemy commitment to keep fighting (...)." The broad range and considerable number of reports clearly indicate how easy it was to conflate culture patterns and States. "In September 1943 Benedict completed a forty-nine-page report on Thailand. In November she wrote a sixty-five-page report on Romania. By January 1944 she had completed a seventeen-page report on Dutch culture and an eight-page memorandum on problems foreseeable in U.S. troop presence in Holland and recommending dos and don'ts for army broadcasts to the Dutch" (Young, 2005, p. 103). As I intend to demonstrate in the third part of this dissertation, this conception of culture was one aspect that shaped how scholars and policy makers treated the Soviet Union during the 1950's.

3.5.
Final Remarks

After this half-century analysis, it seems pretty safe to conclude that the concept of culture, instead of representing a real external ordered world, works as the very principle that orders it. In this sense, culture is a discourse that exerts its effects on reality. As a discourse, it does not owe its origins to a gradual unveiling of the truth that lies behind the blurred gaze of science. Instead, its definition depends on the interplay between knowledge and power.

Nothing could undermine an objectivist rendering of culture more than the realization that the contours it acquired in the 1950's were due to what happened during the 1930's, as I tried to show in this chapter. If the beginning of that decade saw the political implications of racism being tackled in the academic arena, the end was marked by the growing influence

of the Fascist threat in the treatment of culture. Of course, these movements were ingredients inserted in a certain empiricist *epistème*. But its weight was relative. In the same way, political and scientific issues precipitated the rejection of evolutionist conceptions about culture, and were the main causes of anachronistic attempts to revive the science of eugenics. Hence, the processes of spatialization and statization of culture described in this chapter brought with them no idea of historical necessity. They were the result of the interplay of many different aspects; I have tried to describe them to make its relativity explicit.

In this chapter, I intended to demonstrate that the predominant notion of culture available in the 1950's, the one based on the concepts of configuration and pattern of culture, was the result of a long historical process characterized by the interplay among disciplinary, scientific, political and ideological factors. My aim was to elucidate the opacity of the concept of culture, offering the reader the possibility of treating it as a discourse. The logical step after this demonstration would be to explore the relationship between culture treated as a discourse and the sovietologists' descriptions of the Soviet subjectivity. However, the discourse about culture did not operate alone in *sovietologism*. As I suggested in the previous chapter, it needed two more discourses, one on the State and the other on personality, to create the conditions of emergence of the Soviet subjectivity. In the next chapters of the second part of this dissertation, I apply a similar analysis developed in this chapter to explore each of these discourses.