

***Clifford Geertz's
Understanding of Culture
as an Anthropological Resource
for Theology:
A Lonergan Reading***

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College
and the Theological Department
of the Toronto School of Theology.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Theology
awarded by Regis College and the University of Toronto

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PREVIEW

To my father
Ben Koning (1924-2004)
who died during the preparation of this thesis

PREVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Clifford Geertz's understanding of culture and how its usefulness for theology might be enhanced by dialogue with Bernard Lonergan's account of meaning and knowing. The first section of the thesis offers an interpretation of Geertz's position. It situates him within the history of the culture concept, particularly in relation to Boas, Weber, and Parsons (Ch 1). It goes on to analyse his account of culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" (Ch 2). The thesis then examines Geertz's proposals for how culture is to be studied (Ch 3). Negatively, it contrasts his approach with functionalist, structuralist, and reist approaches. Positively, it examines key elements of Geertz's approach, particularly his concepts of local knowledge, thick description, and culture-as-text. Further understanding of his account comes through an exploration of some major critiques, especially the claim that his interpretive approach is not adequately empirical (Ch 4). The second part of the thesis turns to an engagement with Bernard Lonergan. Considerable overlap between the two thinkers is discovered in relation to the public, shared aspects of meaning, while a major discrepancy is found in relation to meaning's personal aspects, which are downplayed by Geertz (Ch 5). Lonergan's distinction between ordinary and original meaningfulness helps pinpoint the roots of Geertz's neglect of personal meaning in an empiricist epistemology undergirding his account of 'public meaning' (Ch 6). Lonergan's epistemology, which critically embraces the data of consciousness, is shown to provide a better grounding for what Geertz seeks - an account of culture which takes meaning seriously and is at the same time empirical. The conclusion points to ways in which theologians using culture as a general theological category might draw upon this suitably reoriented Geertzian approach.

INTRODUCTION

A. Culture as a Theological Category

Culture is a major category in contemporary discourse. At the commonsense level, different ways of doing things and different attitudes to life are routinely explained in terms of cultural differences. At a more reflective level, we find talk of culture wars and references to all sorts of cultures beyond that of ethnic groups, such as corporate culture or the culture of higher education. At an academic level, apart from the established discipline of anthropology, we note the growth of cultural studies as an interdisciplinary development.

So, too, in the life of the Church, culture represents an important category of thought and in a variety of ways. The catholicity of the church is more and more apparent, not simply at the level of the world-wide church, but in the cultural diversity of local congregations. In pastoral practice and in work for justice, there is a clearer appreciation of the cultural dynamics which need to be addressed. From Latin American Basic Christian Communities influenced by liberation theology to Richard John Neuhaus' *First Things* project, culture is the buzz word, unable to be avoided. Passionate disagreements may abound as to what in any given cultural context is compatible with Christian faith and what is counter to it. But beneath it all, there is a consensus that culture is a key reality with which the Church needs to engage.

It is not surprising, then, that culture has become a major category of analysis in contemporary theology. And more and more, the concept of culture being adopted in theology is the modern anthropological concept. An earlier era recognised only one culture, represented by the cultured person. Such a person showed the requisite manners, had been educated, and manifested an appreciation of fine music, the arts, and the classics of literature. A fundamental divide lay between such cultured people and the uncultured, whether they were barbarians, the uneducated masses, natives, or as yet unlettered children.¹

Besides this classicist understanding, another understanding of culture has taken root over the last century, what Canadian theologian and philosopher Bernard Lonergan calls the empirical notion of culture. This notion sees culture as "the set of meanings and values that informs a way of life."² This view does not divide the world into cultured and uncultured, but recognises a diversity of cultures, as diverse as the differing sets of meanings and values informing differing ways of life.³

For Lonergan, this move from a classicist to an empirical notion of culture represented a key seismic shift in theology in the second half of the twentieth century. In Protestant theology, important milestones in this development were marked by Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, in which he defined culture by drawing on anthropological analyses, particularly those of Malinowski and Benedict,⁴ and Tillich's *Theology of*

¹ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), xi, 301.

² *Ibid.*, xi.

³ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁴ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1951), 29-39.

Culture, with his neat formulation that "religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."⁵ In Catholic Church teaching, the classicist understanding of culture began to shift with Pius XII.⁶ While operating still predominantly within a classicist framework, he began to acknowledge a plurality of cultures.⁷ This understanding was taken up by John XXIII⁸ and became firmly established at the Second Vatican Council with the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:

[C]ulture necessarily has historical and social overtones...; in this sense one can speak about a plurality of cultures... [d]ifferent styles of living and different scales of values ... Thus the heritage of its institutions forms the patrimony proper to each human community.⁹

This empirical sense of culture found further articulation in both major post-conciliar pontificates. Paul VI called for the evangelization, not just of individuals somehow divorced from their cultural contexts, but of cultures themselves.¹⁰ Both he and John Paul II have been 'missionary' popes, making many trips to various countries and addressing the inter-relations between faith and culture in a variety of cultural

⁵ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 42.

⁶ Hervé Carrier, "Understanding Culture: The Ultimate Challenge of the World-Church?," in *The Church and Culture since Vatican II: The Experience of North and Latin America*, ed. Joseph Gremillion (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 17-18.

⁷ Pius XII, "Allocution to the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1944), 210. This reference was later cited in his 1951 encyclical letter, *Evangelii Praecones*, #60.

⁸ John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, #1.

⁹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #53. On this definition as a "modern analytical instrument," see Hervé Carrier, "The Contribution of the Council to Culture," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After (1962-1987)*, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 452-453.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #20.

contexts. Thus, there has been ongoing reflection at the level of the papal magisterium on the role of culture in human life and on the processes by which gospel and culture interact.¹¹ The consistency with which both popes have returned to the theme of culture ensures that culture is not likely to disappear as a category for doctrinal, systematic and pastoral reflection. This was further highlighted by the current Pope's establishment of the Pontifical Council for Culture early in his pontificate, with the task of giving "the whole Church a common impulse in the continuously renewed encounter between the salvific message of the Gospel and the multiplicity of cultures."¹² The Council for Culture was a concrete embodiment of the prominence of the theme of culture within the Pope's oeuvre.¹³

Theologians have also taken up an empirical sense of culture as a crucial category for theological reflection. This is evident in all areas of theology, from the Scripture scholar's examination of what is culture-bound in particular texts and what is of universal import, to the moral theologian's similar discernment in relation to ethical

¹¹ For overviews of the contributions of Paul VI and of John Paul II to the Church's teaching on culture, see Hervé Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures from Leo XIII to John Paul II*, trans. John Drury (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1989), 22-28; Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 206-238. For more detailed treatments of their teachings on inculturation, see Jacob Mananathodath, *Culture, Dialogue, and the Church: A Study on the Inculturation of the Local Churches According to the Teaching of Pope Paul VI* (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1990); Francis E. George, *Inculturation and Ecclesial Communion: Culture and Church in the Teaching of John Paul II* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1990); S. Iniobong Udoidem, *Pope John Paul II on Inculturation: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1996).

¹² John Paul II, "Letter of 20 May 1982 to Cardinal Casaroli on the Foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture," *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition (28 June 1982), 7.

¹³ On this theme in the Pope's writings, see Avery Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 117-129; Christopher J. Walsh, "Building the Civilization of Love: Recent Statements by John Paul II on Evangelizing Culture," *Communio* 24 (1997): 780-793; George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Cliff St. Books, 1999), 792-804.

norms. In fact, Lonergan puts culture into his very definition of theology's role: "A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix."¹⁴ Of course, as Bevans points out, good theology, like good pastoral practice, has always been contextual.¹⁵ But today, for a variety of reasons, the Church is becoming more critically reflective about what this means.¹⁶ This reflection has generated a burgeoning realm of theological discourse, often called the theology of inculturation – theological analysis of what happens, and what ideally should happen, when the gospel and a culture interact.¹⁷ The term 'inculturation,' though apparently first used in 1959,¹⁸ took some time to catch on. It only became well-established in theological discourse with its first usage in an official episcopal document in 1974,¹⁹

¹⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, xi.

¹⁵ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Faith and Cultures Series, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 3-4.

¹⁶ Bevans reviews a number of such reasons, some external and some internal to theology (*Ibid.*, 5-10).

¹⁷ For some recent examples, see Barth Chidili, *Inculturation as a Symbol of Evangelization* (Jos, Nigeria: Mono Expressions, 1997); Wilfred LaCroix, "Inculturation, Signs of the Times, and the Rapidly Changing Culture," in *Catholicism at the Millennium: The Church of Tradition in Transition*, ed. Gerald L. Miller and Wilburn T. Stancil (Kansas City, Missouri: Rockhurst University Press, 2001), 79-94; Thomas Menamparampil, *The Challenge of Cultures: Cross-Cultural Relationships, Conflicts, Inculturation* (Bombay: St Pauls, 1996); Peter K. Sarpong, *Peoples Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelisation* (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002); Shagbaor F. Wegh, *Understanding and Practising Inculturation* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Caltop Publications, 1997).

¹⁸ According to Mariasusai Dhavamony, the term was used at the 1959 Semaine de Missiologie at Louvain (Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation*, Documenta Missionalia, vol. 24 [Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997], 89). This is earlier than was previously thought, with commentators often pointing to a 1962 paper by Joseph Masson, in which he speaks of "un catholicisme inculturé," as possibly the earliest use of the term. See, for example, Shorter, 10; Ary A. Roest Crolius, "What Is So New About Inculturation? A Concept and Its Implications," in *What Is So New About Inculturation*, ed. Ary A. Roest Crolius, *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1984), 2.

¹⁹ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970-1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arévalo (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), 14. In #12, the Asian Bishops speak of their vision for a church "indigenous and inculturated."

followed by its usage in the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-1975),²⁰ its elaboration in some depth in the letter on the subject which that Congregation mandated the Jesuit Superior General to write (1978),²¹ and its first usage in a papal document in *Catechesi Tradendae* the following year.²²

The letter by Pedro Arrupe, apart from the influence exerted on a religious order with both a strong academic tradition and a wide missionary history and presence, also provided a definition of inculturation which has informed theological discussion over the subsequent quarter-century.

[I]nculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'²³

Another marker of the central role of culture as a theological category is its use by the different 'voices' that are emerging as part of contemporary theological

²⁰ Society of Jesus, *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus: An English Translation*. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), Decree 5. There are further references in Decree IV, "Our Mission Today" (#36, #53-56), and Decree VI on Formation (#29).

²¹ Pedro Arrupe, "Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation," *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* 7, no. 1 (1978): 1-9.

²² John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #53.

²³ Arrupe: 2. Arrupe's definition is quoted, for example, in Chidili, 17; Dhavamony, 91-92; Shorter, 11; Udoidem, 2, 5; Michael Amaladoss, "Inculturation and Ignatian Spirituality," *The Way Supplement* 79 (1994): 39; Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, new and rev. ed. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003), 124; Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 6; Carl F. Starkloff, *A Theology of the In-Between: The Value of Syncretic Process*, Marquette Studies in Theology, vol. 33, ed. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 12 n.1.

discourse. Native, black, feminist, post-colonial, third-world, and subaltern voices, for example, are beginning to speak out and to be heard, both in the academy in general and within theology in particular.²⁴ In all cases, there is a concern for what understandings of culture can do justice to their experience and their desire to speak and be heard. At the same time as this growing concern for the uniqueness of particular voices and cultures, we note the phenomenon of globalisation and the growing awareness of the interdependency of cultural groups, and with it the concern within the church for world-wide solidarity – a sense of the deep interconnectedness of all humankind. This is an issue that Doran takes up when he distinguishes between ordinary cultural meanings and values, those which are particular to a particular culture, and world-cultural values and meanings, those which can help form the foundation for a world-cultural humanity.²⁵ Robert Schreiter also addressed this issue in his study of what he calls the new catholicity.²⁶ Moreover, it is part of the current Pope's concern when he speaks of the contradictory possibilities set before every culture – whether it will shape itself into a culture of life, respecting human life and enabling full human flourishing, or into a culture of death, where the value of human life and the dignity of the human person are continually threatened.²⁷

²⁴ For two surveys of the scene, see Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000); R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, new ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis/SPCK, 1995).

²⁵ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 37-38, 473-499.

²⁶ Robert J Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*, Faith and Culture Series, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

²⁷ See especially John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*.

If culture is such a crucial category for contemporary theology, we need to be clear on what we mean by culture when we use that term in theology. Robert Schreiter recognises this need, noting that the “long and careful listening to a culture” that the development of a local theology demands requires “a theory of culture with an attendant methodology for uncovering the realities of a culture.”²⁸ Lonergan mentions that a philosophy of culture could “make a great contribution” to the fulfilment of the task of preaching the Gospel to all nations.²⁹ Charles Kraft, a Protestant anthropologist with a strong interest in theology, has pointed out that theology, like any discipline dealing with human beings, “needs the sharpest insights possible into the nature and workings of that within which humans ‘live and move and have their being’ – culture.”³⁰

Culture is, of course, not a category unique to theology, like grace or sin or Trinity. Rather, it is a general category for theology – a category which is shared with other, non-theological disciplines.³¹ As such, theological understandings of culture generally derive from, or are at least clarified in conversation with, understandings of culture developed in the human sciences which make use of this category. In particular, they are derived from those areas which specialise in the study of culture – traditionally, anthropology and sociology, and more recently, cultural studies. Thus, Vatican II’s definition of culture acknowledges that “the word ‘culture’ often carries with

²⁸ Robert J Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 28.

²⁹ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Philosophy and Theology,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 206.

³⁰ Charles H. Kraft, “Cultural Anthropology: Its Meaning for Christian Theology,” *Theology Today* 41, no. 4 (1985): 394.

³¹ On general and special categories, see Lonergan, *Method*, 282.

it sociological and ethnological connotations,³² while many contemporary theologians interested in culture define their terms in relation to anthropological understandings.³³ One recent study has been devoted entirely to discussion of the shift in understandings of culture and its implications for theology.³⁴

A number of theologians, in drawing upon anthropological sources for their theological approaches to culture beneficial, have turned to American anthropologist Clifford Geertz.³⁵ Some refer to him simply in passing, perhaps making use of his definition of culture, or of religion, or making reference to his method of 'thick description.' But other use his work in more significant ways. Carl Starkloff, for example, takes up Geertz's notion of cultural systems, examining the usefulness for the theory and praxis of inculturation of each of the four systems for which Geertz provides

³² *Gaudium et Spes*, #53.

³³ Dhavamony, 11-26; Gallagher, 13-26; Shorter, 4-5; Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 42-73; Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, ed. Ary A. Roest Crolius, *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures*, vol. I (Rome: Centre 'Cultures and Religions' - Pontifical Gregorian University, 1982), 8-11; Ary A. Roest Crolius, "Inculturation and the Meaning of Culture," *Gregorianum* 61 (1980): 266; Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 45-48; David Nazar, "Inculturation: Meaning and Method" (Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Theology diss., Saint Paul University, 1989), 14-38; Achiel Peelman, *L'Inculturation: L'Eglise et les Cultures* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1988), 42-56; Carl F. Starkloff, "Inculturation and Cultural Systems," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994): 69-81. One exception would seem to be Peter Schineller, whose book *A Handbook of Inculturation*, while paying considerable attention to the definition of inculturation, offers no definition of culture.

³⁴ Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Guides to Theological Inquiry Series, ed. Kathryn Tanner and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

³⁵ Azevedo, 8-9; Dhavamony, 25-26; Gallagher, 18-19; Nazar, 17-21; Shorter, 4-5; Wegh, 8; Crolius, "Inculturation and the Meaning of Culture," 266; Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 56; Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 53-54, 56; Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 28.

an extended analysis: art, religion, ideology and common sense.³⁶ In his most recent work, he makes use of Geertz's study of internal conversion in Bali to supplement his treatment of conversion in relation to syncretism.³⁷ On the side of Protestant theology, we find both Hans Frei and George Lindbeck making significant use of Geertz in their approaches to theology.³⁸

Given this significance of Geertz within theology, let us turn to an examination of his career and its impact.

B. Geertz as a Major Exponent of a Concept of Culture

Clifford Geertz is recognised within anthropology as a key figure in the reconfiguration of the culture concept over the last 40 years.³⁹ He was born in 1926 in San Francisco. Having served in the US Navy during the Second World War, he benefited from the GI Bill (The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of June 22, 1944), receiving a scholarship for his college studies. He chose to go to Antioch College in

³⁶ Carl F. Starkloff, "Inculturation and Cultural Systems," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994):66-81, 274-294.

³⁷ Starkloff, *Theology of the In-Between*, 64-67.

³⁸ Lindbeck mentions Geertz's influence on his experiential-expressivism in George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 20. He also notes that his "'cultural-linguistic' theory of religion is, except for its name, adapted from Clifford Geertz" (George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Post-Liberal Age*, ed. James J. Buckley [London: SCM Press, 2002], 198. Frei also makes use of Geertz at a number of points; see, for example, Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 12-13, 26-27; *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 100, 146-147.

³⁹ Sherry B. Ortner, introduction to *The Fate of 'Culture': Geertz and Beyond*, ed. Sherry B. Ortner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1.

Ohio, which he described as “the very model of ... the small, small town, vaguely Christian, even more vaguely populist, liberal arts college.”⁴⁰ Originally intending to major in English so as pursue his interest in becoming a novelist, Geertz found this too constraining and switched instead to philosophy, which allowed courses in a range of disciplines. By the time he left Antioch, he had a broad general arts background, and both he and his wife, Hildred, a fellow Antioch student, had no idea of what to do after graduating.⁴¹

A mentor, George Geiger, philosophy professor at Antioch, steered him away from philosophy, which he felt had “fallen into the hands of Thomists and technicians,” and pointed him towards anthropology.⁴² This was an area Geertz had not studied to date. But Geiger was aware of the new Social Relations Department at Harvard, an early experiment in interdisciplinary studies, and with his endorsement, Geertz received a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies generous enough to support both his wife and himself for two years. When they were both accepted into the Social Relations program, their careers in anthropology began.⁴³

⁴⁰ Clifford Geertz, “Passage and Accident: A Life of Learning,” in *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.* For Geertz’s reflections on George Geiger, see Clifford Geertz, “Geiger at Antioch,” *The Antioch Review* 58, no. 1 (2000): 21-27.

⁴³ Although they have been divorced for some time, Hildred continues to publish under her married name. Her most recent work is Hildred Geertz, *The Life of a Balinese Temple: Artistry, Imagination, and History in a Peasant Village* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

At Harvard, Geertz walked in upon the finishing stages of a project set up by two of the doyens of anthropology in the United States – Clyde Kluckhohn (1905-1960) and Alfred L. Kroeber (1876-1960).⁴⁴ They were attempting to compile all the definitions of 'culture' that had appeared in the literature from the infancy of scientific anthropology in the mid-1800s.⁴⁵ Because of his background in philosophy, Geertz was asked to offer suggestions on their work. In this way he was brought into immediate engagement with what he describes as anthropology's "problematic," the concept of culture, which has fascinated him ever since. In fact, he sees his own career as paralleling the vicissitudes of the word 'culture': "In its ups and downs, its drift toward and away from clarity and popularity over the next half century, can be seen both anthropology's lumbering, arrhythmic line of march, and my own."⁴⁶

A major project of the Social Relations Department was the desire to find a common language for the social sciences, and so an interdisciplinary approach was fostered, rather than immediate specialisation in one discipline. In his first two years, Geertz studied anthropology, clinical and social psychology, sociology, methodology and anthropological theory. At that point, he and his wife needed to find somewhere to do fieldwork towards their theses, and once more, an opportunity presented itself. A multi-disciplinary research expedition was being jointly organized by the Social

⁴⁴ Kluckhohn taught at Harvard from 1935 until his death, and so would have been there during Geertz's time. Kroeber spent most of his career at the University of California, Berkeley, where Geertz taught from 1958-1960.

⁴⁵ Published as Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963). Originally published in 1952 as Vol. XLVII, No. 1 of the *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Harvard University.

⁴⁶ Geertz, "Passage and Accident," 12.

Relations Department, MIT's Center for International Studies and Gadjah Mada University in the newly-independent Indonesia. The plan was to conduct an intensive, long-term study of a small town in central Java, approaching the research from a number of different angles – history, psychology, sociology and anthropology. They needed people to study religion and family life, and so the Geertz signed on, Clifford for the former and Hildred for the latter.⁴⁷

The doctoral dissertation resulting from his research in Java was completed in 1956 and later published as *The Religion of Java*.⁴⁸ Geertz stayed on to teach at Harvard for a further year (1956-57), before doing fieldwork in Bali and then moving back to California to teach at the University of California, Berkeley (1958-60) and to be a fellow at Stanford (1958-59). From there, he moved to a long-term position at the University of Chicago, 1960-1970, during which time he had four periods of fieldwork in Morocco. In 1970, a chair of Social Science was established at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) at Princeton, previously the haunt primarily of eminent scientists and mathematicians, like Einstein and Gödel. Geertz was appointed as the inaugural professor, a position requiring no teaching, thereby allowing him to devote himself to the development of his interpretive anthropology through his research and writing, and through the appointments he made in the department.⁴⁹ Having served in that position for thirty years, he became Emeritus in 2000.

⁴⁷ Clifford Geertz, "Recollections of an Itinerant Career," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 24, no. 3 (1988): 32.

⁴⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

⁴⁹ Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 79.

Geertz's works comprise three major components. His various stints of fieldwork in Java, Bali and Morocco led to the authoring of six books⁵⁰ and the co-authoring of two others.⁵¹ These ethnographic works are exemplary, as even those who disagree with elements of his methodological framework are quick to note.⁵² Geertz is also a prolific writer of articles, reviews, and prefaces for books, as well as speeches to sundry audiences in which he applies his fertile mind to a range of fields outside of the traditional purview of anthropology.⁵³

It is the theoretical and methodological part of Geertz's corpus which is of most interest in analysing his concept of culture and his approach to its study. Most important are five books on these areas, three of which are collections of essays. Two

⁵⁰ Apart from *The Religion of Java*, these are Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involvement: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963); *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1965); *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968); *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁵¹ Hildred Geertz and Clifford Geertz, *Kinship in Bali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and Lawrence Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Geertz also edited Clifford Geertz, ed., *Myth, Symbol, and Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974).

⁵² William Roseberry, "Balinese Cockfights and the Seduction of Anthropology," *Social Research* 49, no. 4 (1982): 1013; Bradd Shore, "An Introduction to the Work of Clifford Geertz," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 71 (1988): 27.

⁵³ A helpful initial bibliography can be found in Fred Inglis, *Clifford Geertz: Culture, Custom and Ethics*, Key Contemporary Thinkers (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 196-204. Inglis' bibliography appears to be effectively that of the Institute for Advanced Study faculty web-page on Geertz, available at http://www.sss.ias.edu/pdf_documents/geertzcv.pdf; Internet; accessed 12 November 2004. For an impressively comprehensive bibliography, including unpublished materials, materials in non-print media, and translations of Geertz's works into numerous languages, see Ingo Mörth and Gerhard Fröhlich, "HyperGeertz WorldCatalogue," at <http://www.iwp.uni-linz.ac.at/lxe/sektktf/GG/HyperGeertz.html>; Internet; accessed 12 November 2004.

of these anthologies, *The Interpretation of Cultures* and *Local Knowledge*, were his seminal works on interpretive theory and its methods; the other, *Available Light*, his most recent work, reflects in particular on the interface between anthropology and philosophy.⁵⁴ A further work, *Works and Lives*, is a series of analyses of the style of writing of major anthropologists and the reasons for their success – trying to discover what anthropology is about by reflecting on the practice of four of its most notable practitioners, Lévi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski, and Benedict.⁵⁵ The fifth book is a review of his own career, *After the Fact*.⁵⁶

In these various methodologically-focussed works, Geertz proposed a fundamentally interpretive approach to the study of culture. He saw the need for anthropology to seek to discover the meanings at play in human social life through a hermeneutic reading of the symbolic mediations of meaning. Of course, this was not an entirely new approach. As we shall see further in Chapter 3, his work, posited as a challenge to dominant functionalist approaches which sought to make social sciences as much in the image of the natural sciences as possible, represented a reclaiming of the earlier traditions of Dilthey and Weber. Nor was Geertz the only proponent of such an interpretive approach. Apart from his colleagues, like David Schneider at the

⁵⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (USA: Basic Books, 1983); *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000). Essays are Geertz's preferred mode of attacking a subject (Clifford Geertz, introduction to *Local Knowledge*, 6-7).

⁵⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁶ Clifford Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).