PART-I
CHAPTER - 1
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

'Culture' has been the basic unit of study in archaeology since the turn of the century. Tracing this concept backwards in archaeological thought leads us to the discipline of anthropology. The development of this concept in archaeology is linked to that in anthropology particularly in North America. Amongst the social sciences, anthropology has done the most in formulating the concept. "It was anthropologists who discovered culture" said A.L.Kroeber (1936 : 331,333) ; and Leslie White added " it has been anthropologists who have cultivated this field " (1975 : 126).

America, unlike Europe, has had a long tradition of interaction between the two social sciences of anthropology and archaeology. In fact, ever since the founding of the first University department of anthropology by Franz Boas in America (1888 at Clarke University), prehistory was taught with anthropology. The close association between the two disciplines has led often to the uncritical use of anthropological concepts (culture included) by prehistorians. This is of course not particular to American archaeological writings but happens in the European tradition as well. I will elaborate on this point later.

In this chapter I propose to survey the work of some of the leading American anthropologists of this century, beginning with Boas and his contributions to the so called science of culture. The archaeological line of development of the culture concept (beginning with V.G. Childe) will be taken up in the following chapter.

I start with Boas, because first, one can trace the lineage of certain basic concepts of 'New' and contemporary archaeology back to Boas. Second, his work on cultures other than White American is a watershed in American intellectual history; and his tremendous output in terms of publications is impressive. Third, amongst Boas' large galaxy of students were Margaret Mead, Leslie White, Robert Lowie, Ruth Benediet, Alexandar Goldenweiser, and many others who
were heavily influenced by him (though not all chose to toe his line; some diverged from him in more ways than one as I shall presently discuss). And they all contributed to the further development of the study of culture. Therefore for a better understanding of the work of later day anthropologists and archaeologists and their view of culture, a study, albeit sketchy, of the seminal ideas of Boas are a logical starting point. Last, one can trace the lineage of an idea back almost indefinitely if one so wishes. But (a) that would not enlighten us where modern archaeology is concerned and (b) I realised I had to draw the line somewhere.

Franz Boas (1858-1942)

With the pioneering research of Boas in the early twentieth century, American anthropology took off on its road to maturity. Boas was "a sort of funnel through which American anthropology passed between its nineteenth century juniority and its twentieth century maturity" (Bohannan and Glazer 1988: 81).

Boas was born and brought up in Germany. He received his doctorate from the University of Kiel (1881). He first studied physics, then mathematics, then geography, finally settling for anthropology. He carried out exhaustive ethnographic surveys of North-Western American Indians for nearly sixty years, particularly of the Kwakiutl Indians. Boas belief in the value of fieldwork and the collection of first-hand information held fast to the end. He was first and foremost an ethnographer, covering a much broader range of issues in his surveys than his nineteenth-century predecessors or his contemporaries had done. Furthermore, whereas his associates seldom learned the language of the people they were studying, Boas insisted on learning the native language (insisting also that his students know the language of the group they studied). Despite his voluminous ethnographic output, anthropologists like Lowie have accused Boas of not completing even a "single large-scale portrait of tribal culture, not even of his beloved Kwakiutl" (1947: 434). Rohner (1969: xxii) attributes this to his philosophy of fieldwork which insisted that it is only after all the facts about a
people have been collected that some cautious generalizations could be made: and Boas was never satisfied that he had all the facts about the Kwakiutl!

In 1894 Boas accepted an assistant curatorship at the American Museum of Natural History, a position soon combined with a professorship at Columbia (a post he held until his retirement in 1936). From his academic base at Columbia, Boas influence stretched far. By 1926, for example, every academic department of anthropology in the United States was headed by one or other of Boas' students (Stocking 1968:296), Kroeber and Lowie at Berkeley, Sapir and Cole at Chicago, and so on. Boas himself maintained a patriarch's "control over anthropology at Columbia to his death in 1941" (Harris 1969:251). Another institutional appointment Boas secured was Honorary Philologist at the Bureau of American Ethnology. Resulting from this was the publication of vast bodies of linguistic material, as evidenced in the Handbook of American Indian Languages (Lowie 1947:428). He also served as editor of The Journal of American Folklore and the Publications of the American Ethnological Society. In 1917 Boas founded the International Journal of American Linguistics. He had earlier founded the American Folklore Society (1888) and the American Anthropological Association (1900). His contributions to the field of American Anthropological are, no doubt, immense.

Despite numerous writing, including three major books stretching over half-a-century, Boas did not leave as his legacy a coherent theory of culture for social scientists to build their work on. His understanding of culture has to be deconstructed from his writings; and those anthropologists influenced by him and who treated culture in a more systematic way than him.

"The Mind of Primitive Man (1911), Anthropology and Modern Life (1928) and Race, Language and Culture (1940). The last is actually a compilation of sixty-three essays."
Boas' work cannot be fully understood without understanding the context in which it developed. To grasp why and what he was offering as his contribution we need to be familiar with the dominant evolutionary perspective of the late nineteenth century. The ideas of cultural evolution were closely linked with Tylor's (1832-1903) view on the nature of culture. The evolutionists infused with Darwinian ideas about evolutionary change and human development hoped to establish a "science of culture" by demonstrating that all cultural systems, or specified parts of culture, progress through the same and invariable stages of development, with the latter stages presupposing the earlier ones. In Tylor's words: "... the main tendency of culture from primaeval up to modern times has been from savagery towards civilization" (1871). An ethnocentric attitude was clearly visible in the writings of these cultural evolutionists. After placing the industrialized nineteenth century west at the top of the scale, they sequentially placed the societies of other peoples around the world into hypothetical earlier stages of development.

The paradigm of evolution viewed historical change in the cultural life of mankind as following discernible laws, applicable in all cases, from which it followed that cultural development is in basic principle the same amongst all races and people. Parallel cultural developments in different parts of the world were cited as examples to prove the general theory.

Evolutionists of the likes of Tylor and Morgan [author of Ancient Society (1877)], were aware of the facts of cultural diffusion and the way in which diffusion had enabled societies to skip certain "stages". But their major concern was with the evolution of culture as a global phenomenon rather than with the development of specific cultures. Regarding the use of the word

1In Primitive Culture (1871) Tylor defined culture as "that most complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p.1). Whatever its limitations, Tylor was I think one of the first anthropologists to regard culture as a central problematic focus of scholarly investigation.
"culture" in the singular in the writings of the late evolutionists, Stocking makes the important observation that:

In all my readings of Tylor I have noted no instance in which the word culture appears in the plural. In extended researches into American social science between 1890 and 1915, I found no instances of the plural form in writers other than Boas prior to 1895. Men referred to "cultural stages" or "forms of culture" as indeed Tylor had before, but they did not speak of "cultures".

(1968: 203)

It is to Boas' credit that he was the first in America to challenge 'culture' in the singular¹. As Stocking has printed out, Boas too began his career with a notion of culture that was within the framework of contemporary evolutionist usage², but in the early 1890s he began to puzzle over this notion as his data on the North-western American Indians did not seem to be fitting into the evolutionist picture of development of totems, clans or marriage forms. It was then that he began talking about cultures as unique entities that had to be understood in their own terms. This involved accepting the idea of cultural relativism, which denied the existence of any universal standard for comparing the degree of development or worth of different cultures.

¹In Germany, a nonevolutionist interpretation of culture becomes prominent around the turn of the century among a group of scholars -- Friedrich Ratzel, Bernhard Ankerman, Leo Frobenius and Fritz Grabner. This was a historical type of interpretation, the so-called kulturkreislehre. It tried to argue that similarities of culture in non-contiguous areas were due to diffusion rather than independent development.

²In 1884, when he first went to British Columbia to conduct his fieldwork, he went with the notion of "civilizing" the Kwakiutl Indians!
Boas maintained that:

Research which compares similar cultural phenomena from various parts of the world ... makes the assumption that the same ethnological phenomenon has everywhere developed in the same manner. Here lies the flaw ... for no such proof can be given. Even the most cursory review shows that the same phenomenon may develop in a multitude of ways.

(1940: 273)

The argument of cultural relativism also involved the acceptance of another doctrine, historical particularism. As Boas writes in "The Methods of Ethnology":

We rather see that each cultural group has its own unique inner development, dependent upon the peculiar inner development of the social group, and partly upon the foreign influences to which it has been subjected. There have been processes of gradual differentiation as well as of levelling down differences between neighbouring cultural centers, but it would be quite impossible to understand on the basis of a single evolutionary scheme what happened to any particular people.

(1940: 6)

Thus culture came to be viewed as the result of specific and complex historical processes in which culture contact, borrowing, acculturation and (the largely chance operation of) diffusion played a major role in bringing about change.

Boas recognized that a catalogue of similar culture traits across diverse societies can never itself offer sufficient evidence of historical contact. Rather, the similarities must include those that are interrelated in similar ways to offer sufficient proof of diffusion. In addition, Boas concluded that we can reasonably
assume contact only among geographically proximate societies. In fact, in 1887 he proposed that museum collections should be exhibited according to geographical areas and tribes (demonstrating principles of diffusion operating within the geographic provinces) rather than in terms of hypothetical evolutionary sequences or typological similarities applicable to the entire continent. However, Boas never argued for geographic or environmental determinants of culture.¹ According to him:

> Environment has a certain limited effect upon the culture of man, but I do not see how the view that it is the primary moulder of culture can be supported by any facts.

(1896: 96)

A good example of Boas' critique of the evolutionist perspective is a paper (1896) titled, "The Limitations of the Comparative Method in Anthropology". Boas begins by disagreeing with the evolutionists who argued that cultural similarities were the outcome of the same basic and underlying causes as the human mind reacted in a similar fashion in like environmental conditions. According to Boas, it is impossible to account for all types of culture similarity by invoking similarity of the human mind. He held that the discovery of similar traits in different societies is not as important as the comparative school would have it. Similar traits may have developed for very different reasons in different cultures. Giving a variety of examples, he tries to demonstrate that the same 'ethnical phenomena' may develop from different sources. Let us consider one of his examples on the use of masks amongst different peoples:

> The use of masks is found among a great number of peoples. The origin of the custom of wearing masks is by no means clear in all cases, but a few

¹Many nineteenth century ethnologists had tried to explain cultural similarities and differences through the mechanism of geographic determinism. That is, they believed that environmental conditions affect cultural development and determine the rate of progress.
typical forms of their use may be easily distinguished. They are used for deceiving spirits as to the identity of the wearer. The spirit of a disease who intends to attack the person does not recognize him when he wears a mask, and the mask serves in this way as protection. In other cases the mask represents a spirit which is personified by the wearer, who in this shape frightens away other hostile spirits. Still other masks are commemorative. The wearer personifies a deceased person whose memory is to be recalled. Masks are also used in theatrical performances illustrating mythological incidents ... We cannot say that the occurrence of the same phenomenon is always due to the same causes, and that thus it is proved that the human mind obeys the same laws everywhere. We must demand that the causes from which it developed be investigated and the comparisons be restricted to those phenomena which have been proved to be effects of the same causes ..."

(1896: 88-89)

[A short comment is necessary here. The theory of social evolution as it is used and taught today does not focus on, leave alone hinge on, masks or decorative elements. It concerns the nature of groups, economic structures, the role of kinship, relations of production etc.].

Boas, therefore, tried to replace the comparative method with a method that stressed that customs have to be studied in detail and as a part of the cultural whole; and also that the distribution of a custom amongst neighbouring cultures be analysed. This would enable the student to find the environmental factors that influenced a culture, to clarify the psychological aspects that shape a culture, and to clarify the history of the local development of a custom.
Boas concluded:

Thus we have seen that the comparative method can hope to reach the grand result for which it is striving only when it bases its investigations on the historical results of researches which are devoted to laying clear the complex relations of each individual culture. The comparative method and the historical method, if I may use these terms, have been struggling for supremacy for a long time but we may hope that each will find its appropriate place and function. The historical method has reached a sounder basis by abandoning the misleading principle of assuming connections wherever similarities are found. The comparative method, notwithstanding all that has been said and written in its praise, has been remarkably barren of definite results, and I believe it will not become fruitful until we renounce the vain endeavor to construct a uniform systematic history of the evolution of culture...

(1896 : 93)

An important point Boas brings forth in his course of ethnographic studies is that cultures of particular people need to be viewed not as static and stable but as dynamic -- "in a state of flux" (1920 : 97). In "The Aims of Anthropological Research" (1932) he wrote:

The apparent stability of primitive types of culture is due to our lack of historical perspective. They

1There were some scholars who in turn objected to Boas' attack on the comparative method. Chief among them was, Leslie White.
change much more slowly than our modern civilization, but wherever archaeological evidence is available we do find changes in space and time. A careful investigation shows that those features that are assumed as almost stable are constantly undergoing changes. Some details may remain for a long time, but the general complex of culture cannot be assumed to retain its character for a very long span of time.

(p. 254)

Boas in numerous writings exhibits hostility to theory and laws i.e., to generalizations of all kinds in the study of cultures. He warns against the dangers of inter-posing theories between the observer and the facts. In this context a remark made by a student of Boas, Marian W. Smith, is of interest:

Boas taught his students statistics and phonetics as tools for handling biological series and language, but the greatest lesson we learnt was that data had an order of their own.

(emphasis mine; Krupat 1990 : 138)

Boas taught that anthropology is the sort of discipline that best limits its views to the singularity or particularity of cultural phenomena (ibid). Yet, in "The Aim of Ethnology" (1888 ; and included in his book Race, Language and Culture published decades later, indicating that he till then maintained the relevance and importance of this article) Boas writes that "the human mind develops everywhere according to the same laws ... the discovery of these [laws] is the greatest aim of our science " (1940 : 637).

Krupat (1990 : 139-40), writing about the 'irony' in Boas' work, points out that while Boas always insisted on a search for order in the enormous mass of empirical data on culture, he simultaneously lodged the caveat that more and even more data must first be studied before any valid generalization could begin. As all the evidence could never be in (as I pointed out earlier, Boas himself, despite his
life long study on the Kwakiutl Indians, was never satisfied that he had all the facts on them), the anthropologist had best stick to particularities and defer concern for pattern or general law. The two positions, one rejecting the formulation of all kinds of generalities and laws on the one hand and the other claiming the discovery of these laws as the highest aim of "our Science" seem to be "self-contradictory" (ibid: 138). Besides the issue of self-contradiction there is the further issue that even when recommending the development of scientific generalizations in the discipline Boas insists on unrealistic prior development in the field, namely the total collection of empirical facts.

In Boas' concept of culture, the individual held importance. According to him, it was people, not abstract cultures, who did things. The individual was emphasized:

The problem of the relation of the individual to his culture, to the society in which he lives have received too little attention. The standardized anthropological data that inform us of customary behaviour, give no clue to the reaction of the individual to his culture, nor to an understanding of his influence upon it. Still, here lies the source of a true interpretation of human behaviour. It seems a vain effort to search for sociological laws disregarding what should be called social psychology, namely the reaction of the individual to culture. They can be no more than empty formulas that can be imbued with life only by taking account of individual behaviour in cultural setting.

(1940: 258-59)

And further:

Culture may be defined as the totality of mental and physical reactions and activities that
characterize the behaviour of individuals comprising a social group...

(Boas quoted by White 1959: 69)¹

Boas' students Kroeber and (later) White carried the culture concept in the opposite direction. They argued for the complete subordination of the individual to his cultural milieu. It was this de-emphasis of the individual, elaborated at great length in "The Superorganic" (1917), which convinced everybody that Kroeber had departed from the Boasian fold. More on this later.

Boas and his students tried to refute the myth of American Indian inferiority and incapacity for progress. In The Mind of Primitive Man (1911) Boas explored the relationship -- or lack of it -- between culture and human physical types. In Race, Language and Culture (1940), he pointed out that these entities had to be studied separately and their history treated as independent variables. From his intensive field study of North American 'cultural areas', he concluded that traits tended to spread outward from their point(s) of origin and that as a result of diffusion similar cultures sometimes were shared by people with very different physical and linguistic characteristics. Hence the latter characteristics cannot provide clues for the reconstruction of culture history, any more than cultural criteria can be used to reconstruct the history of the language or physical type associated with any particular group. (It is indeed worthy of note that in contemporary archaeology reference is sometimes made to the work of geneticists and their findings extrapolated to language and culture).

Throughout his career, Boas insisted on cultural explanations rather than physical/racial expressions of cultural differences; and he rejected German racist theories directed against Jews, and American ones directed against black people. In 1931, alarmed at the rise of German Nazism he felt it his responsibility to

¹White (1959:69) raised a valid question in this respect: How does one determine which traits characterize a group and which do not? How is one to draw the line between culture and non-culture?
deliver an address on the subject of race and culture at the University of Kiel, Germany (on the occasion of the award of an honorary doctorate). In fact, in 1943, when he was dying, his last words concerned the need for eternal vigilance against racism. In Eric Wolfs' words: "It is Franz Boas' enduring legacy to have made us think about the issues posed by race, culture and peoplehood/ethnicity" (1994: 7).

Therefore in Boas' work, the usage of the term 'culture' became almost completely antithetical to those of nineteenth-century evolutionism (Kahn 1989: 6). A number of central elements of modern anthropological culture concept can be traced back to Boas -- "historicity, plurality, behavioural determinism, integration and relativism" (Stocking 1968: 204). Boas understood culture(s) as the product of a long history; dynamic not static; marked by accidents of diffusion; practised by individuals who change it; and quite separate from race or language. He thus "transformed the notion into a tool quite different from what it had been before. In the process he helped to transform both anthropology and the anthropologist's world" (ibid: 233).
A.L. Kroeber (1876 - 1960)

Alfred Kroeber, a student of Boas (in fact his first Ph.D. student) also contributed in a major way towards formulating the anthropological concept of culture. Along with Kluckhohn, Kroeber produced an exhaustive survey\(^1\) of the existing concepts of culture. The notion of culture, even then appears to be much debated. Anthropologists were at odds about the nature of their subject matter, and as to where to set its boundaries.

In 1901, Kroeber founded the department of anthropology, at the University of California (Berkeley) where he remained to his retirement in 1946. He was director of the University's Museum of Anthropology until 1946. Kroeber contributed to a broad range of scholarships: linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, archaeology\(^2\) and psychology. In fact, throughout Kroeber's writings there is an attempt to break down disciplinary boundaries and move to a multidisciplinary study.

In 1923, Kroeber published a general textbook, Anthropology. Another book Configurations of Culture Growth (1944), the result of many years of research was an elaboration of his ideas on civilization, 'culture areas' and ecology.

Kroeber had a long-term interest in the nature of culture and the way culture formed recognizable and persistent patterns. His main concern really was with cultural "patterns" as the units of cultural description. He defined pattern as "a rough plan of convenience for the preliminary ordering of facts awaiting description or interpretation" (1948 b: 120). Pattern, was therefore, that "...system of internal relationship which give to any culture its coherence or

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2. A small venture into archaeology at Zuni in 1916, led Kroeber to further archaeological studies in the valley of Mexico (in 1924) and Peru (between 1925 and 1942).
plan, and keep it from being a mere accumulation of random bits" (1923: 311). The "interpretation" of facts according to him required a move to process i.e., "those factors which operate either toward the stabilization and preservation of cultures and their parts" or toward growth and change" (ibid. : 148). Kroeber notes that such process, results in the movement of cultural patterns within and between cultures and through time.

Kroeber's emphasis was on the essentially acquired, transmitted or achieved nature of the "patterns" of culture as opposed to its allegedly ascriptive qualities. "Culture consists of conditions or learned activities ... the idea of learning brings us back again to what is socially transmitted, what is received from tradition, what is acquired by man as a member of society. So perhaps how it comes to be is really more distinctive of culture than what it is" (1948a: 258).

The interest Kroeber showed in cultural patterns culminated in The Configurations of Culture Growth (1944). Here Kroeber undertook a survey of various aspects of culture such as philosophy, science, philology, painting, literature, music, drama and sculpture of a few past societies in Europe, the Near East and Far East. On the basis of these surveys Kroeber tried to trace the life-cycle of the above aspects (their formation, culmination or "climax" and decline) and to throw light upon the following question: how do the various configurations in different regions and different historical periods compare with each other? And to what extent do the life-cycles of the several patterns of culture tend to run simultaneously? The results were largely negative. "I see no evidence", he writes, "of any true law in the phenomena dealt with; nothing cyclical, regularly repetitive, or necessary. There is nothing to show either that every culture must develop patterns within which a florescence of quality is possible, or that, having once so flowered, it must wither without chance of

1 We note the germ of the idea of culture as a system in equilibrium, which was later to become one of the sacred truths of New Archaeology.
revival ..." (p. 761). Kroeber did not regard his venture a success1.

Nevertheless, Kroeber's notions of pattern, process and culture change added new dimensions to the culture concept for both anthropology and archaeology. As Stanton and Perlman (1985: 6) pointed out, in his approach culture was viewed not as a closed but an open phenomenon. Pattern, according to Kroeber, preserved or changed through time and space as the result of underlying cultural processes.

The one major issue on which Kroeber differed from Boas is the role of the individual in the cultural setup. In his definition of culture, quoted above, culture is regarded as the property of human groups and not individuals. One need not be concerned with the individual, Kroeber felt, because the individual is the mere agent of cultural forces.

Kroeber's view of culture as superorganic was first expressed, in a seminal paper in 1915 and was paralleled by Robert Lowie. "Culture is a thing sui generis ...." said Lowie (1917: 66). The above view actually dates much further back to scholars of the eighteenth century. The idea is also evident in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in fields, other than anthropology. In Durkheim's writings a fairly clear statement of the superorganic conception of culture becomes evident and Kroeber seems very much to have been influenced by him. But Kroeber's formulation of the superorganic was, according to Gamst and Norbeck (1976: 34) probably made without direct reference to Tylor's writings like The Primitive Culture (1871), in which was presented the first fully clear statement on the concept. (Kroeber seems to have borrowed the term "superorganic" from the nineteenth century sociologist Herbert Spencer).

In the "superorganic" approach culture is seen as having an existence of its own apart from the biological organism, man. It is an entity at a higher level than the individual and governed by a logic all its own. 'Culture is culture is

1In the final chapter, "Review and Conclusions" Kroeber confesses to "...some lowering of expection in the course of my work" (1944: 762).
culture' seems to be Kroebers' credo. "In one sense", wrote Kroeber, "culture is both superindividual and superorganic" (1948a:253). He further specifies:

Superorganic means simply that when we consider culture we are dealing with something that is organic but which must also be viewed as something more than organic if it is to be fully intelligible to us... there are certain properties of culture -- such as transmissibility, high variability, cumulativeness, values, standards, influence on individuals -- which are difficult to explain, or to see much significance in, strictly in terms of the organic composition of personalities and individuals. These properties or qualities of culture evidently attach not to the organic individual of man as such, but to the actions and the behaviour products of societies of men-- that is, to culture.

(ibid.:253-54)

Therefore culture in Kroeber's terms was an actual organism.

Kroeber concedes that man is the active agent in creating and transmitting culture but he does not determine its nature or content in any arbitrary, independent or wilful way. In his view, culture engenders culture, and the human organism is the agency through which it operates [an agent, that is of course, indispensable for the creation, modification and perpetuation of culture but 'dispensable and distracting if one desires to understand the process of culture change and development' (Gamst and Norbeck 1976:11)].

Leslie A. White had also begun expressing similar views on culture as a superorganic phenomenon by the 1940s. Kroeber and White were in basic agreement over the concept although they disagreed over some other issues.

Geographers, like Carl O. Sauer (1889-1976), who in his time dominated North American cultural geography also borrowed Kroeber's 'superorganic' approach. This was a result of Sauer's association with Kroeber and Lowie at
Berkeley in the 1920s and the 1930s. Therefore, this concept of culture was spilling over to other disciplines as well.

The construct of culture as something with its own self-moving forces came under heavy criticism from Boas, Sapir, Mead, Goldenweiser and others. They were specifically attacking the "reification" of culture and the fact that was being studied was abstractions and not real, living people who actually do the things that make a culture. Boas (1928:236) emphasized that:

The forces that being about the changes are active in the individual composing the social groups, not in the abstract culture.

And at another place he writes (ibid. : 235):

It seems hardly necessary to consider culture a mystic entity that exists outside the society of its individual carriers and that it moves by its own force.

Students of Boas joined in the arguments against Kroeber's construct. Benedict was critical of the "superorganic" in Patterns of Culture (1943 : 231). In 1917, Edward Sapir, another student of Boas, wrote a response article to Kroeber's entitled "Do we need a superorganic?" His conclusion was a definite NO. According to Sapir "it is always the individual that really thinks and acts and revolts" (Sapir 1917 : 442). Sapir, who maintained a deep interest in the field of personality and culture argued for due importance to be given to the individual in the culture concept. In "Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry" published in 1932 (232-33), he wrote that:

The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals, and, on the subjective side, in the world of meanings which each one of these individuals may unconsciously abstract for himself from his participation in these interactions.

\(^1\)At the personal level too Kroeber and Sapir did not get along. Eric Wolf in an interview says that Kroeber was trying to keep Sapir out of a job at Berkeley (Friedman 1987 : 110).
He goes on to write that:

The concept of culture, as it is handled by the cultural anthropologist, is necessarily something of a statistical fiction ... It is not the concept of culture which is subtly misleading but the metaphysical locus to which culture is generally assigned.

(ibid. : 233)

Sapir therefore argued that culture cannot be "...realistically disconnected from those organizations of ideas and feelings which constitute the individual" (ibid.). But White (1959 b : 67) has accused Sapir of doing just that i.e., "disconnecting."

In his words:

...and no one has done a better job of disconnecting than Edward Sapir: there is not a single Indian - or even a nerve, muscle, or sense organ - in his monograph, *Southern Paiute, a Shoshonean language* (1930). Nor are there any people roaming about in his *Time Perspective in Aboriginal American Culture* (1916).

Many scholars criticized the concept of the "superorganic" on the basis that it cannot be known empirically and thus be verified. In *The Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Ryan writes:

In social science Durkheim's "collective conscience", Talcott Parson's "pattern variables", and Kroeber's "culture" are examples of concepts that are impossible to link to empirical data either directly or indirectly, in such a way as to demonstrate their existence as autonomous causal agents.

(1970 : 87)
Moreover the concept of the superorganic involved the rejection of "the commonsense belief in the importance of actions of real, fresh and blood individuals" (Duncan 1980: 190). Opler sums up this objection, stating that, "the truth is that no human being is a mere organism unless he is a foetus or an imbecile" (1964: 521).

Besides the controversy over the role of the individual in culture, Boas and Kroeber also entered into a controversy concerning which of them was the more historicist-minded! Kroeber in the 1930s began to argue that cultural phenomena were, on the whole, more amenable to historical than strictly scientific treatment and that "there are no laws in history similar to the laws of the physiochemical sciences. All asserted civilizational laws are at the most tendencies ... History does not deny them and may have to recognize them, but their formulation is not its end" (Kroeber quoted in Harris 1968: 326). Kroeber's view rested upon Windelband's distinction of science, in the strict sense of the word, as being generalizing or nomothetic, but of history as particularizing or idiosyncratic in aim (Kroeber and Kluckhon 1952: 162).

According to Kroeber, Boas applied the historical method but only as a "safeguard" (1935: 542). He deemed Boas mistaken in thinking that his own anthropology was exclusively a historical science (ibid.). According to Kroeber, the problems to which Boas directed his attention, including the general dynamics of both distribution and diffusion, were not historical problems. The results at which he arrived were not historical results. However, unwittingly, he was a functionalist, a student of "structural interrelations, change and process" (ibid.: 541). To my mind it is possible that Kroeber was being too extreme in his criticism of Boas. As I can see, Boas too, held a particularistic instead of a generalizing view of culture, and to him too, each culture was a result of long history.

On almost all other issues involved in the culture-concept, Kroeber was in agreement with his teacher, Boas. The same anti-evolutionist stand is reflected in Kroebers work. "Selection and other factors of organic evolution cannot be admitted as affecting civilization" (Kroeber quoted in Harris 1968: 326); And
"the so-called savage is no transition between the animal and the scientifically educated man ... All men are totally civilized man ... There is no higher and lower civilization for the historian" (ibid.). Akin to Boas were also his views on the role of the physical environment in shaping culture. In Kroeber's words, "Geography or physical environment, is material made use of by civilization, not a factor shaping or explaining civilization" (ibid.). The New Archaeologists did not follow that rather subtle point! For them culture meant adaptation to an environment.

To conclude, we can say that though influenced by his teacher, Kroeber chose to diverge from him in some ways, which has added new perspectives to our understanding of the concept of culture. In fact, his "superorganic" approach to culture, signalled the beginning of cultural determinism in American anthropology.

Robert H. Lowie (1883-1957)

As stated earlier Lowie was, like Kroeber, a believer in the "superorganic" nature of culture. Lowie and Kroeber, were colleagues at Berkeley for many years. This can explain the influence they had on each other, and the parallel development of some of their intellectual viewpoints. And like Kroeber, Lowie too had been a student of Boas.

Lowie carried out extensive ethnological field surveys, especially amongst the Crow Indians. In 1920, he published *Primitive Society*, based and supported by his vast ethnological fieldwork. It was a major success. The book embodied very largely the anti-unilinear and diffusionist views that had become popular (thanks to the efforts of anthropologists of the likes of Boas and Kroeber).

*Primitive Society* was followed by *Primitive Religion* (1924); *The Origin of the State* (1927), *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (1934) and *History of Ethnological Theory* (1937). In these works, the aim was not to oppose one doctrine by another but to show with the aid of ethnographic evidence, that the complexity of the data were such that any culture seen as an entity must be
regarded as a historical occurrence; and that the diffusion of ideas and techniques
were as important as internal developments in determining cultural forms. Lowie
comes very close to Boas' concept of culture. But at the same time, he stressed
that recurrent characteristics of types of institutions among unconnected peoples
justified the hypothesis of recurrent underlying factors that might be made clear
by cross cultural studies. He called himself a "middle-of-the-road" man (1960 : 13) that is, as having accepted both diffusion and independent development
according to the evidence in particular cases.

Lowie also shared the empiricism and caution of his teacher Boas. He
played a leading part in establishing standards for the systematic reading of
corroborated ethnographic data. And like Boas, he shunned generalizations from
one or two haphazard cases.

Lowies' main target was Henry Morgan and his evolutionary theory
(Leslie White, as we shall shortly discuss in turn attacked Lowie for his attack on
Morgan). Lowie was specifically critical of Morgans contributions in the field of
social organization and development of kinship terminology. Lowie claimed that
Morgans' scheme of the evolution of kinship could not be proved and moreover
he accused Morgan of using faulty data.

But Lowie, like Kroeber, diverged from Boas on the issue of the centrality
of the individual in the schema of culture. For him too, culture was
"superorganic" - an entity above man quoting Lowie:

Psychology, racial differences, geographical
environment, have all proved inadequate. Culture is
a thing sui generis which can be explained only in
terms of itself. This is not mysticism but sound
scientific method ... the ethnologist ... will account
for a given cultural fact by merging it into a group
of cultural facts or by demonstrating some other
cultural fact out of which it has been developed.

(1917 : 66)
Duncan (1980) in his analysis of the superorganic in American social sciences has rightly pointed out that the development of this approach was an attempt to distinguish anthropology from psychology and later sociology by focusing on culture as an independent level of reality - a suprahuman level. By raising culture to this level, the anthropologist had no need for individuals and therefore for psychological processes (p. 184).

Lowies' 'Culture' faced the same kind of opposition as Kroeber's "superorganic".

**Carl O. Sauer (1889-1975)**

It is appropriate to introduce at this stage the geographer Carl Sauer¹. Sauer liberally borrowed and enriched the concepts and ideas of Kroeber and Lowie, particularly their "superorganic" perspective. Also the themes of historical reconstruction, culture area and diffusion, which Sauer introduced into American geography were those that Kroeber and Lowie, amongst many other students of Boas, had been working on since Boas first became interested in such topics in the 1890s. Sauer encouraged his students² to familiarize themselves with the anthropological concept of culture by taking courses with Kroeber and Lowie.³ Yet by about 1950 graduate students at Berkelay were not necessarily expected to read Kroeber or other culture theorists. It was assumed that they knew what culture was. But Geertz notes in an interview (Handler 1991 : 606) that by the time he got to Berkeley in 1959-60, Kroeber was a fairly distant presence".

¹ Through his students, many of whom went on to hold senior academic posts in American Universities, Sauer influenced many generations of American geographers.

² Sauer was the head of the Geography department at Berkeley University from 1922-54.

³ Kniffen, a student of Sauer, writes that, "I got an awful lot from Kroeber. I had more courses in anthropology than I did in geography" (quoted in Duncan 1980 : 186).
As I can see, the roots of the approach of cultural determinism in America, which dominated the social sciences to the 1950s (with the exception of geography which continued to be dominated by Sauerians until recently\(^1\)) can be traced back to one major institution i.e., University of California at Berkeley.

Cultural geography for Sauer incorporated the Superorganic argument which ruled out social psychological and social organizational variables. In his view "culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape the result " (Jackson 1989 : 14). He was thus drawing attention to the physical environment rather than the social by attributing causality to culture. Culture was therefore, the agency. Sauer defined agency as "the capacity of man (sic) to alter his natural environment" (1956 : 49). According to Jackson "although he spoke of agency in terms of 'historically cumulative effects', his discussion concentrated on physical and biological processes set in motion by human intervention rather than on social processes per se". (1989 : 14).

To Sauer, the "superorganic" self-regulating culture often overrides individual fates. To him Human Geography was "a science that has nothing to do with individuals, but only with human institutions, or cultures" (1963 : 358). Sauer thus shared Kroeber and Lowies' belief that culture was the property of human groups and not individuals, and also that it was embodied in custom and tradition. However, Sauer put more stress on the material aspects of culture as opposed to its symbolic forms. Much of his empirical research focused on material culture as artefact, and its context in the landscape -- house forms, field patterns, cemeteries etc. It was this focus on the material aspects of culture and its representation in the environment which influenced the development of American geography. Sauer also stressed on the 'folk' element over high culture. He had great respect for tradition and diversity; and viewed with regret the homogenizing tendencies of the modern world.

\(^1\)But from the late 1970s and 80s scholars like Jackson (1989) began arguing that cultural geography is in urgent need of reappraisal and that its concept of culture is outdated.
According to Jackson (1989: 15), the current agenda of cultural geography is still dominated by Sauers' original concerns with rural, vernacular and folk themes. This is all very well, except for the fact that their concept of culture remains largely the same -- most present day cultural geographers are still confined to mapping the distribution of culture traits in the landscape. But some scholars like Jackson (1989), Duncan (1980) and others are now arguing for the rejection of the reified approach to culture and an adoption of a more sociological approach. In Duncans' words: "the 'Sauerian' or Berkeley cultural geography is unnecessarily limited in the range of questions it can address and more importantly in the range of explanatory variables with which it can deal" (1980: 198).

**Leslie A. White (1900-1975)**

Leslie A. White wrote extensively on the 'science of culture' or what he called 'culturology'. In his notion of the culture concept too, the "superorganic" held force.

During the course of his studies in the 1920s, White came under the influence of the Boasian outlook, and this is not surprising, because at the New School in New York between 1922-24 he was taught by Alexander Goldenweiser (a student of Boas) and at the University of Chicago, where he went to study sociology, he was influenced by Boasians like Edward Sapir. He was also at this time specifically influenced by Lowies' *Primitive Society* (1920).

During his teaching assignment at the University of Buffalo in the late 1920s, White began to be dissatisfied with Boasian ideas. In his classes he found it difficult to explain, leave alone defend, Boas to his students. Around that time, while working with his students on the Seneca reservation (Iroquois territory), White came across Morgan's *League of the Iroquois* for the first time. His fascination with this book led him to a thorough study of Morgans' writings and thence back to the thought of the early evolutionists. His break with the Boasians
had begun. Marvin Harris (1968 : 640, following Barnes 1960 xxvi) traces White's "final conversion to evolutionism" to his tour to the Soviet Union in 1929, where he read Marx and Engels and became interested in their construction of the nature and development of civilization.

In 1930, White took up a teaching position at the University of Michigan. He also served as a visiting professor at Chicago, Yale, Columbia and Harvard Universities; and in 1936 he was at the Yenching Institute at Beijing. During White's tenure at Michigan, its anthropology department grew to be one of the country's renowned centers of anthropology.

During his early years at Michigan, White's writings were devoted to a debate with the Boas school (which continued through his writings till the end). Through the 1930s, White published a number of monographs on the Native American Indians of South Western United States. Post World War II, White concentrated on the so-called 'science of culture' and the book The Science of Culture, published in 1949, was his introduction to his own conceptions of culture, evolution and 'culturology'. In 1959, he published an intensive four-volume work on the development of culture, The Evolution of Culture: The development of civilization to the fall of Rome. White also carried on an intensive investigation of the life and works of Morgan. He made a study of the literary sources on Morgan and also tried literally to trace Morgans' travels. Mostly under the influence of Morgan, White went back to the evolutionary perspective of the early nineteenth century.

1 The Acoma Indians (1932), The Pueblo of San Domingo, New Mexico (1935), The Pueblo of San Felipe (1932) and The Pueblo of Santa Ana, New Mexico (1936).

2 He edited extracts from the European Travel Journal of Lewis H. Morgan (1937) and Pioneers in American Anthropology: The Bandelier Morgan letters 1873-1883 (2 Vols; 1940).
Morgan, according to White, has been either ignored/belittled or grossly misrepresented. "I have tried to defend him against these injustices" (1947a: 401). This attitude according to him was not "fanaticism" and blind faith but merely a sense of "justice and freeplay" (ibid.). White repeatedly reiterated Tylor's stand (put in his 1881 book *Anthropology*) that "evolution is the great principle which every scholar must lay firm hold of if he intends to understand either the world he lives in or the history of the past". The year 1946-47 was the time of the debate in *American Anthropologist* between Lowie (1946 a, b) and White (1947 a) over the issue of evolutionism. [Lowie (1946 a: 223-33) accused White of taking the defense of Morgan and the evolutionary perspective to the extreme].

Evolutionism in its most irreducible form was to White "a temporal sequence of form" (1959 a: vii) for "no stage of civilization came into existence spontaneously but developed out of the stage before it" (Tylor 1881: 20, quoted in White 1959 c: 108). "Evolution is the name of a kind of relationship among things and events of the external world ... (and) in the dynamic aspect, things and events related in this way constitute a process, an evolutionist process" (White 1959 c: 114). But in White's scheme of evolution only a cultural 'system' was capable of evolving-- "a mere aggregation of things without organic unity cannot undergo evolution" (1959 a: 30). He further writes that:

Cultural evolution is applicable to any cultural system, whether it be our model of culture of mankind as a whole, or the culture of any people, group of people, or area, in so far that it can properly be regarded as a system, or to those portions of the total cultural system that can be treated as subsystems, such as technology, social organization or philosophy ...

(ibid.)

I will shortly come to White's view of culture as systems.
In his preface to his monumental *Evolution of Culture* (1959), White clearly states that the work was an attempt to present a modern, mid-twentieth century exposition of the evolutionist theory. He emphasizes that the theory set forth cannot be called "neo-evolutionism" (a term proposed by the likes of Lowie and Goldenweiser). White (1959 a: ix) refers to neo-evolutionism as:

a misleading term: used to imply that the theory of evolution today is somehow different from the theory eighty years ago. We reject any such notion. The theory of evolution set forth in this work does not differ one whit in principle from that expressed in Tylor's *Anthropology* in 1881.

Criticizing the main culprit of the anti-evolutionist stance, Boas, White writes:

The domination of much of American anthropology by such a man for almost four decades has been of course exceedingly unfortunate. To be led by one who was opposed to theorizing, generalizations, syntheses and philosophic systems, who was a cultural anti-evolutionist, a mind incapable of envisaging a science of culture, could not have been other than disastrous for anthropology. Boas' reactionary outlook and strong personal influences have done American anthropology an injury from which it will be slow to recover.

(1946 : 91)

The students of the Boas school1 were accused as being particularists and relativists, refusing to set up stages of development and asserting that any

1Those most frequently cited by White included Sapir, Goldenweiser, Lowie, Herskovits, Mead and Benedict.
explanation of cultures was chimerical and ethnocentric (White 1947: 165). White was also critical of their reliance upon the inductive method and their faith in the collection of facts, particularly Boas' insistence on the piling of facts in order to somehow come to some kind of understanding. White firmly believed that no amount of accumulation of facts could ever produce understanding, at least in the form of generalizations of science. According to White facts could never speak for themselves: it was the creative imagination which spoke for them. "Facts as facts", he wrote, "lie inert and meaningless until they are quickened into life and meaning by the creative power of intelligence" (1946: 406).

According to White, anthropology as influenced by Boas tended to confuse the process of history—a temporal or chronological sequence of events—with the process that is evolution—a temporal sequence of forms. "The stream of culture", wrote White, "undergoes changes of content as well as alterations of form as it flows" (1959a: 66). The distinction between the historical and the evolutionist processes is discussed at length in White's 1945 article "History, Evolutionism and Functionalism: three types of interpretation of culture".

Within the evolutionist framework White set out to define what culture is. "Culture" (1949: 10) in his words is:

...the name of a distinct order, or class of phenomena, namely those things and events that are dependent upon the exercise of mental ability, peculiar to human species that we have termed 'symbolling'. To be more specific, culture consists of material objects—tools, utensils, ornaments, amulets etc.—acts, beliefs and attitudes that function in contexts characterized by symbolling. It

1 White was also critical of the Kulturkreis School in Germany and Austria. The anthropologists who adhered to this school were labelled "clerical anthropologists" (1959a: viii).
is an elaborate mechanism, an organization of exosomatic ways and means employed by a particular animal species, man, in the struggle for existence and survival.

And in his 1959 article, "The Concept of Culture", he writes that:

when things and events dependent on symbolling are considered and interpreted in an extrasomatic context i.e., in terms of their relationships to one another rather than to human organisms, we may call them culture and the science culturology . . .

(1959 b: 59)

The key words and phrases of White's definition of culture were: 'symbolling', 'extrasomatic' or 'exosomatic' and 'means employed by man' in the 'struggle for existence and survival'. Let us take up each of these in turn.

According to White, culture originated and is undergoing a continuous process of improvement because of man's ability to symbolize.\(^1\) Without symbols man would not be the thinking animal he is. Thus culture itself, which depends on symbols, would not have existed without the ability to symbolize. Symbols or symbolates, he believes, can be used to refer to human behaviour and psychological processes; however, this is the province of psychology. It is only when symbols are regarded in an extrosomatic context, without the mediation of individuals, that it is a cultural process.

Clarifying what he meant by the extrasomatic nature of culture White states that:

We mean that although culture is produced and perpetuated only by the human species and

\(^1\) To White, all the behaviour of man is symbolic behaviour, and this is a point close to that of the cognitive anthropologists of today.
therefore has its origins and basis in the biological make-up of man, in its relation to human beings after it came into existence and became established as a tradition, culture exists and behaves and is related to man as if it were non-biological in character.

(1959 a: 12)

White therefore, like Kroeber and Lowie, gave little space to the individual within the culture concept. "No co-relation" according to White, in the sense of a cause-and-effect relationship can be established between particular peoples and particular cultures" (1959 a : 12). This therefore, meant that man is irrelevant to various problems of cultural interpretation such as cultural diversities and process of culture change in general and the evolution of culture in particular (ibid.) . According to White, the view that people, rather than culture do things was the "fallacy of pseudo-realism" (1959 b: 66). Till the last of his writings, White firmly upheld the view-point that man was irrelevant to explanations of culture process. He took up the cudgels against all those anthropologists who attempted to give a position of honour to the individual in the concept of culture, like Edward Sapir.

"Culture as a process sui generis" was a dictum of Lowie that White popularized. As I have worked out, it is a concept that can be traced back from White to Lowie, Kroeber and Durkheim. White is perhaps even more forceful than Kroeber in asserting the superorganic nature of culture.

If the behaviour of a people is determined by its culture what determines the culture? The answer is that it determines itself. Culture may be regarded as a process sui generis.

(White quoted in Harris 1968 : 548)
Let us move on to the third part of White's definition i.e., culture as a means employed by man in the struggle for existence and survival. In all of White's writings, culture is an extrasomatic mechanism employed to make human life more secure. But in his last work, *The Concept of Cultural Systems* (1975), White declares this explanation erroneous. According to him the concept of cultural systems on which he had dwelt for many years made it possible for him to see this error (p. 9). In his words:

... systems must be interpreted and understood in terms of themselves i.e., their structure and behaviour. The application of this rule to cultural systems made me realize that "the function of culture is to serve the needs of man" is as invalid as it had been obvious to me before.

(ibid. : xi)

In his later writings, White began discussing more frequently the concept of cultural systems.¹ The concept was developed as a corollary of the proposition that "culture constitutes a distinct order of phenomena". The systems approach in archaeology, beginning in the 1960s, owes its fundamentals, in part, to White's conception of culture as systems. Binford, in particular, having been his student has been a keen propagandist of White's work. Discussing the systems approach, White writes:

To understand cultural systems in particular we must know something about systems in general.
First, they are composed of interrelated, interdependent parts, or kinds of parts; these parts

¹ In fact in his last book, published in 1975 is devoted entirely to the concept of cultural systems.
form the structure of the system. The parts interact with one another, and the system correlates and coordinates the parts to form an integral whole.

Cultural systems must be explained in terms of themselves, in terms of their components, their structure. They are to be understood, writes White, "in terms of the intrinsic properties of their components and the integration of these parts in a unity-- all in accordance with the principle of cause and effect" (ibid. : 36).

White looked upon cultural systems as closed units. According to him "...it is only when and in so far as cultures can be considered significantly apart from their relations and contact with other cultures that they can be treated as systems" (1959 a : 18). Though he did not deny the importance of diffusion' and culture contact, White believed that "to the extent that we can think realistically of the culture of the Zuni or of Western Europe or of aboriginal America as not significantly influenced by other cultures, to that extent we can think of them as systems" (ibid.). White however, nowhere explains how one may "realistically" determine a culture as uncontaminated. He does not specify the criteria we need to apply, to distinguish a culture, as a system or a non-system.

For White there were four kinds of components or subsystems of cultural systems: technology, ideology, society and sentiments or attitudes -- all of which were to be considered as parts of the organic whole. However the fact that these components were interrelated did not mean that their respective roles in the culture process were equal. The technological factor was the most important,
with all others being dependent on it and determined by it (technology as the determining factor in culture processes and change is also something that the archaeologist, V.G. Childe was emphasizing at the same time as White). Quoting White:

Thus we may say, in summary of our discussion of the inter-relationship of technological, sociological, philosophic and sentimental sectors of culture, that technology is the basis upon which the cultural system as a whole rests. Secondly, it is the technology of a culture that determines in a general way the form and content of social systems, philosophies and sentiments. In the system that is culture, technology is the independent variable, the other sectors the dependent variables. All human life and consequently culture itself, depends upon the material, physical and chemical means of adjustment of man as an animal species, as living material systems, to the surface of the earth and the surrounding cosmos. The fact is obvious that to emphasize it would be superfluous were it not for the prevalence of theories which rest upon other premises. Society, philosophy and sentiment are, in effect, nontechnological forms of expression of the basic technological process.

(1959 a: 26)

We may note especially one sentence in the above passage: "All human life and consequently culture itself ... surrounding cosmos". It is exactly what Binford was to say later: "Culture is man's extrasomatic adaptation to the environment" (1972 : 105).
White formulated his concept of technological determinism in terms of a basic law of evolution which stated that, things being equal, culture evolves as the amount of energy harnessed per capita increases. By means of technological instruments energy is harnessed and put to work. He distinguished three factors in any cultural system namely:

1. The amount of energy harnessed per capita per year,
2. The efficiency of the technological means by which energy is harnessed and put to work; and
3. The magnitude of human-serving goods and services produced, which was determined by the above two.

White gave the following formula $E \times T \rightarrow C$, in which $C$ represented the degree of cultural development, $E$ the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year, and $T$, the quality or efficiency of tools employed in the expenditure of energy.

Culture being a superbiological, superpsychological, superorganic phenomenon constituting a distinct order of reality required, according to White, a special science for its interpretation -- the 'science of culture'. White was in fact reasserting what Lowie had stated: that the investigation of culture "demands ... a separate science" (Lowie 1936: 306). This science White labelled "culturology" (1949: 115-117; 409-415). Cultural phenomena, since they acted according to their own laws, must be interpreted in terms of culture itself. White praised Kroebers' *Configurations of Culture Growth* (1944) because it was according to him a study of culture and not of the personality or reactions of human organisms--a culturological rather than a psychological study (1946: 85). According to White, as science has grown and matured it has reached successively the following levels: Anatomy, physiology, physiological psychology, individual psychology, social psychology (sociology), and finally the science of culture or culturology (ibid.).
White therefore, investigated the laws of cultural development rather than the 'historical particularism' of the Boasians. White's argument that men and women are not the centres from which their behaviour emanates, links him to Kroeber, Lowie, and by extension, Durkheim. And White's construct of culture as systems, became the central theme of the American 'New Archaeology' movement, which was spearheaded by Binford in the late 1960s.

To sum up, we can say that the anthropological notion of culture changed over time. There has been no unified concept of culture since the time of Boas. Various perceptions can be discerned. Yet that is not to say that there are no linkages in the theories of Boas, Kroeber, Lowie and White. There were many major points on which the several approaches to culture as a construct converged.

Boas' construct of culture -- as anti-evolution, as dynamic, a product of long history and tradition, influenced by diffusion of ideas and peoples, practiced by real men and women and as an entity separate from other entities like race and language -- found a wide following among many generations of American anthropologists (referred to as the Boasians).

Kroeber and Lowie agreed with most of Boas' formulation except when it came to the role of the individual. Here there was a complete divergence. Within the superorganic framework of Kroeber, Lowie and later White, the individual had no value in the cultural set up as culture was an entity above man. The superorganic concept aroused much debate within anthropology and related disciplines. It was also adopted uncritically by scholars from other disciplines, like Carl O. Sauer.

White's approach was the total opposite of Boas'. Whatever Boas had rejected, White accepted. It was a reversion, from deep conviction, to Morgan's evolutionism. But with Kroeber, White was in total agreement over the concept of the superorganic. Though they tended to disagree over other issues such as
White's materialist conception of the world in which technology was a determining force. For us the important consideration is that White's work had a considerable influence on 'New Archaeologists' of the 1960s and 1970s, chief amongst whom was Lewis Binford. Binford's understanding of culture as systems and his definition of culture as "mans extrasomatic means of adaptation to the environment" comes straight down from White.

This chapter, therefore, provides a background to the next chapter on the notion of culture in archaeology.