

ABSTRACTS

LAWRENCE GROSSBERG, *Cultural Studies in Dark Times*

The essay aims to revive debates about the sorts of critical work it will take to respond to these 'dark times', focusing on the best works of cultural studies, assuming that there is no consensus about the nature of the project of cultural studies, and that it is always reconfiguring itself, in response to the changing configurations of power and the changing possibilities of struggle and resistance, possibility and transformation. In order to react to these 'dark times', the suggested reflection concludes that we need to look at (1) the articulations of material effects that produce populations and forms of agency (such as control) and passivity; (2) the expressive articulations of lived but perhaps not subjective experience as a distribution of bodies and capacities; and (3), the semiotic articulations that produce the specificity of human existence.

HARTMUT BÖHME, *Perspectives of the Kulturwissenschaft from an Historical and Analytical Point of View*

The paper examines how, in order to represent cultural studies as a specific discipline, the organization of the university system has to accept their weak definedness, many overlaps of topics with other disciplines and that their risk is also what makes their interdisciplinary competence. Based on questions from the media, gender and culture, some universities in Germany have chosen horizontal orientations, while other universities preferred to set up new disciplines: media studies, cultural studies, gender studies. The paper reconstructs the ways the field of studies on culture in Germany can deal with problems like the cultural diffusion of the religious dimension, risk and security dilemmas in contemporary society, the society of work and the society of weariness etc.

MENA MITRANO, *From 'Culture' to Reciprocities: Imagining the Critical Act after Power*

This paper presents cultural studies less as a field and more as an intellectual inclination. It treats 'cultural studies' as a label that thematizes but hardly exhausts an inclination to challenge inequality through criticism. The paper begins by tracing the philosophical affiliation of cultural studies as a new form of critical discourse, on the one hand, to the post-Heideggerian problematic association of culture with an existential notion of dwelling and, on the other, to early critical theory's focus on the intensity of the relation between concept and concrete reality, with particular reference to the work of pioneers like Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. The paper goes on to discuss cultural studies' transatlantic crossing as simultaneously a geographical and a theoretical passage from traditional criticism to critique, which combined the interrogation of key terms like 'culture' with Foucault's new insights into the dynamics of modern power. In the second part of the paper, the inclusion of neglected figures from a non-Anglophone context (feminist theorist Carla Lonzi) in the international trajectory of cultural studies and a consideration of the current planetary redistribution and rearrangement of culture help to account for the interconnected destinies of cultural studies, understood as special attention to often elusive sites of struggle, and the contemporary search for a purposeful critical act.

ANTONIO LUCCI, *Italian Kulturwissenschaft. Reflections on the 'erste Kulturwissenschaften' Starting From the Italian Theory*

On the basis of a critical analysis Roberto Esposito's last book *Da fuori*, this essay focuses on the theme of the 'Italian Theory.' Proposing a reconstruction of the history of continental philosophy, Esposito suggests that the concept of life may represent a trait d'union for the tradition of the Italian thought. This essay proposes an alternative genealogy of this concept within the history of Italian thought. It shows that the concept of 'life' was first developed by scholars, such as Mantegazza, Lombroso, De Sanctis, and De Martino, whose theories crossed the boundaries between theoretical and applied human sciences, and natural sciences.

JOACHIM FISCHER, *Philosophical-Anthropological Theories of Culture: Cassirer, Scheler, Plessner*

The topic of this paper is the theory of the mind (*Geist*) i.e. of the culture (*Kultur*) in Cassirer's, Scheler's and Plessner's thought. Central is the idea that in the 1920s, by all three authors, a certain, hitherto unknown, so new type of theory of mind occurred – one can also say of theory of knowledge, or of philosophy of culture. The related thesis is that both the novelty and the commonality of this theory of mind in Cassirer, Scheler and Plessner, despite their differences, is due to a

common theoretical background, the paradigm of Philosophical Anthropology. To obtain that purpose, the paper analyzes and reads together the texts on «symbolic forms» (Cassirer), on «forms of knowledge» (Scheler) and on «forms of giving meaning» of the senses (Plessner).

ANDREA BORSARI, *The 'Kultur Mensch' between 'Tragödie' and 'Renaissance'. Aesthetics and Anthropology at the Origin of the Kulturphilosophie*

In current recovery of the German philosophy of cultures (*Kulturphilosophie*) you can determine a theoretical core – the relationship between subject and object – and a defining moment for its genesis – the discussion of Georg Simmel's theses on the tragedy of culture carried out by Ernst Cassirer. The essay discusses the importance of Simmel position for the current self-awareness of *Kulturphilosophie* and the critics to him by Cassirer, analyzes the terms of the comparison between the two philosophers, together with their related anthropologies, and detects their similarities and differences emblemized by the two aesthetic and moral categories «Tragedy» (Simmel) and «Renaissance» (Cassirer).

GIACOMO SCARPELLI, *The Great Goddess of Ephesus. A Philosophical Diachrony*

This essay, moving from the Warburg Institute iconological collection of Artemis of Ephesus images (paintings and sculptures from 2nd century B.C. to 19th century A.C.), analyses the hypothesis on the origin of the cult of this popular goddess by some of the greatest minds of our age: from Goethe to Nietzsche, Frazer, Freud, Reinach and Sartiaux. All of them thought that Artemis, worshipped in the ancient Lydian town, is related with the archaic Great Mother divinities. According to Nietzsche, the image of Artemis is in some way connected with Egyptian Isis and Baubo of Eleusinian Mysteries and with the concept of 'veiled' nature. Freud thought that Artemis of Ephesus influenced the image of the Christian Mother of Jesus. According to him, the Underworld of the mythology is the allegorical transfiguration of the unconscious. Frazer believed that Artemis of Ephesus is the 'reflected image' of Diana of Nemi, the central figure of his Golden Bough. Studying some little known aspects of the thinking by Nietzsche, Freud and Frazer, like their opinion on the cult of the Ephesian goddess, will help us to better understand the thinking of each of them and to obtain a more appropriate image of the concatenation of the History of Culture.

MICHELE COMETA, *The Things of the Self. Towards an Archeology of (Material) Culture*

The essay emphasizes some major points characterizing the field of studies on cultures from an anthropological, archaeological, and neuro-cognitive point of view

and focuses on the relationship among processes of subjectivation, the birth of the Self and the manipulation of tools. The latest Cognitive Archaeology, recovering concepts such as affordances of objects, agency and network, suggests that the mind, the action and the matter should be considered together. It is quite different from the old assumption that procedural objects, things and tools, are an extrasomatic extension for adaptation, but remain confined among the 'cultural' productions. In this perspective, the 'things', along with the mind, the body and the Self, are something beyond the difference between nature and culture.

GILBERTO MAZZOLI, *The Nature of the Environmental History after the Cultural Turn. Themes and Historiography*

Environmental history is an interdisciplinary historical approach that studies the human interaction with the natural world through time: how humans both shape their environment and are shaped by it. What does 'nature' mean for the environmental historians? This essay, after a brief introduction to this sub-field of modern and contemporary history, will treat the effects that the so-called Cultural Turn in humanities had on the methodology of environmental historians, and shows the peculiar way of this discipline to deal with the concepts of nature and culture.

JOÃO CEZAR DE CASTRO ROCHA, *Shakespearean Cultures and the Poetics of the Emulation*

This essay proposes to analyze specimens in the relations between the literary theory, from the point of view of a mimetic hypothesis inspired by the work of René Girard, and the study of cultures. To do that, the links that connect different exhibitions of art are observed from a Girardian perspective, which seems to be located at the intersection of the concept of 'Shakespearean cultures' (i.e. cultures that cannot be defined except by the gaze of the Other) and the theoretical framework of the 'Poetics of the Emulation' (a set of aesthetic and intellectual procedures through which a culture tries to affirm itself assimilating another culture, mainly predominant).

FRIEDRICH A. KITTLER, *Nietzsche, or the Invention of the Political Culture*

This essay aims to examine the philosophical questioning of Friedrich Nietzsche intended as 'Kulturpolitik'. Especially through the analysis of *Ecce Homo*, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the relationships between philosophy Kulturwissenschaft and Kulturpolitik will be inquired. The conclusive part of the essay investigates the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, analyzed with particular consideration of his thematic of the history of technics.

