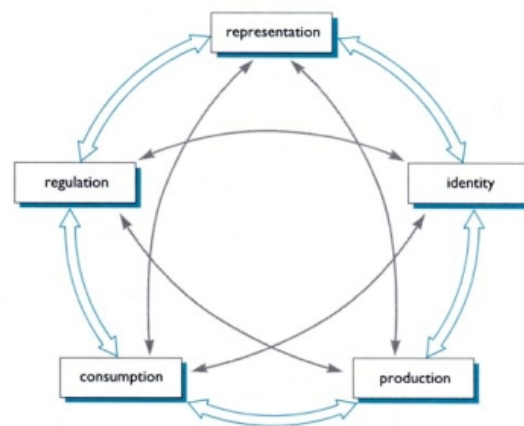


Explain, in your own words, what Richard Rorty means in the following quote:

"We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is not truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there -- cannot exist independently of the human mind -- because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own -- unaided by the describing activities of human beings -- cannot." (Rorty, 1989: 69) -- Barker, pp. 104-105



from Paul Du Gay, Production of Culture/Cultures of Production (London: The Open University), 1997

## The Circuit of Culture



KEY THINKER: Antonio Gramsci

An Italian writer, politician, political philosopher, and linguist. He is considered one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His writings are concerned with the analysis of culture and political leadership. He is renowned for his concept of *cultural hegemony* as a means of maintaining the state in a capitalist society. Also central to his thinking are the ideas that 1) The need for popular workers' education to encourage development of intellectuals from the working class; and 2) The distinction between *political society* (the police, the army, legal system, etc.) which dominates directly and coercively, and *civil society* (the family, the education system, trade unions, etc.) where leadership is constituted through ideology or by means of consent.

**Key Writings:**

*The Prison Notebooks* (smuggled out of prison in the 1930s; published in the 1950s)

- ▶ The *war of position*: the winning of hegemony within the sphere of civil society.
- ▶ The *war of maneuver*: the assault on state power

## Power/Knowledge

Foucault certainly regards knowledge as implicated with power, hence his concept of *power/knowledge*. By *power/knowledge* is meant a mutually constituting relationship between power and knowledge, so that knowledge is indissociable from regimes of power. Knowledge is formed within the context of the relationships and practices of power and subsequently contributes to the development, refinement and proliferation of new techniques of power. – Barker, p. 72

## The Linguistic Turn in Cultural Studies



**Signs become naturalized codes. Their apparent transparency of meaning is an outcome of cultural habituation. The effect of this is to conceal the practices of cultural coding. – Barker, p. 78**

Roland Barthes argues that we can talk of two systems of signification: denotation and connotation.

- ▶ **Denotation** is the descriptive and literal level of meaning shared by virtually all members of a culture. Thus, 'pig' denotes the concept of a useful pink farm animal with a snout and curly tail, etc.
- ▶ **Connotation** involves meanings that are generated by connecting signifiers to wider cultural concerns. Here, meaning involves the association of signs with other cultural codes of meaning. Thus, 'pig' may connote nasty police officer or male chauvinist according to the sub-codes of lexicons at work.

(Barker, p. 79)

According to Barthes, myth and ideology work by *naturalizing* the contingent interpretations of historically specific persons. That is, myth makes particular world views appear to be unchallengeable because natural or God-given. 'Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal'. – Barker, p. 80



KEY THINKER: Roland Barthes

A French literary theorist, philosopher, and semiotician whose writings on semiotics made structuralism one of the leading intellectual movements of the 20th century. In general, Barthes wanted to create a way for people to deepen their understanding of language, literature, and society. Specifically, he focused on nonverbal signs. He felt that society is a construction, perpetuated by signs of the dominant values within its culture.

**Key Writings:**

*Mythologies* (1957; translation 1972)

*S/Z* (1970; translation 1975)

## *Différance*

Language is non-representational and meaning is inherently unstable so that it constantly slides away. Thus, by *différance*, the key Derridean concept, is meant 'difference and deferral'. – Barker, p. 85

Meaning is no longer fixed outside any textual location or spoken utterance and is always in relation to other textual locations in which the signifier has appeared on other occasions. Every articulation of a signifier bears a trace of its previous articulations. There is no fixed transcendental signified, since the meaning of concepts is constantly referred, via the network of traces, to their articulations in other discourses: fixed meaning is constantly deferred. (Weedon et al., 1980: 199) – Barker, p. 85

# Deconstruction

To deconstruct is to take apart, to undo, in order to seek out and display the assumptions of a text.

Deconstruction seeks to expose the blind-spots of texts. These are the unacknowledged assumptions through which they operate. This includes those places where a text's rhetorical strategies work against the logic of its own arguments, that is, the tension between what a text means to say and what it is constrained to mean. – Barker, p. 87



## Discursive Practices

For Derrida, meaning has the potential to proliferate into infinity. By contrast, Foucault explores how meanings are temporarily stabilized or regulated into a discourse. This ordering of meaning is achieved through the operation of power in social practice. For Foucault, discourse 'unites' both language and practice. – Barker, p. 90

Foucault argued that discourse regulates not only what can be said under determinate social and cultural conditions but also who can speak, when and where...Foucault has been a prominent theorist of the 'disciplinary' character of modern institutions, practices and discourses. – Barker, p. 91

Foucault establishes a mutually constituting relationship between power and knowledge so that knowledge is indissociable from regimes of power. Knowledge is formed within the practices of power and is constitutive of the development, refinement and proliferation of new techniques of power. Hence the analytic term 'power/knowledge' (Foucault, 1980). – Barker, p. 92

For Foucault, bodies are 'subject to' the regulatory power of discourse by which they become 'subjects for' themselves and others. Here, he is concerned with subjectivity as formed within the subject positions of discourse. The speaking subject is not to be held to be the author or originator of a statement. Rather, subjectivity depends on the prior existence of discursive positions. – Barker, p. 93

## Post-Marxism

Class, in Marxist theory, is conceived of as an essential unified identity between a signifier and a specific group of people who share socio-economic conditions. By contrast, class is understood by Laclau and Mouffe to be the effect of discourse. Class is not simply an objective economic fact but a discursively formed, collective subject position. Class consciousness is neither an inevitability nor a unified phenomenon. Classes, while sharing certain common conditions of existence, do not automatically form a core, unified class consciousness. Rather, class and class consciousness are historically specific. Further, classes are cross-cut by conflicting interests, including those of gender, race and age. Thus, subjects are not unitary wholes; they are fragmented subjects who take up plural subject positions. – Barker, p. 95

## Discourse and the Material

The materiality of the world is one of those things that is, in the Wittgensteinian sense, beyond doubt. That is, we cannot function without this assumption. As Wittgenstein argues, we may in principle imagine that every time we open a door there will be a bottomless chasm beneath us. However, it makes no sense to do so; it is unintelligible to us. – Barker, p. 108

**Knowledge is not a matter of getting an accurate picture of reality. Rather, it is a question of learning how to contend with the world in pursuit of those purposes. – Barker, p. 109**

## Biology and Culture



- ▶ Human culture and human biology have co-evolved and are indivisible. – Barker, p. 113
- ▶ The idea of the body as a pre-social, pre-cultural object has become impossible to sustain. – Barker, p. 119

For Goffman the body enables people to intercede in the comings and goings of daily life. This includes the ways in which humans negotiate how they present themselves to others. For example, Goffman discusses the way that we communicate with our bodies through facial expression, dress and stance. These symbolic actions construct and deploy a shared cultural vocabulary or idiom of bodily communication. – Barker, p. 121

**The body is both a material entity and a set of cultural signs that categorize, train and cultivate people. – Barker, p. 121**

## The Medical Body

The manner in which the body has been understood by medical science illustrates the paradox of agency and discipline that is apparent in the work of both Foucault and Goffman. For example, there is little doubt that medicine has been heavily implicated in the disciplining and surveillance of modern populations. – Barker, p. 122

# Evolutionary Culture

- ▶ Evolutionary psychology – ‘By themselves, psychological theories do not, and cannot, constitute theories of culture. They only provide the foundations for theories of culture.’ (Tooby and Cosmides, 1992: 88)
- ▶ Evolved brain – The evolutionary time-lag means that we are operating with brain mechanisms developed within and for an environment quite different from that of contemporary culture. – Barker, p. 127

## Implications for Cultural Studies

It is the distinct and divergent ways that cultures construct meanings around sexuality, the family, death, etc., that is of interest to us even as we explore that which human beings also have in common. – Barker, p. 128

## The Case of Emotions

Emotions can be understood as a form 'embodied consciousness' or 'way of being' that is lived, experienced and articulated. They involve culturally habituated practices and our interpretation of them through cultural discourses, display rules and emotion work (Denzin, 1984). These interpretations occur through culturally formed discourses related to the body via metaphors of heat and cold, pressure and release, flow and stasis, etc. (Lupton, 1998). Subsequently, these narratives of emotion bring us into being as subjects and form part of our identities through, for example, learning and telling narratives of romantic love or grief. Further, identity involves emotional attachment to the narratives of our lives.

– Barker, p. 135



## New World Disorder

**There is a widespread perception that we are living through a period of radical change in our social orders. Old and trusted maps of meaning are felt to be giving way to the uncertainties of a global disorder. These multidimensional and interlinked changes concern:**

- the economy
- technology
- politics
- culture
- identities

(Barker, p. 141)

Above all, these changes are not confined to specific nation-states. Rather, they are implicated in processes of globalization that question the very concept of bounded societies and cultures. The complexity of the changes taking place has led to a reconsideration of questions of social determination. In particular, there has been a recognition of the complex overlapping and overdetermined causes of change. These causal forces, in which culture plays a decisive role, are multidirectional and chaotic rather than singular and linear. – Barker, p. 141

## Economy, Technology and Social Class

- ▶ **Fordism:** a manufacturing philosophy that aims to achieve higher productivity by standardizing the output, using conveyor assembly lines, and breaking the work into small, deskilled tasks.
- ▶ **Keynesianism:** economic theories of John Maynard Keynes, especially those theories advocating government monetary and fiscal programs designed to increase employment and stimulate business activity.

Central to the mass production and mass consumption of consumer goods was a developing culture of promotion and advertising that supported the selling process. Further, full employment strategies were pursued not just as a social 'good' but as a means of keeping spending power at levels that met the capacity for production. – Barker, p. 142

**Efficiency was sought through the techniques of 'scientific management' (Taylor, 1911), which stressed:**

- the organization of the division of labor to allow for the separation of tasks
- the use of time and motions studies to measure and describe work tasks
- the use of financial incentives as the prime form of worker motivation

## Post-Fordism

As described by David Harvey (1989), the Fordist regime began to experience problems that came to a head during the early 1970s...In particular, a system geared towards mass production and consumption faced the difficulties of saturated western markets. This led to a crisis of overproduction. This did not mean that everybody could have all the consumer goods that they wished for. Rather, the spending power of consumers had reached a point where they could not afford to purchase any more goods. – Barker, p. 144



Post-Fordism involves a restructuring of the labor process. It aims at multi-skilling workers and eliminating rigid job demarcation lines. The purpose is to create a more horizontal labor organization with an emphasis on worker co-responsibility. Quality control shifts from post-production testing into the very process of manufacturing. – Barker, p. 145

The labor training required for multi-skilling is expensive. This leads companies to offer the core workforce higher long-term job security rather than waste their investment through high labor turnover. – Barker, p. 145

Post-Fordism refers not just to the working practices of flexible specialization but to a new 'regime of accumulation' and an associated 'mode of social and political regulations'. – Barker, p. 146

A 'regime of accumulation' is a concept that refers to a stabilizing of the relationship between consumption and accumulation; or how much capital companies retain and how much money consumers spend. Such an analysis implies a relationship between conditions of production and social/political relations and lifestyles. – Barker, p. 146

For some writers...the changes in working practices that have been described here as post-Fordism are better viewed as neo-Fordism. That is, the changes are understood to be an *extension* of Fordist practices aimed at giving it new life. Neo-Fordism involves:

- the diversification of companies into new products
- internationalization in search of new markets
- economies of scale
- the intensification of labor through the intensive application of new technology

## “New Times”

The new configuration of production, politics, consumption, lifestyles, identities and aspects of everyday private life constitutes a condition that has been dubbed ‘New Times’ (Hall and Jacques, 1989). The ‘New Times’ approach explores a wide-ranging set of cultural, social and economic issues and the connections between them.

These include:

- ▶ flexible manufacturing systems
- ▶ the customization of design and quality
- ▶ niche marketing
- ▶ consumer lifestyles
- ▶ globalization
- ▶ new social and political movements
- ▶ state deregulation and privatization of welfare
- ▶ the cultural configurations of postmodernism
- ▶ the reconfiguration of class structures

In this context, the old certainties that linked economy, culture and politics together through the figure of class are put into doubt...This is leading to new social divisions expressed as the two-thirds: one-third society. That is, two-thirds of the population are relatively well-off while one-third is either engaged in de-skilled, part-time work or forms a new 'underclass' of the unemployed and unemployable. At the same time, the cultural identities and political allegiances of class factions are increasingly unpredictable. – Barker, p. 148



## Post-industrial Society and the Reconfiguration of Class Identities

For Bell (1973), a post-industrial society is characterized by the shift from industrial manufacturing to service industries centered on information technology. This argument gives a key role to knowledge production and planning. In this view, technological change is the driving force of social change. In particular, information exchange and cultural production are seen to displace heavy industry at the heart of the economy. New production processes, and a general shift of emphasis from production to consumption, make information technology and communications *the* industries of the future. – Barker, p. 148

## Pivotal to conceptions of the post-industrial society are:

- the critical place of knowledge in the economy and culture
- the shifts taking place in the kinds of work people do
- the related changes in occupational structure

# Patterns of Consumption

**Thus far, analysis has focused on changes centered on the structure and character of work. However, we also need to consider the linkage between changing class identities and patterns of consumption. This is a theme that has been absorbed into cultural studies via theorists of postmodern culture. Here we are concerned with two crucial dimensions:**

- the rising absolute consumption levels available to labor
- class fragmentation and the consumer orientation of the working class

Thus, the majority of the population of western societies has sufficient housing, transportation and income to be in a post-scarcity situation. Consequently, it is argued, workers' identifications and identities shift from location in the sphere of production to that of consumption. – Barker, p. 152

## Globalization

Globalization is constituted by the ever-increasing abundance of global connections and our understanding of them. – Barker, p. 155

## Globalization is grasped in terms of:

- the world capitalist economy
- the global information system
- the nation-state system
- the world military order

- ▶ **Global economic flows:** Many of the process of globalization are economic in character. Thus, one half of the world's largest economic units are constituted by 200 transnational corporations. They produce between a third and a half of world output (Giddens, 1989). – Barker, p. 156
- ▶ **Global cultural flows:** Globalization is not just an economic matter but is concerned with issues of cultural meaning. While the values and meanings attached to place remain significant, we are increasingly involved in networks that extend far beyond our immediate physical locations. – Barker, p. 157



We are not of course part of a world state or unitary world culture. However, we can identify global cultural processes, of integration and disintegration, that are independent of inter-state relations. According to Pieterse, one can differentiate between a view of culture as bounded, tied to place and inward-looking, and one in which culture is seen as an outward-looking, 'translocal learning process'. – Barker, pp. 157-158

Appadurai (1993) has argued that contemporary global conditions are best characterized in term of the *disjunctive* flows of:

- ethnoscapes
- technoscapes
- finanscapes
- mediascapes
- ideoscapes

**That is, globalization involves the dynamic movements of ethnic groups, technology, financial transactions, media images and ideological conflicts. These flows are not neatly determined by one harmonious 'master plan'. – Barker, pp. 158-159**

**Cultural imperialism thesis: The cultural homogenization thesis proposes that the globalization of consumer capitalism involves a loss of cultural diversity. It stresses the growth of 'sameness' and a presumed loss of cultural autonomy. This is cast as a form of cultural imperialism. The argument revolves around the alleged domination of one culture by another. – Barker, p. 159**

**For all that it has projected itself as transhistorical and transnational, as the transcendent and universalizing force of modernization and modernity, global capitalism has in reality been about westernization – the export of western commodities, values, priorities, ways of life (Robins, 1991: 25). – Barker, p. 160**

**Hybridity and Complex Cultural Flows thesis:  
Globalization is not constituted by a monolithic one-  
way flow from the west-to-the-rest. – Barker, p. 161**

## Globalization and Power

The concepts of globalization and hybridity are more adequate than that of cultural imperialism, because they suggest a less coherent, unified and directed process. However, this should not lead us to abandon the exploration of power and inequality. The fact that power is diffused, or that commodities are subversively used to produce new hybrid identities, does not displace our need to examine it. --  
Barker, p. 163

Relations of power and hegemony are inscribed and reproduced within hybridity for wherever we look closely enough we find the traces of asymmetry in culture, place, descent. Hence hybridity raises the question of the terms of the mixture, the conditions of mixing and mélange. At the same time it's important to note the ways in which hegemony is not merely reproduced but refigured in the process of hybridization. (Pieterse, 1995: 57) – Barker, p. 163