

The Language of Culture Discussion

In the many “official” discussions of culture what is omitted is reference to the word’s origin from the Sanskrit; “cult”, meaning to “preserve” (to “cultivate” is our word for this) and “ur” which means light, spiritual light ; hence culture is the "preservation /cultivation of light."

‘Cultivate’ connotes a gardening; a natural thing. And, in fact, culture is natural and elemental to the society in which it belongs, and which it nourishes. Society is a kind of ground-bed on which the seeds of ideas fall, or are planted. A culture “strategy” softens the soil, as it were, where otherwise a seed cannot take root. As soil is softened by water and warmth, one might say that “water” is the intelligence brought to bear on the “cultivation’ of culture. Warmth is nothing less than benevolence of intent. A society will not respond to ideas that are not of a “kind intelligence”, nor to strategies that are not shaped in “kind” intelligence.

Intelligence is strategy. Kindness is the “eros” of intent behind the strategy. And words are the persuasion of intelligence warmed by that eros. It follows that “hard-branding” (as opposed to soft branding) will not persuade. Hard branding hardens the soil; soft branding softens the soil. The seed can be planted. An idea can take hold.

Systemic metaphors are anemic to culture discussions. They render the subject flat, and inspire neither the plan, nor that for which the plan is for – societies.

Organic metaphors “speak” wholeness and integration. Systemic metaphors merely “refer” to wholeness and integration.

Systemic metaphors, conceived in “open systems theory”, tend towards the abstract, and decay in the orbit of deterministic agendas. Such metaphors tend toward the mechanistic; since systems theory has its origin in cybernetic theory. However useful the mechanistic appears in culture discussion (e.g. engines, levers, input/output, scales) the language remains at odds with what it tries to foster—creativity.

Words may look serviceable, and be a disservice to the idea behind them. A society is inspired in the terms by which that society feels itself and knows itself. What is required is words that convey the eros of care and the romance of an idea. If an idea is not romantic, there are no words to excite the popular mind. The words of policy and strategy must be faithful to that romance.

Is there romance in the notion of a “creative city”?

The language is proof of either the beauty of an idea; or proof that there is no lover of the idea behind the language.

Words that describe beautiful notions in mechanistic terms, reveal that the authors see “possibilities” only in terms of what is “useful”. The language of utility betrays the intent; a mind exploitative of possibility cannot point us to the wonders of the impossible, which is the world of creativity.

Bad industrial thinking holds the notion that organic metaphors are not clear enough; that somehow the language of mapping and schemata is more understandable. Reductionist language may be useful to the mathematics of construction. It is useless to the construction of motivation; and even more useless to culture discussion. Organic metaphors are clear. People have an intuition for concepts expressed by the organismic and vitalistic. For the organic metaphor furthers the holistic notion that body and mind are one intelligence. Technical metaphors remain mentalistic and lose their efficacy, because they are artificial to the whole.

Even so, the “useful” and the “inspirational” are not separate categories. To think that they are separate is to form one more kind of “silo-thinking”.

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