

# CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY



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## **SUBSTANCE-ORIENTED AND PROCESS-ORIENTED WORLDVIEWS** (A study of culture and worldview typology)

**I**n philosophical anthropology there are many methods to compare different cultures. While studying the variety of cultural worlds it is impossible to overlook the differences in mechanisms that constitute the cognition. This study considers the means of conceptualization, i.e. the way mental representations are formed, as a principle on which to establish culture typology. It is essential for the author to understand and to demonstrate the way each culture thinks. The main focus of this article is to render and study forms of mental organization and conceptualization. Different ways to mentally explore reality inevitably produce specific worldviews. This refers not only to some scientific theories, but mainly to the way common notions of the world order arise in mass consciousness.

The article discerns two levels on which reality can be perceived: spontaneous language and reflective theoretical. Both levels are considered in terms of conceptualization. The first level is determined as linguistic, the second – as logico-philosophic. The author shows that conceptualization is closely connected to the pursuit of coherence, while coherence is directly related to integrity. It is these two concepts that establish intuitive comprehension of reality. This tendency to see the world not as fragmented, but as integral, seems to be a characteristic anthropological demand. The world is multiform, but it is also constant.

The study considers two large cultural areas, the Western and the Arab. This said the question remains open whether the results of the Arab study are applicable to other related Semitic languages and Semitic-based cultures, especially to Hebrew and Jewish culture.

Discussing the linguistic level of reality comprehension, the author shows that language is a theoretical construct. However, in everyday life we deal not with language, but with speech. Coherent speech is described here as a speech telling, whereas telling is a process that forms subject-predicate constructions. In other words, coherent speech is a sequence of coherent sentences, whereas a coherent sentence is that which consists of a subject and a predicate, both in linguistic and logical terms. This is the way speech actually becomes coherent. Thus, there are many versions of linguistic phrases for one single proposition. Not only does one logically correct form unify the entire variety of expressions in one language, but it also reduces the interlingual diversity and, therefore, ascertains interlingual translation. Thus, according to the author, our main purpose is to feel out this underlying structure in order to understand what the variety of surface structures is to be reduced to.

The author believes that though the rapid leap from Aristotle to Noam Chomsky has smoothed some curves, it did not alter the main point: characteristic of the Western thought is the substance-oriented worldview. It sees the world as a whole of things-substances. Understood in such way, things make the “what” of the world and ascertain its unity, while the features, qualities and relations between these things make the “how” of the world, its multiformity and diversity. This is the basis of Aristotelian physics, which explained the world order throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Modern science adopted this basis. As the author notices, there is no information on whether there were any real endeavors to build some other non-substance-oriented type of worldview. He proposes that such attempt should be made.

The study proves that substance-oriented worldview, purposefully built by logico-philosophic principles and intended to weave a solid cloth of conceptualization, does not actually cope with its task. It is probably the same with any alternative worldview: along with some aspects of the world it will also miss those which are well captured by the substance-oriented worldview. From this point of view, language is more universal than any logico-philosophical worldview: it implies different ways to construct a monistic worldview, neither of which could encompass all dimensions of the world. Such logico-philosophical worldviews are alternative and, therefore, plural. It appears that the logico-philosophical worldview depends on culture, while the linguistic worldview is more universal. To the mind that usually associates universality with science and cultural exclusiveness – with language, this conclusion would seem contradictory.

According to the author, the alternative to the substance-oriented worldview is created by the Arab thought. It is based on the intuition of a process and thus could be determined as a process-oriented worldview. The article

considers it both on spontaneous linguistic and logico-philosophical (reflected) levels. The author's point of departure is the fact that the constantly renewed analysis of the relation between language and mind was one of the main themes of the last century. He articulates the idea, according to which Arabic language, that is as a language exactly, should not necessarily provide a process-oriented and not a substance-oriented worldview since there is no special evidence to the contrary. Moreover, even formal features of Arabic language do not reveal any tendency to form a process-oriented worldview. This tendency is to be found not in Arabic language, but in Arabic speech. Of course, they are connected, but at the same time they differ, and this difference is directly relevant to thinking.

The resulting idea of the article is that, owing to its basic conceptualization mechanism, Western culture forms a substance-oriented worldview. In the same way, the mechanism of conceptualization provides the profound fundamental integrity of Arab (or even wider Semitic) cultural area and results in a process-oriented worldview.

**Keywords:** typology of cultures, worldview, conceptualization, linguistic level, logico-philosophical (reflected) level, the West, substance-oriented worldview, Arab culture, process-oriented worldview, mind

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