

Cognitive Culture Studies

Peter Hanenberg

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Introduction

At a certain point, the Universidade Católica Editor asked me to suggest an image for the cover of this book. Certainly, I would not repeat the image that we had chosen for the book *Culture, Translation and Cognition* – though I have always thought that it says nearly everything that I have to say. However, this time it had to be different and somewhat more concrete. Therefore, I started to imagine a scene at the bank of the River Rhine near Düsseldorf where I had spent many of my Sundays in my younger days. The low and long waves would sweep slanting against the beach... While these words came to my mind, I saw the small town of Kaiserswerth in the background, involved in the fog of early German history. And while the ferry was slowly crossing the river, the image blended into Lisbon's waterfront of my current Sunday mornings as if the Rhine flowed into the Tagus River. The bridge would be there to connect the shores and the notion of regret for not having been educated to be able to draw or paint the scene – or at least to take a picture of it. In the end, I would have to resort to one of those image banks which offer views of others for one's own purposes.

Reading through the account of this challenge and holding the book in your hands where the cover image is already given, you are thereby introduced into the main topics of the following pages. Cognitive Culture Studies aims at studying the relation between mind and culture and their mutual interdependence. The mind produces culture as much as it is shaped by it. Culture expresses meaning as much as it forms it.

An alternative title to this book could be borrowed from Peter Handke's *The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld* which would count then as another reminiscence of the values of literature as in the quote of Uwe Johnson's words which I smuggled into the description of the Rhine's long waves. While the relation between cognition and culture is the scientific focus point of these

collected studies, literature is the privileged means to come to terms with it. The words are a cultural given as much as the image banks in the internet and in our memory. How the mind reaches out to its other side in the world out there and how this world translates into meaning, this is the overall issue of this book.

The first chapter claims the possibility and necessity of intersecting the study of culture and cognition, emphasizing the importance of a cognitive culture system and the interplay of neurons, empathy and literature. The second chapter introduces the term 'tacit knowledge' as key to understanding how culture shapes the mind. The concrete working of such tacit knowledge is shown in chapter III on the example of André Jolles' *Einfache Formen* and Aby. M. Warburg's *Pathos formula*. The following chapter presents a different cognitive process in the understanding of literary discourses on history, namely the concept of 'force dynamics' which in chapter V will also be applied to Walter Benjamin's ninth thesis on history. From Benjamin we take the idea of Utopia whose cognitive conditions will be explored in chapter VI. Chapter VII then explains the fundamental concept of 'intramental translation' on the example of Christopher Columbus' non-discovery of the New World. A last chapter briefly alludes to the practical consequences of tacit knowledge and intramental translation in the practice of intercultural communication.

Each of the chapters can be read on its own – or as a continuous accumulation of the underlying argument in showing how culture shapes the mind and how the mind forms meaning and culture.