In the whole history of ideas there are few carrier-stories stranger and more striking than that of the term and concept of *culture*. A word of venerable antiquity, which already occurs with Cicero, it remains till the end of the eighteenth century a little used, marginal expression of learned folk and the scholarly public. Today this word has not only invaded the talk of all of us, becoming in its many derivations an everyday catch-phrase, but constitutes one of those notions without which a systematic reflection upon our own situation, and the human situation in general, seems to be impossible. It is not fortuitous that Heidegger once mentioned the *concept* of culture among the metaphysical grounds of modernity.

At the same time, this story of phenomenal success is the story of fundamental failure. The present-day complexity of meaning of the term culture has been primarily established in the theories of the late Enlightenment. Here, however, it served – together with a number of competing synonyms – as
the articulation of a fundamental social-historical project. Today it requires
the labour of remembrance, a work of historical reconstruction, to recall this
practical-projective aspect of the use of culture to which, however, its original
importance and popularity was primarily due. It is the loss of this meaning
that to a significant degree conditions our situation today.

To refer in this context to Hegel’s philosophy, is – I think – rather unusual.
It is, of course, a commonplace that our modern conceptions of culture were
largely elaborated within German philosophy. Anthropologists refer to Herder
or perhaps Iselin as the true initiators of the contemporary culture-concept;
philosophers will at least add Kant, and maybe even Fichte to this list. Hegel’s
name, however, is almost never mentioned in this connection. In fact, one of
the best scholars of Hegel in Germany – Bruno Liebruck – not long ago pub-
lished a paper attempting to explain why Hegel avoided employing the con-
cept of culture, and failed to integrate it systematically into his philosophy.

With due respect to Liebruck’s knowledge of Hegel (certainly superior to
mine), such a way of posing the question seems to rest on a misunderstanding
based on a number of factors that certainly ought to be mentioned and
acknowledged. Firstly, it is a fact that Hegel used the term “Kultur” in a quite
sporadic and accidental manner. Instead he employed another word, which,
at least at the turn of the century, was generally accepted in Germany as
the synonym of “Kultur” – the term “Bildung.” The reasons for this termino-
logical preference are, in all probability, quite innocent. The German word
“Bildung,” due to its associations with the noun Bild (picture) on the one hand,
and with the verb bilden (to form) on the other hand, allowed Hegel to draw
together the various meaning-aspects of “culture” through that etymologis-
ing reference to the unconscious spirit of language which he so much liked,
and which we find so often irritating. This terminological choice has, how-
ever, proved to be quite fatal from the viewpoint of the later reception of
Hegel. For in the second half of the nineteenth century the original synonym-
ity between “Kultur” and “Bildung” was broken, and Bildung has acquired the
more restricted meaning of education (and the contents acquired through the
educational process). Consequently, Hegel’s conception of Bildung has been
predominantly treated in its individualistic pedagogic aspect alone. This has
been reinforced by the fact that it is this aspect of Bildung with which Hegel
himself dealt in the most extensive and explicit manner, though mostly