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**THE MEDIALITY OF CULTURE.
THEORIES OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS**

How do we store, process, share and interpret information? By the help of signs. Today's information society as well as the traditions of our rich cultural history are equally inseparable from the study of signs and signification. How do we create signs? What kind of sign-systems can convey information? Language, diagrams, pictures, gestures, musical signals or any combination of these. Consequently, it is not only the systemic nature but also the mediality which is of crucial importance in signification. According to the various media, the study of mediality has its own disciplinary branches: applied linguistics, iconology, musicology, physiognomy, etc. Aiming at a complex interpretation of culture, however, one needs a combination of several, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, which have to be brought into harmony by a general theory of culture. In my presentation I shall try to offer such a mediality-oriented theory of cultural representations, beginning with Clifford Geertz's proverbial definition, "culture is the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves." I develop this definition with concerns about the mediality of culture into the following complex approach: "Culture is a social practice of multimedial, self-reflexive, and narrative representations by the help of which a community constructs, interprets, and operates its own identity."

The paper then surveys trends and case studies which examine culture by looking at multimedial, especially image–word related representations. Case studies will range from medieval to postmodern emblematic expressions illustrating the politics of images, imagology, the principle of "seeing is believing" and various uses of multimedial cultural representations.