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## CULTURE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PERSONALITIES AND LIVES

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*Given all the problems that exist in the world today - from the COVID-19 pandemic and racial violence and prejudice to the environmental crisis and colossal disparities in income and wealth – people everywhere in the world are being severely challenged and thinking a great deal about the development of their personalities and lives. When Edward Burnett Tylor defined culture as "the complex whole," it was apparent that all people live a "cultural life" as a whole made up of many parts. Matthew Arnold went farther in this regard by contending that the challenge in life is to create a "harmonious cultural life" through the development of all our faculties and powers. Johan Huizinga went even further when he provided a powerful and profound insight into this matter by stating that the challenge is to create balance and harmony between the material and non-material dimensions of life, and therefore all the diverse activities and developments in the world and in life. Given the severe imbalances and disharmonies that exist in this area at present as a result of placing a much higher priority on the former dimension compared to the latter dimension, it is clear that this problem can only be resolved and rectified by placing a much higher priority on the development of non-material activities such as the arts, humanities, education, and spirituality going forward into the future. Not only is this the key to coming to grips with many of the world's most complicated and life-threatening problems and changing directions in the world and in life in the future, but also it is the solution to developing our personalities and lives as balanced and harmonious wholes. This will result in a great deal more caring, sharing, compassion, cooperation, conservation, and creativity in the world, thereby putting us in a much stronger position to come to grips with the problems we will be confronted with in the future, creating more compatible lifestyles and ways of life, achieving sustainable development, and becoming cultural personalities in the realistic and idealistic sense.*

**Key Words:** Culture, foundation, complex whole, cultural life, harmonious cultural life, material and non-material dimensions, imbalances and disharmonies, sustainable development, arts, humanities,

*education, spirituality, balance and harmony, personalities, lives, the cultural personality, real, ideal, cultural age.*

These are difficult times for all people and countries in the world. Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic caused billions of people in countries all over the world to fear that they might catch the coronavirus and possibly even die from it, but also there is the constant fear of what life and the world will be like after this pandemic is brought under control.

After living through many decades with a relatively high degree of predictability with respect to developments in the world and our role and place in it, it is difficult to deal with the uncertainty of not knowing what the world will be like in the years and decades ahead as well as what the "new normal" will be. Will we be able to return to our old jobs and ways of life after a cure for this deadly virus has been found? Or will we be compelled to search for new jobs or possibly even have to create our own jobs and employment opportunities? And what about physical distancing and social interaction? Will we be able to hold the hands of our loved ones and hug one another again, or will physical distancing be a permanent fixture in our lives?

Even before the pandemic struck, there were disturbing signs that all was not right in the world. Not only were we losing the battle with climate change, global warming, and the environmental crisis, huge disparities in income and wealth, racial prejudice and ethnic unrest, and conflicts between different groups, races, religions, countries, cultures, and civilizations, but also we seemed to be moving farther away from other people rather than closer to them due to the "me generation," developments in contemporary technology, and preoccupation with smart phones and texting. These problems, and others, have been getting more pronounced in recent years and are waiting in the wings after a vaccine for the coronavirus has been found and the devastated economies of the world have been rebuilt.

However, all is not negative. There are some positive signs on the global horizon as well. One is the fact that people and countries are working together in coming to grips with the huge challenges we face rather than working apart, as well as creating new technological devices to deal with complex problems like this. Another is the profuse outpouring of caring, sharing, compassion, sympathy, and empathy in the world rather than continued preoccupation with the self. And, most importantly of all, there is the willingness on the part of frontline workers and health care providers to take countless risks and put their lives on the line to help and save people suffering from this deadly disease.

There is another development taking place in the world that is equally promising and encouraging. Many people are using the period of self-isolation to

examine their lives and the state of the world more intensively. Others are deciding that their existing ways of life are not sustainable due to the devastating effect they are having on the natural environment and other species and are concluding that they must change their ways of life in the future. And still others are realizing that their lives are not giving them the happiness and satisfaction they expected to find in life and are embarking on new career paths or considering more exciting employment possibilities in the years ahead.

Regardless of what type of approach people are taking to the present situation and their personal assessments of it, one thing is certain. People will not be able to make the changes they want in their lives, jobs, careers, and ways of life – or put themselves in the strongest possible position to confront the challenges and opportunities presented to them in the future – without assessing their personalities and lives on a much deeper and more fundamental level. This often includes examining the nature and meaning of life itself, as well as deciding for themselves what they were meant to achieve and realize in life.

While we seldom think about this in a systematic and concentrated manner, every person in the world is compelled to combine all the various parts of their lives together to form a “whole” or “total way of life” made up of many parts. It doesn’t matter if they are carpenters or prime ministers, where they live in the world, what their educational circumstances are, or where they work. Every person must combine all the different parts of their lives together to create a holistic entity, regardless of whether this is done in terms of their bodies, minds, brains, souls, spirits, and senses or all the economic, social, political, artistic, technological, recreational, spiritual, scientific, and environmental activities they are involved in over the course of their lives. This is a necessity that all people must confront and come to grips with in life. There is no escaping it, regardless of whether this is done well or badly.

It is this holistic necessity and process that Edward Burnett Tylor, the British anthropologist, may have had in mind when he defined culture formally as “that *complex whole* which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man (woman) as a member of society.” (Tylor, 1958) Tylor defined culture this way in the latter part of the nineteenth century, although his principal concern at that time was to apply this all-encompassing definition of culture to societies and countries rather than to individuals and institutions which is occurring much more frequently today.

While this definition of culture is a much more all-inclusive definition than the one that most people, governments, corporations, and educational institutions are familiar with and use today – namely “the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and cultural industries of publishing, radio, television, film, and so

forth" – it has powerful implications and consequences for all people, countries, and the world at present and going forward into the future. This is because every person in the world lives a "*cultural life*" in the holistic sense that is made up of countless parts.

Think about it for a moment. Regardless of how much time we devote to all the different faculties we possess or how much we value specific activities in our lives – some people may spend most of their time developing their minds, bodies, souls, spirits, or senses while others value activities such as economics, technology, social affairs, religion, science, education, politics, the arts, the environment, and so forth most highly - the fact remains that we all live a cultural life in the holistic sense. Not only is this consistent with the definition of culture advocated by Tylor and confirmed by most anthropologists, but also it is consistent with James Feibleman's belief that, "the study of culture properly begins with the study of the cultural elements in the individual," (Feibleman, 1968). It is also consistent with Ruth Benedict's conviction that "cultures are really people's personalities and lives writ large," (Benedict, 2006) and the ancient Chinese proverb says that, "the beginning of wisdom lies in calling things by their right names."

It is culture in this all-inclusive, holistic sense that is the real foundation of human existence in general and our existence as people in particular. Realizing this is *the* most important step we can take in developing our personalities and lives if we have not already done this. It is also the key to countless developments in life because everything emanates from this and depends on it. Admitting this and taking action on it is imperative if we want to put ourselves in the strongest possible position to deal with the complex problems and limitless opportunities we will be confronted with in life. No other development compares with this since it necessitates a fundamental transformation or paradigm shift in our lives from seeing and developing our personalities and lives in terms of the parts to seeing and developing our personalities and lives in terms of the whole.

With this transformation or paradigm shift in place, where do we go from here? Surely there is really only one place to go and that is to realize that it is necessary to develop our personalities and lives not only as "*wholes*" – which is a reality that all people must deal with – but also as "*harmonious wholes*," which is an ideal that all people should strive to achieve. This is because doing so possesses the potential to produce a great deal more happiness, fulfillment, creativity, and good health in life if we are wise enough to realize this.

Matthew Arnold, the British cultural scholar, is generally credited with being the first person to discuss this matter in real and ideal terms in considerable depth. When he talked about being a "whole person" in his book

*Culture and Anarchy*, it was not only creating our lives as wholes that he had in mind. It was also necessary to achieve a "*harmonious expansion of all the powers that comprise human nature.*" (Arnold, 1968) In order to do this, Arnold felt it is essential to avoid falling into the trap of developing one of these powers only, or developing some of these powers to the exclusion of others. Furthermore, he believed that culture is an inward condition of the mind, body, soul, and spirit and not an outward condition of mechanical and material civilization, as well as an active rather than passive affair.

If we are able to create harmony between all the different factors and powers that constitute our personalities and lives – the multiplicity of activities we are engaged in on a daily basis as well as all our human faculties – it is very likely that we will create a great deal of harmony in our personalities and lives in both the realistic and idealistic sense. However, if we are not able to do this, we will still live a cultural life and experience life as a whole. However, we will probably experience disharmonies and imbalances in our personalities and lives rather than harmonies and balances, and therefore be compelled to deal with all the complex difficulties that arise from this and are encapsulated in it.

Arnold went much further than this in talking about the need to develop our personalities and lives in a balanced and harmonious manner, both as an ideal and as a reality. He contended that our personalities and lives should be "*harmonious wholes*" and not just "*wholes*," as well as the fact that this more idealistic state can be achieved in many ways and not just in one way. An excellent example of this in Arnold's view was to attend to the diffusion and sharing of all the best knowledge and ideas in the world. This was extremely important according to Arnold because knowledge and ideas possess power and influence and therefore should be shared by all people in the world and not just wealthy, privileged, or educated elites. Here is what he had to say about this:

The great men (and women) of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light (Arnold, 1968).

Let's take a much closer look at what is needed to develop our personalities and lives as harmonious wholes and not just wholes in the realistic and idealistic sense. In order to do this, it is helpful to focus attention on the

thoughts, ideas, and ideals of Johan Huizinga, the Dutch cultural scholar and historian, since he had a great deal to say about this subject.

This is apparent in the powerful and profound insight he provided into the nature of the world situation and life in general and the development of our personalities and lives in particular in both real and ideal terms. Here is what he had to say on this matter:

The realities of economic life, of power, of technology, of everything conducive to man's (people's) material well-being, must be balanced by strongly developed spiritual, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic values (Weintraub, 1969).

What makes this insight so powerful and profound is that it withstood the test of time in Huizinga's day almost a century ago and still stands the test of time today. This is because Huizinga looked at the world and life from the holistic perspective provided by culture and then used this to examine numerous cultures throughout the world and subject them to rigorous evaluation before making this statement. As a result, his statement is "spot on" as they say, since it describes one of the biggest problems and most essential needs in the world today, namely what is required to change the world and develop our personalities and lives much more effectively. In doing so, Huizinga put his finger on one of the greatest challenges confronting humanity and the world at present and going forward into the future.

This challenge has resulted from the fact that the *more* time, energy, and attention has been devoted to "the realities of economic life, of power, of technology, of everything conducive to man's (people's) well-being" over the last half century, the *less* time, energy, and attention has been devoted to creating "strongly developed spiritual, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic values." As a result of this, the pendulum has been swinging steadily towards the development of the material, quantitative, and non-human dimensions of life while simultaneously swinging steadily away from developing the non-material, qualitative, and human dimensions in life. This has produced a great deal of imbalance and disharmony in the world as well as in the lives of many people and countries in most parts of the world.

This is confirmed by many developments in the world over the last five or six decades. While these developments have produced remarkable improvements in the standards of living of billions of people and numerous countries throughout the world, they have likewise caused depletion of the world's resources and devastation of the natural environment at an alarming and unprecedented rate, substantial decreases in attendance at religious services and involvement in religious organizations in more and more countries in the world;

learning systems that are based much more on preparing students for consuming more goods and services and creating more material and monetary wealth than providing them with well-rounded educations and learning for life; severe cuts in public and private funding of the arts and humanities in most countries and countless institutions in the world; and a decline in moral values that has been so severe, serious, and pronounced that the World Commission on Cultural and Development was compelled to make the need for "a new global ethics" - rather than development of the arts, humanities, and "cultural industries" as is usually the case - the first chapter in its report *Our Creative Diversity* published in 1995. (World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995) Along with many other developments taking place in the world, this explains why the global situation has been deteriorating rapidly and threatening to escalate out of control. This is largely due to the imbalances and disharmonies – rather than the balance and harmony – that exists in the world, the world system, and people's and countries' lives.

Fortunately, Huizinga's powerful and profound insight provides a solution to this problem and not just an assessment of it. As a result, it addresses Gregory Bateson's concern that "we do not know enough about how the present will lead us into the future."

As Huizinga powerful and profound insight confirms, the solution to this problem lies in focusing much more attention on - and according a much higher priority to - the development of spiritual, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic values and the activities that contain them in the overall scheme of things. Not only will this cause the pendulum to swing back towards the centre where it rightfully belongs - rather than being locked on one side or the other where it doesn't belong - but also it provides the key that is required to create a great deal more balance and harmony in the world and people's and countries' lives. And, it must be quickly added, the more the pendulum swings towards the centre the more balance and harmony will be achieved in life and in the world.

This will make it possible to come to grips with some of the most complex, difficult, and life-threatening problems that humanity and the world are confronted with at present and may be confronted with even more so in the future. It will also make it possible to achieve sustainable development, as well as to assist people with the development of their personalities and lives in a more practical, balanced, harmonious, and ideal way.

It is at this point that "the cultural personality" makes its appearance on the scene because this is precisely what this particular personality type is all about and most committed to in life and in the world. (Schafer, 2019) This is because the cultural personality is constantly striving to achieve balance and harmony in both realistic and idealistic terms, as well as helping other people to achieve this

balance and harmony as well. This is enhanced considerably when this striving is manifested in actions, deeds, lifestyles, and ways of life and not just words, theories, and ideas and does this on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. Mahatma Gandhi captured this requirement best when he said, "be the change you want in the world."

At the apex of this requirement is the need to restore balance and harmony between human beings, the natural environment, and other species since everything depends on this and evolves from it. As a result, this also includes striving to achieve balance and harmony between the material and non-material dimensions of development and life, the arts and the sciences, technology and society, human rights and human responsibilities, the public sector and the private sector, and a great deal else. This will not be possible, however, without getting deeply immersed in the arts, humanities, ethics, and spirituality and placing a much higher priority on them since this is what is needed to rectify the present and prospective world situation.

From a purely practical perspective, developments like these will reduce the demands we are making on the natural environment and world's scarce resources because artistic, humanistic, ethical, and spiritual activities are labour-intensive rather than material-intensive and therefore do not make as many demands on the natural environment, other species, and the world's precious resource legacy as the majority of industrial, manufacturing, commercial, and technological activities.

While developments such as this are essential, Huizinga provided an even more compelling, effective, and proactive way of dealing with these complex problems. In a follow-up statement to his earlier statement he said:

A culture which no longer can integrate the diverse pursuits of men (people) into a whole, which cannot restrain men (people) through a guiding set of norms, has lost its center and has lost its style. It is threatened by the exuberant over-growth of its separate components. It then needs a pruning knife, a human decision to focus once more on the essentials of culture and cut back on the luxuriant but dispensable... If such harmony of cultural functions is present, it will reveal itself as order, strong structure, style, and rhythmic life of the society in question (Weintraub, 1969)/

What is true for all the various cultures and societies in the world and their diverse pursuits is also true for the cultural personality and all people and countries in the world. Concerted actions of this type will lead to putting a great deal more time, effort, energy, and funding into creating artistic, humanistic, educational ethical, and spiritual activities that yield profuse developments and

seminal advances in creativity, innovation, imagination, ingenuity, and entrepreneurship, working cooperatively in the realization of common causes, goals, and objectives, and cultivating skills and abilities that are transportable and transferable across a broad range of career opportunities and employment possibilities. It will also lead to the creation of many more programs and teaching many more courses on the different cultures and civilizations of the world, greater appreciation for the diversity of cultural expressions, countless opportunities for intercultural, cross-cultural, and civilizational dialogues, a flowering of international cultural exchanges, greater commitment to human values and ideals such as caring, sharing, compassion altruism, and empathy, as well as more equality, justice, trust, and order in the world.

We have had a taste of what experiences like this can be like over the last two decades, as well as signs that people, countries, and the world as a whole are capable of moving in this direction. This was apparent during the bombings of the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon on Washington on September 11, 2001, the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the protests to end racial prejudice and violence against Black and Indigenous people as well as other oppressed minorities in the United States, Canada, and most other parts of world. During these difficult times, many people were surprised to find that people were waving at them and saying hello in the mornings when this never happened before, manifesting more concern for other people's health, welfare, well-being, and safety than their own, putting a great deal more emphasis on assisting others than on being preoccupied with themselves, and experiencing more kindness, generosity, love, compassion, and sympathy in the world.

And this is not all. We are also witnessing a great deal more artistic activity in the world as artists and arts organizations struggle to bring their heartfelt messages and achievements to other people despite the fact that many have lost their jobs and sources of income and are compelled to create new technologies at their own expense in order to realize this. And what is true for the arts is also true for the humanities, education, religion, spirituality, and the like. Many humanists, educators, and religious and spiritual leaders – as well as countless people in the food and entertainment industries as well as in other areas and walks of life – are giving freely of their time, energy, and talents to provide badly needed necessities and services free of charge or at greatly reduced prices in order to help other people and provide assistance to those who are elderly, destitute, or in urgent need.

This raises one of the biggest questions of all in the world today. Will these practices be continued and manifested in the world of the future, or will they fade into the background and disappear once the economies of the world are rebuilt and countries are "open for business" again?

This is why it is so important at present and going into the future to keep the pendulum swinging in the direction of more kindness, humanism, and compassion in the world and in our lives, as well as commitment to achieving sustainable development and environmental well-being in all parts of the world. This is particularly important for people who are concerned with developing their personalities and lives as balanced and harmonious wholes, as well as aspiring to become cultural personalities in real and ideal terms. If they can be holistic, humane, creative, altruistic, and compassionate and manifest these qualities in their personalities and lives, they will send out a strong message to people that the world really is moving in a different direction - a direction designed to make the transition from the present economic and material age to a future cultural and human age.

In order to achieve this, we must create the balance and harmony that is imperative between the material and non-material dimensions of development and life, as well as make it possible for all people and all countries to enjoy decent standards of living and real fulfillment, happiness, and well-being in life without straining the carrying capacity of the earth to the breaking point. For as Margret Mead so astutely put it, "even the small children were collaborators in an undertaking that transcended both me and them - the attempt to understanding enough about culture so that all of us, equally members of humankind, can understand ourselves and take our future and the future of our descendants safely in our hands." (Mead, 1977) To do this is to confirm that culture is the real foundation for the development of our personalities and lives, as well as the key to becoming cultural personalities in both the realistic and idealistic sense.

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## КУЛЬТУРА ЯК ОСНОВА РОЗВИТКУ ОСОБИСТОСТІ ТА ЖИТТЯ

Д. Пол Шафер

*Враховуючи всі проблеми, які існують у світі сьогодні, – від пандемії COVID-19, расового насильства та забобонів до екологічної кризи та колосальних розбіжностей у доходах і багатстві – люди в усюму світі піддаються серйозним викликам і багато думають про розвиток особистості і життя. Коли Едвард Барнетт Тайлер визначив культуру як «складне ціле», було очевидно, що всі люди живуть «культурним життям» як цілим, що складається з багатьох частин. Метью Арнольд пішов далі у цьому плані, стверджуючи, що мета життя полягає у створенні «гармонійного культурного життя» шляхом розвитку всіх наших здібностей та можливостей. Йоган Гейзінга пішов ще далі, коли заявив, що метою життя є створення балансу та гармонії між матеріальними та нематеріальними вимірами життя, а отже, всіма різноманітними видами діяльності та подіями у світі та в житті. Зважаючи на сильні дисбаланси та дисгармонії, які існують у цій галузі в даний час внаслідок надання значно вищого пріоритету колишньому виміру порівняно з іншим, зрозуміло, що цю проблему можна вирішити і усунути лише шляхом надання набагато більшого пріоритету розвитку нематеріальної діяльності, такої як мистецтво, гуманітарні науки, освіта та духовність. Це не тільки ключ до вирішення багатьох найскладніших та небезпечних для життя проблем через зміну напрямків дій у світі та в житті в майбутньому, але й рішення для розвитку особистості та життя як збалансованих і гармонійних цілих. Це призведе до того, що в світі стане набагато більше турботи, співчуття, жалю, співпраці, ощадливості і творчості, що дозволить нам набагато краще справлятися з проблемами, з якими ми зіткнемося в майбутньому, створювати більш сумісний стиль і образ життя, домагатися сталого розвитку і ставати культурними особистостями в реалістичному і ідеалістичному сенсі цього слова.*

**Ключові слова:** *культура, фундамент, складне ціле, культурне життя, гармонійне культурне життя, матеріальні та нематеріальні виміри, дисбаланс та дисгармонія, стійкий розвиток, мистецтво, гуманітарні науки, освіта, духовність, рівновага та гармонія, особистості, життя, культурна особистість, реальний, ідеальний, культурна епоха.*

## КУЛЬТУРА КАК ОСНОВА РАЗВИТИЯ ЛИЧНОСТИ И ЖИЗНИ

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*Учитывая все проблемы, которые существуют в современном мире, – от пандемии COVID-19, насилия на расовой почве и предрассудков до экологического кризиса и колоссального неравенства в доходах и благосостоянии – люди во всем мире сталкиваются с серьезными проблемами и много думают о развитии личности и жизни. Когда Эдвард Барнетт Тайлор дал определение культуре как «сложному целому», стало очевидно, что все люди живут «культурной жизнью» как целым, состоящим из множества частей. Мэтью Арнольд пошел дальше в этом отношении, утверждая, что цель жизни – создать «гармоничную культурную жизнь» посредством развития всех наших способностей и возможностей. Йохан Хейзинга пошел еще дальше, когда осуществил мощное и глубокое понимание этого вопроса, заявив, что цель жизни состоит в том, чтобы создать баланс и гармонию между материальным и нематериальным измерениями жизни, и, следовательно, всеми разнообразными видами деятельности и событиями в мире и в жизни. Принимая во внимание серьезные дисбалансы и дисгармонию, которые существуют в этой области в настоящее время в результате того, что первому измерению придается гораздо более высокий приоритет по сравнению с последним, ясно, что эту проблему можно решить и исправить только путем придания гораздо более высокого приоритета развитию нематериальных видов деятельности, таких как искусство, гуманитарные науки, образование и духовность. Это не только ключ к решению многих наиболее сложных и опасных для жизни проблем и изменяющихся направлений в мире и жизни в будущем, но также и решение для развития личности и жизни как сбалансированных и гармоничных целых. Это приведет к тому, что в мире станет гораздо больше заботы, участия, сострадания, сотрудничества, бережливости и творчества, что позволит нам намного лучше справляться с проблемами, с которыми мы столкнемся в будущем, создавать более совместимый стиль и образ жизни, добиваться устойчивого развития и становиться культурными личностями в реалистическом и идеалистическом смысле этого слова.*

**Ключевые слова:** культура, основа, сложное целое, культурная жизнь, гармоничная культурная жизнь, материальное и нематериальное измерения, дисбаланс и дисгармония, устойчивое развитие, искусство, гуманитарные науки, образование, духовность, баланс и гармония, личности, жизнь, культурная личность, реальный, идеальный, культурная эпоха.

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