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Curriculum for a Cultural Age

The whole determines the parts, not only their relation but also their very nature.
Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*

Every age has an educational system, structure, and curriculum that is designed to indicate what is most essential to learn in order to survive and function effectively in that age and usually starts with young people and future generations and expands upward and outward from there to include all people and all generations. Curriculums like this usually include information about major achievements from the past, knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the age people are living in at that time, and what is most essential to know with respect to future challenges, opportunities, problems, expectations, and experiences. This results from contributions by elders, spiritual leaders, and many others in early times and teachers, scholars, practitioners, and departments of education more recently, starting with elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools and expanding to include adult education and life-long learning.

Curriculum of the present Economic Age

Take the curriculum of the economic age we are living in at present as the most obvious example of this. While this curriculum varies somewhat from country to country and one part of the world to another, it usually consists of a course on historical developments, an official language or two, mathematical courses such as algebra, geometry, and calculus, scientific courses such as biology, physics, and chemistry, management courses such as bookkeeping, accounting, economics, technology, and others. These courses are designed to assist people, organizations, communities, and countries to develop the skills and abilities they need to live and function effectively in the economic age, as well as to know about the most important values, lifestyles, and ways of life embraced by this age. This is predicated largely on people and organizations specializing in very specific production functions, being responsible consumers and producers, creating goods, services, and material and monetary wealth, obeying the law and laws of the age, and playing a responsible role in societies, countries, and the economic age in general.

This age is breaking down at the present time because it is designed to produce goods, services, and material and monetary wealth and not designed to come to grips with such life-threatening and dangerous problems as climate change, global warming, and the environmental crisis, colossal inequalities in income and wealth, mounting tensions, conflicts, and wars over land and resources, inability to understand and respect the cultures of other people and countries, and escalating health problems among young people and future generations. These problems exist today because economics was created and has evolved over the last two hundred and fifty years as a *free-standing and independent discipline* with virtually no consideration given to the environmental, human (apart from being consumers and producers), and cultural *consequences*,

as well as the *context* economics and economies are situated in and can't be changed now *after the fact*. (1)

While there are many thoughts and ideas about what type of age is required to address these complex problems and create a better world in the future, many signs point in the direction of a cultural age, This is because this age possesses the potential to come to grips with the aforementioned problems and many others, take the natural environment, all people, all counties, and other species into account, and create more peace, harmony, order, stability, and security in the world. (2) Unlike the paradigm of the economic age that is based on breaking wholes up into parts in order to produce more material and monetary wealth, specialization, exclusion, inequality, and unsustainability, the cultural paradigm is based on holism, inclusion, equality, and sustainability.

Like all ages, a curriculum will be required for the cultural age that is consistent with what is known and understood about the nature, meaning, and definition of culture in both the holistic and partial sense, learn far more about all the diverse cultures in the world, and function effectively in this age in the years and decades ahead. This is also needed to come to grips with the complexities and debilitating polarities that exist in the economic age today, as well as the shortcomings in its educational curriculum and not just its strengths, assets, and capabilities.

Assessment of the Current Situation

Speaking generally, very few if any educational institutions in the world are capable of providing the comprehensive education and compelling curriculum that are required to deal with humanity's and the world's most debilitating problems, as well as provide a much more expansive and exciting approach to life, living, education, and learning in the future.

This is due to the lack of cultural courses and qualified teachers that are available in educational systems today, as well as the low priority assigned to culture and all its diverse aspects and manifestations in the economic age, especially at the elementary and secondary school level when and where it is needed most. While countless elementary schools provide exposure to music, drama, dance, painting, and other cultural activities, these are usually one-time events and not courses. Although they often become courses at the secondary school level, they are usually optional rather than compulsory. and are being severely cut these days in many if not most secondary schools throughout the world because they are deemed to be "frills" in the economic age and therefore of little value or use. While some schools provide "multicultural days" that are designed to introduce students to the different cultures in the world through their food, cuisines, art, music, traditions, customs, and so forth - and others celebrate ethnic holidays and festivities for similar purposes - they are usually extracurricular rather than curricular in nature and fall far short of a balanced and comprehensive curriculum. This explains why *STEM* (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) – rather than *STEAM* (science, technology, engineering, *arts*, and mathematics) - are promoted in most schools and educational systems today.

While things are more developed at the college, university, adult, and life-long learning level since a variety of courses are usually offered here in the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and cultural industries, most students are discouraged from taking these courses because they are often seen and treated as "bird courses" that have little use in the economic age. Things are better in the social, natural, and physical domain, especially the social sciences with courses in psychology, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, and so forth, as well as the natural and physical sciences with courses in ecology, biology, geography, zoology, botany, physics, and the like. However, most of these courses are intended for students who are planning to pursue professional careers in these areas and therefore provide insufficient information on the "*cultural segments of these courses*" because there is so much to learn about the other segments of these courses.

What is needed now and needed more than ever at this crucial juncture in the history of humanity and the world is a *cultural curriculum* that is consistent with the requirements of a cultural age, just as the *economic curriculum* is consistent with the requirements of the economics age.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to pull everything together that is known at present about the nature, meaning, perceptions, and definitions of culture in general and cultures in particular. This is the purpose of the book - *The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic Whole* – published in 2022. (3) This book traces the evolution of culture as an idea and reality over the course of history and provides everything in one place. As a result, included in this book is the very first definition of culture which was espoused by Cicero more than 2,000 years ago when he said, "culture is the philosophy or cultivation of the soul;" the holistic definition of culture proposed by Edward Burnett Tylor as...“that *complex whole* which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and *any other capabilities and habits acquired by man (people) as a member (members) of society*” in his book *The Origins of Culture* published in 1871 (4); Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn's in-depth examination of the many different definitions of culture - *Culture - A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* –published in manuscript form in 1952 and book form in 1963 which revealed that there were more than 150 definitions of culture in use throughout the world at that time (5); Raymond Williams' informative book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* that makes the case that the word “culture” is one of the most difficult words in the English language (and presumably other languages as well) to pin down and define (6); and even “cosmological definitions” advocated by Thomas Berry and other scholars.

For a long time, the “*holistic definition of culture*” proposed by Edward Burnett Tylor and countless other anthropologists was confined to human beings. However, more recently, this definition has been expanded substantially through the incredible amount of research, writing, and publications provided by biologists, ecologists, zoologists, botanists, horticulturalists, and others who have revealed through their findings that culture is not limited to human beings but is also evident in the lives and creations of other species, most notably plants and animals. This confirms the fact that culture and the creation of cultures by all species – rather than economics and economies that are confined to the human species – are the *real foundations and essence of life and living on planet earth for all living creatures and not just human beings*.

The implications of this finding are phenomenal because they refute the claim made by Karl Marx and many other scholars that “the economic interpretation of history” is the most accurate and authentic interpretation of history possible. As a result of the recent findings by cultural scholars, historians, biologists, ecologists, geographers, and numerous others, the doors are open to creating a much more comprehensive and compelling “*cultural interpretation of history*” that is substantially larger in scope and millions of years older in time than the economic interpretation of history.

What is true for the cultural interpretation of history is also true for the thoughts, theories, and findings of cultural scholars compared to those provided by economic scholars, especially going forward into the future. What was also discovered during the research undertaken for *The World as Culture* was the fact that the findings and insights of generations of cultural scholars and historians are usually far more relevant to the world of the present, the future, and creation of a cultural age than the findings of economists and economic historians. Take this astute insight provided by the cultural historian, Johan Huizinga, many decades ago on what is most lacking in the modern world:

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*. The balance exists above all in the fact that each of the various cultural activities enjoys as vital a function as is possible in the context of the whole. *If such harmony of*

functions is present, it will reveal itself as order, strong structure, style, and rhythmic life in the society in question. (7)

We don't have to look very far to realize how relevant this quotation is to the state of the world today and prospects for the future. Since the balance produced by "strongly developed spiritual, intellectual, moral and aesthetic values" does not exist in the world today, the conflicts, imbalances, and polarizations that do exist will not be addressed successfully, the environmental crisis will not be solved, the huge inequalities in income and wealth will be increased rather than decreased, there will be many more conflicts and wars over land and resources, more tensions will erupt between the diverse people, races, countries, and cultures of the world, there will be fewer values and ideals, and the world will become a more inhumane and chaotic place. This is not a viable scenario for the future.

Foundations for the Cultural Age and Curriculum

When all these many different factors and developments are added up and considered in totality, it is apparent that culture has a far more fundamental role to play in the world of the future and creation of a cultural age than economics and the economic age. There is a reason for this. Culture can be seen and defined in a foundational way that is far more relevant to the world of the present and the future than economics. This way is the *holistic definition of culture* as "the complex whole or total way of life of people, communities, countries, and the world." This should play a central role in the world of the future in the same way that economics plays in the world of the present and the past. Without this, there is bound to be more disorder and instability in the world, as well as many more disharmonies and imbalances between the many diverse activities in life.

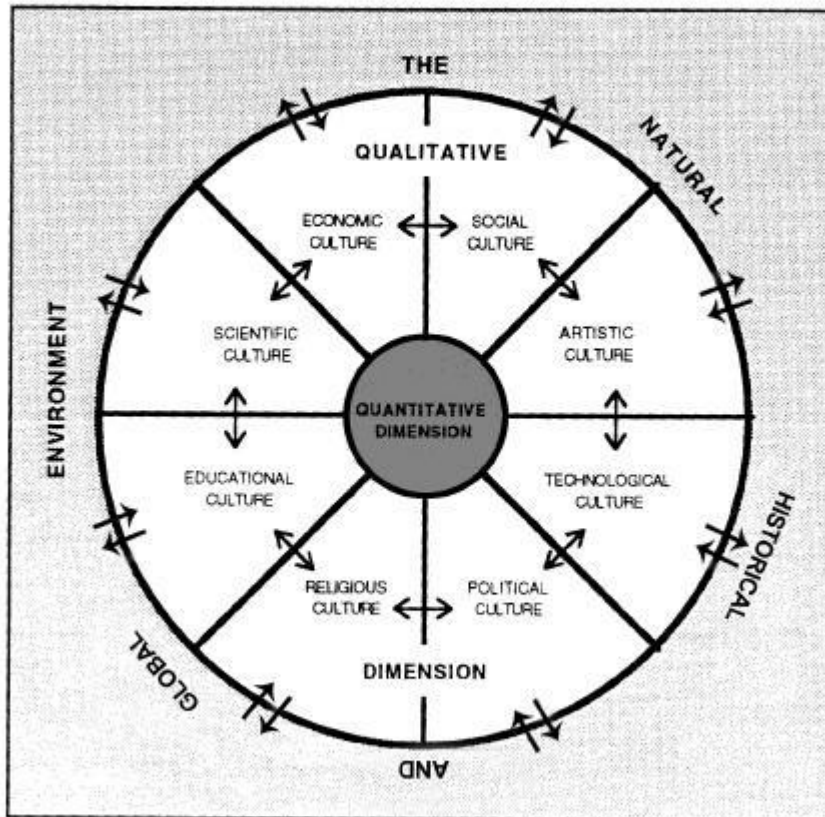
The Holistic Definition of Culture

This holistic definition of culture makes it possible *to see the world and everything in it* as a whole, total entity, and overall way of life because it includes all activities, species, and the natural environment whereas the partial definition of economics as "the production, distribution, and consumption of goods, services, and material and monetary wealth" only makes it possible to see the world from a circumscribed and limited economic perspective. And this is not all. The emphasis on "the whole" provided by culture also makes it possible to bring things together rather than split things apart. This is what wholes and their creation are really all about and designed to accomplish, whereas the function of economics and the economic age is to split wholes into parts and specialize on very specific production functions as Adam Smith advocated in his book *The Wealth of Nations* and is still the case today. Interestingly, Smith used the example of creating pins and pin factories where everybody specializes on a single production function rather than generalizes on all functions in order to make the most pins (and wealth) possible. (8)

Culture as a Whole and Cultures as Wholes composed of many Components and situated in the Natural, Historical, and Global Environment or Space and Time

While the graphic depiction above of the holistic character of culture as a whole composed of many different components (which includes the economic culture as a fundamental component of this in order to avoid any misunderstanding about the crucial importance of economics in a cultural age) has been greatly simplified and stripped to its essence to facilitate analysis of culture as a whole and total way of life, it is symbolic of the "all-inclusive potential" and "whole-parts phenomenon" inherent in the all-encompassing definition of culture in general and cultures in particular. (9) It also explains why some cultural scholars use "trees" as ideal metaphors for culture and cultures in the holistic sense because trees are also dynamic and organic wholes made

up of many different components, such as roots, trunks, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit just like culture and cultures. It is this all-inclusive ability that the cultural age and cultural curriculum should be based on in the future.



It is clear from this diagram that the scope and contents of culture and cultures in the holistic sense are enormous since it includes all aspects and dimensions of life and living on planet earth - the positive and the negative, non-material and material, qualitative and quantitative – and therefore possesses a breadth, depth, scope, and essence that extends well beyond economics to include countless other disciplines, activities, and fields. This is due to culture's all-encompassing nature and multidimensional character that can be subdivided into five major components:

- *culture as a whole and cultures as wholes* (the complete circle);
- *the components of culture and cultures* (the various components – economic culture, social culture, artistic culture, technological culture, political culture, and so on - that comprise the complete circle);
- *the relationships between the different components of culture and cultures* (the interactive arrows between the various components of the complete circle that link them all together);
- *the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of culture and cultures* (the interactive arrows connecting the inner and outer components of the complete circle); and

- *the relationships between culture and cultures and the natural, historical, and global environment* (the interactive arrows between the complete circle and the colossal expanse of space beyond the complete circle that constitutes the natural, historical, and global environment as well as the universe and cosmos if required).

It is important to examine each of these five components in turn, since this sheds a great deal of light on the way the cultivation of culture and specific cultures in the world can be dealt with most effectively and efficiently in the years, decades, and centuries ahead.

In order to cultivate culture as a whole and cultures as wholes, it is necessary to include and cultivate *all* components of culture and cultures and not just some components as stated earlier. Cultivation in this sense is a comprehensive, integrated, inclusive, and egalitarian process - rather than partial, dichotomized, exclusive, and partisan process - which is the case in the economic age. This is because it is necessary to address people's social, educational, health, political, aesthetic, religious, and other needs and not just their economic, industrial, business, and technological needs. This confirms the conclusion arrived at earlier that people need excellent educational opportunities, high-quality health services, viable artistic and spiritual endeavours, and stable political systems every bit as much as they need economic, commercial, and technological opportunities if they are to function effectively in countries, live creative, constructive, and fulfilling lives, and survive, function, and flourish in the future. Viewed from this perspective, economics is no longer *the* factor in development, but rather *a* factor in development along with all the other factors. It is not a case of developing economics and economies first and foremost, and then assuming that this will lead to the development of all other activities through the "base-superstructure" theory and "trickle-down" effect. Rather, it is a case of developing all factors and activities and developing them simultaneously rather than sequentially. This is the key to taking a holistic rather than specialized approach to culture, cultures, life, living, development, and virtually everything else.

This is imperative if development is to come to grips with the totality of people's needs and have a "cultural and human" rather than "economic and material" face. For development of artistic, social, spiritual, educational, and social activities *in conjunction with* economic, commercial, industrial, and technological activities is imperative if "human-centered and cultural-oriented cultivation" is to take place. There is a reason for this. The human and cultural element glows through every artistic, spiritual, educational, and social act. Without this, people will always play second fiddle to products, profits, economics, the marketplace, and the bottom line.

This will also make it impossible to come to grips with the host of debilitating problems confronting humanity and countless people and numerous countries in the world at present - unacceptable levels of pollution, poverty, starvation, and unemployment, a great deal of hunger and homelessness, intolerable levels of malnutrition and exploitation of labour, especially child labour, oppressive debts and deficits, lack of suitable housing, accommodation, and fulfillment in life, and severe inequalities in income, wealth, and resources. Dealing with these problems requires development that places a much higher priority on people and matters of human welfare and well-being than on products, profits, consumerism, technology, AI, wealth, and the marketplace.

While developing culture as a whole and cultures as wholes is *the* most important priority when development is viewed from a holistic, cultural perspective, a very important dimension of this is cultivating the components of culture and cultures *as entities in their own right*, but always bearing in mind that they must be properly situated in culture, cultures, and the natural, historical, and global environment if they are to function properly.

This is why the components of culture and cultures are depicted in the diagram as the "economic culture," "social culture," "political culture," "technological culture," and so forth because they all share culture in common. All these components can be subdivided into more specific components if more assessment, analysis, or specificity is required. For instance, the

“*technological culture*” can easily be subdivided into scientific, artistic, social, industrial, digital, AI, and many other technologies and techniques.

These specific components of culture and cultures are developed most effectively when they are cultivated in terms of their uniqueness, creativity, vitality, integrity, and diversity. This is true for the artistic, political, social, and spiritual culture, as well as for all the other components of culture and not just the economic one. Given the highly specialized nature of the world we are living in today, a great deal is known about these components and how to cultivate them most effectively, even if the financial, capital, and human resources are not always available to realize this in reality.

Unfortunately, far less is known about how to deal with the complex relationships that exist between and among the diverse components of culture and cultures. What, for example, is and should be the relationship between the economic culture and the religious culture, and how can this relationship be conducted in the years ahead to avoid immoral actions and unethical behaviour? Or, to cite another example from many, what is and should be the relationship between the scientific and technological culture and the artistic and social culture? Specifically, how can science and technology be developed so that they impact favourably rather than unfavourably on artistic and social activities? As these two examples indicate, there is a vast and complex array of relationships between the components of culture and cultures that must be dealt with if culture and cultures are to be cultivated successfully in the future. Understanding these complex relationships and coming to grips with them is looming larger and larger in the overall scheme of things and matrix of problems that must be addressed throughout the world today.

Just as culture and cultures are concerned with the constellation of relationships that exist between the components of culture and cultures, so they are concerned with the vast panorama of relationships that exist between the components of culture and cultures and culture and cultures as wholes. Seen from this perspective, culture and cultures provide the *context* or *container* in which the components of culture and cultures are situated. This makes it essential to examine very carefully the dynamic interplay and interaction that is constantly going on between the components of culture and cultures and culture and cultures as wholes. For instance, how are changes that are taking place in the economic, technological, or political cultures impacting on culture as a whole and cultures as wholes? Conversely, how are changes taking place in culture as a whole and cultures as wholes impacting on the economic, technological, and political culture? Questions like this and many others are of utmost importance to all people, countries, and the world because a larger and larger price will have to be paid if these relationships are not understood and dealt with effectively.

Added to this is the problem of situating culture and cultures and their cultivation in the natural, historical, and global environment or space and time. We will never overcome the problems of the present and lay strong foundations for the world of the future without giving a great deal more consideration to the *context* in which the activities of human beings and other species are situated. If we change the whole as we need to do in the cultural age, this will produce major changes in the component parts and their fundamental nature as Ruth Benedict pointed out so convincingly many decades ago. This means that culture, not economics, should determine the character and contents of the components, which is the way it should be going forward into the future and living in a cultural age.

There is one final issue here that requires our consideration. In a world of rapidly increasing disharmonies, polarizations, and imbalances, it is imperative to strive to create harmony among all the diverse relationships that exist between the different components of culture and cultures depicted in the diagram. (10) This is especially important with respect to the relationships between human beings and the natural environment, other species, the material and non-material or quantitative and qualitative dimensions of development, and therefore human rights and responsibilities, the sacred and secular, rich and poor people and rich and poor countries, the public sector and the private sector, the self and the other, and countless others. Without this – which has been left largely to markets and the marketplace in the economic age rather than to

people - it will not be possible to realize one of the most crucial objectives of the cultural age and curriculum of all.

The Parts Definition of Culture

There is a very complicated problem in the world that affects both the economic age and the cultural age and is very difficult to address. It is the fact that neither economics and economies nor culture and cultures can be seen in their totality due to their incredible complexity and the fact that many of their most essential elements cannot be seen. This is especially true for cultures in the holistic sense, which is why they are often compared to “icebergs” because most of them are submerged and hidden from view.

Fortunately, this problem can be solved to a large extent by turning our attention to the second essential definition of culture and cultures, namely the arts, heritage, and the “cultural and communications industries” in general and music, theatre, drama, dance, literature, the visual and literary arts, architecture, monuments and sites, food, foodstuffs, cuisines, publishing, radio, television, film, videos, games, digital devices, AI, social technologies, and the like in particular. This is what many people in the cultural field and most other fields call “*the cultural sector*” because it includes many elements and activities that are concrete, specific, and visible in character. Some people even expand the cultural sector to include the humanities with such assets as kindness, sympathy, empathy, and compassion, as well as sports and recreation for the benefits they provide in improving people’s health and well-being. These “symbols,” or “gateways” to culture, cultures, and civilizations in the holistic sense have an incredible and indispensable role to play in the future, the development of the cultural curriculum, and creation of a cultural age.

Let’s delve more deeply into this “*symbolic process*” and “*parts-whole phenomenon*” to see how powerful and quintessential *symbols* and *gateways* like these and many others are and can be in broadening and deepening our knowledge, understanding, and consciousness of the cultural sectors of countries. Take, for example, such symbols as Cervantes’ famous novel *Don Quixote*, flamenco music, and football (soccer) and the culture of Spain; the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, and Claude Monet’s garden in Giverny and the culture of France, and the plays of Shakespeare and Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* and the culture of England and the UK. (11)

Interestingly, festivals also play a very important symbolic and gateway role in this. I am thinking here of the Osaka cherry blossom festival in Japan, the Athens Epidaurus festival in Greece, the Qingming Festival honouring people’s ancestors and the Moon Festival giving thanks for bountiful harvests in China, the Diwali Festival that honours the home-coming of Lord Rama in India and involves lights as well as the Holl Festival that involves colours, the Eid al-Fitr Festival that celebrates the end of Ramadan and fasting in the Middle East and elsewhere, and myriad others. Small wonder Siddharth Katragadda provided this astute insight, “*The greatness of culture is to be found in its festivals*.” (12)

Also in this realm amidst countless other examples is the castle strategically located on the top of a high hill overlooking Lake Bled in Slovenia with a captivating Church - *Our Lady of the Lake* –situated on an island in the middle of this exquisite lake. Not only do these and countless other symbols and gateways provide aesthetic experiences and emotional “highs” that are often sublime and border on the divine, but also they enhance natural and environmental settings that are beautiful to begin with but are also capable of producing spiritual and ethereal states that are broader and deeper than nature itself.

What a great role these and many other activities, festivals, and events could play in the world of the future, not only by helping people to overcome their cultural differences, address climate change, global warming, and the environmental crisis, but also enhance the beauty of nature and the natural world beyond what they are today. Here again, Huizinga, had something very profound, powerful, and prophetic to say:

A community is in a state of culture when the domination of nature in the material, moral, and spiritual realms permits a *state of existence* which is *higher* and *better* than the given natural conditions; and when this state of existence is furthermore characterized by a harmonious balance of material and spiritual values and is guided by an ideal... towards which the different activities of the community are directed. (13)

Nothing is more essential in the world today than seeing, valuing, and treating the arts, humanities, heritage of history, festivals, cultural and communications systems, and the works of people working in many other domains of culture as “*ends in themselves.*” This is where everything should start, evolve, emanate, and flow from in a cultural age. Regrettably, this is not the case today due to the marginalization of these activities in the overall scheme of things, the severe cuts that have taken place in their funding in recent years, and most essentially, the tendency to treat these activities as frills, entertainment endeavours, and secondary rather than primary sources and pursuits.

This must change. Not only do these works and achievements bring an enormous amount of happiness, fulfillment, peace, beauty, compassion, and creativity into people’s and countries’ lives, but also there is an incredible amount to be learned from these works about living a full, upright, and responsible life, experiencing good health and well-being, understanding and respecting the universal heritage of humankind as well as the cultures of all people and all countries, and appreciating and respecting all aspects, dimensions, and manifestations of the natural environment and the lives of other species.

And this is not all. They also help to create the new values, value systems, lifestyles, ideals, and ways of life that are imperative to make the world a better, safer, and more secure, harmonious, and humane place. In order to do this, however, people and organizations working in these cultural fields must have the freedom and independence that are required to exercise and express their beliefs, convictions, commitments, and be respected as essential contributors to societies, countries, and the world as a whole.

Treating these activities as ends in themselves needs to be complemented and compounded by capitalizing on their value and importance as “*means to other ends.*” Over the last fifty years, most of the emphasis in this regard has been placed on their means to economic ends, which should be maintained in the future *but in a very different way.* More recently, these activities have not only been valued for their economic benefits but also for their health, well-being, social, environmental, and political benefits. (14)

A remarkable amount of research has been conducted in recent years on these additional benefits which has revealed that they have a quintessential role to play in enhancing people’s overall health and well-being, improving the development of their minds, bodies, and brains and how they function at every stage in the life process, and yielding numerous social benefits by bringing people together and connecting them rather than splitting them apart and separating them. These benefits are also being fortified substantially through their environmental benefits. Did you know that countless activities in the cultural sector are capable of reducing the huge impact we are having on the natural environment and the lives of other species very substantially? This is because many artistic, humanistic, heritage, and related activities are far more “human intensive” than “material intensive,” and, as such, are far more capable of reducing our impact on nature and the natural environment than increasing it. This is because they involve “*experiences that are low in material and resource inputs and outputs compared to “products” that are high in material, capital, and resource requirements.*”

Think about it for a moment. Far less damage is done to the natural environment, other species, people, and countries, as well as using up the world’s finite resources when we are sitting in comfortable chairs in our living rooms listening to music, enjoying a theatrical performance at the local arts centre, or painting pictures at home rather than buying an electric car to put in our driveways to impress our friends and neighbours. Writ large, it is not difficult to see that the shift

from “products to experiences,” developing a more harmonious balance between the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of development and life as well as between human beings and the natural environment, should be a quintessential component of “*the new economics*.” This type of economics is designed to reduce rather than increase the impact we are having on the natural environment and world’s scarce resources and therefore deal effectively with the environmental crisis.

And this is not all. These multifarious cultural benefits are also beginning to seep into the political domain as people and countries realize how valuable they are and how much damage is done to them and their countries when they are living in a state of war rather than peace. This affects their national identity, sense of belonging, bonding, dignity, and pride of place, what is in their hearts, minds, souls, spirits, and deeds, educating their young people and future generations in their most cherished values, ideals, and ways of life, and how imperative it is to preserve, protect, and keep them well and intact.

While the aforementioned activities are very valuable because they can be used as symbols and gateways to open the doors to a cultural age and its curriculum, they also make substantial contributions to the cultivation of culture and cultures through such social sciences as psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology, as well as natural and physical sciences including biology, ecology, geography, botany, zoology, physics, and cosmology as indicated earlier.

Over the last few decades, an enormous amount of research has been undertaken in these areas that is broadening, deepening, and intensifying our individual and collective knowledge, understanding, and awareness of how culture and cultures function in fact, as well as the role they play in all aspects of people’s, countries’, and species’ lives and the world at large. This includes how people are living their lives and dealing with their personal, family, psychological, social, and societal needs, problems, and possibilities; the contents and character of their cultures; the diversity of their languages, customs, and traditions; gender, racial, immigrant, and refugee requirements, Indigenous relations, rights, and responsibilities, the power and actions of corporations and governments, the need for “systemic cultural change” and “change the culture,” organizations as cultures in the holistic sense, and the list goes on and on. There is no doubt that a cultural age is rapidly emerging and taking shape in the world. What is desperately needed to go along with this is a comprehensive curriculum that reflects, enhances, embraces, and builds on this.

Building Blocks of the Cultural Curriculum

The first and most important building block with respect to this cultural curriculum and entering a cultural age is *clarifying, adopting, and utilizing both the holistic and parts definitions of culture in general and cultures in particular*. This is because there is a great deal of misunderstanding, confusion, and controversy throughout the world over how culture and cultures are and should be perceived and defined at present as well as in the future. This building block should be accorded the highest priority in the cultural field and addressed as quickly as possible by cultural organizations and educational institutions because *everything depends on this and is derived from it, as well as all the benefits and opportunities that can be realized from it*. By the end of secondary school, students in elementary and secondary schools should have a basic understanding of the nature and meaning of these two principal definitions of culture and cultures, as well as use them in their academic studies, course work, school projects, and daily discourses and discussions.

The second building block is *enabling students, people, organizations, and countries to experience their own cultures and the cultures of other people and countries in real and concrete terms*. While many organizations throughout the world are now actively engaged in this, one that is growing rapidly throughout the world and making seminal contributions to this crucial building block is *Reconnecting With Your Culture* (RWYC). Creation and development of this remarkable organization by professors Olimpia Niglio in Italy and Rana P.B. Singh in India in 2020 could not

have come at a better time. In specific terms, RWYC is designed to help children and young people in the 5-18 age category to explore and experience their cultures and heritages *in their own communities* and *localities* in conjunction with their teachers, parents, and fellow classmates and are often called “treasure hunts.” These hunts are devised to broaden and deepen students’ knowledge, experience, awareness, and connections with their own cultures and heritages as well as the cultures and heritages of their fellow classmates.

The first step in this process involves preparing students properly for their treasure hunts and exploratory experiences; the second stage involves recording their findings in a variety of ways such as painting pictures, making sketches, taking photographs, creating exhibitions, documenting tastes and sounds, interviewing local residents, producing maps, and so forth; and the third stage is sharing their findings and experiences with their fellow students, parents, and teachers, as well as others in classroom situations and other areas. It would not be difficult to expand this highly creative and very informative process to students at higher educational levels as well as to adults and life-long learners. (15)

Learning about culture and cultures in holistic and partial terms as well as expanding knowledge, understanding, consciousness, and appreciation of them is what makes it possible for people and countries to experience a real “paradise on earth.” Brian Holihan paved the way for this exciting opportunity when he stated in his valuable and timely book *Thinking in a New Light: How to Boost Your Creativity and Live More Fully by Exploring World Cultures* that this paradise really exists in the world and is accessible to all people and all countries. In Chapter 13 of this book, Brian sets out a very effective way to broaden, deepen, and connect with this paradise on earth by “looking at, with, and beyond cultures,” or what he calls “the AWB circle.” (16)

The third building block involves focusing attention on *the foundations and fundamentals of culture and cultures*. This is imperative because culture and all the diverse cultures in the world are based on very essential axioms, assumptions, beliefs, values, values systems, worldviews, ideals, and so forth that shed light on how these complex entities and their components are structured and put together as well as manifest themselves in the world and function in both theoretical and practical terms.

A very important dimension of this should be creating a system of classification and set of cultural indicators that can be applied to all the diverse cultures in the world. In the human domain alone, there is a vast array of cultures that needs to be classified according to their basic features, strengths, and weaknesses. Included in this classificatory system should be: the origins and roots of cultures; the evolution of cultures over space and time; the powerful roles dynasties, tribes, groups, and elites have played and are playing in the cultivation of cultures; cultures’ most quintessential characteristics, traits, traditions, and paces of life; and the most effective means of identifying and differentiating between cultures; exposing the many different layers of cultures that have been created over the centuries; and the role that cultural development and policy play in this process. This should also include their geographical and topographical features; heritages and inheritances; environmental surroundings; most important creative and innovative activities; and others. A set of comprehensive cultural indicators is also urgently needed to assess situations like this and many others, thereby bringing an end to the narrow and inadequate set of economic indicators that are used today to determine people’s and countries’ progress and principal problems.

The fourth building block is examining *the key relationships of culture and cultures*. Included here should be all the different activities that make up culture and cultures as wholes and ways of life; how some of these activities act as symbols and gateways to broaden, deepen, and intensify experiences with culture and cultures while others do not; what cultural scholars, historians, and practitioners have had to say about the different cultures in the world, their relevance over the centuries, and their contributions to humanity and the world at present and going forward into the future. Especially important in this regard is the need to become much

more aware of the relationships that exist – or do not exist – between the components of cultures and the need to bring them together rather than split them apart. As indicated earlier, this is given very little attention in the economic age - which has led to the many major disharmonies, imbalances, and disruptions throughout the world today – but is urgently required in the cultural age.

The final building block is dealing with the *context of culture and cultures* as well as *culture and cultures as contexts*. As we have seen, dealing with the context of culture and cultures involves assessing how culture and specific cultures in the world are situated in the natural, historical, global, planetary, and cosmic environment, as well as affected by all the powerful factors and forces that exist in the world. Dealing with culture and cultures as contexts involves examining the many different ways culture and cultures can be used to advantage, such as functioning as contexts for all the different activities in the world - from economics, politics, technology, and health care to the arts, humanities, heritage of history, sciences, religion, recreational activities, and countless others. Seen from this perspective, global and extraterrestrial cultures provide the context for national cultures; national cultures provide the context for regional, rural, city, and town cultures; and city and town cultures provide the context for neighbourhood, community, home, family, and personal cultures.

In the cultural age, education and the cultural curriculum should be focused initially on exposing children, parents, teachers, and people to culture in general and their own cultures in particular in as much breadth and depth as possible. Over time, this should be extended and enriched by exposing them to many other cultures in the world in live, virtual, and digital terms. A vast amount of information and many diverse techniques already exist in these areas, such as exploring other cultures through a variety of technological devices and techniques that include walking in the streets of their towns and cities, enjoying collections in their museums, art galleries, and libraries, witnessing their musical and dramatic productions as well as their heritage and architectural accomplishments; and flying over them in order to see them from the air and not just on the ground. This is why pulling all this information together and providing it in easily accessible places is of crucial importance, as is creating a global archive and judiciously placed sources that house and make all this indispensable information accessible on a sustained and systematic basis.

In conclusion, just as the economic age and curriculum are based on a number of foundational and fundamental principles, premises, and ideals that are based on breaking wholes up into parts, partialism, specializing on very specific production functions, attending to people's consumption and production requirements, and relying on stock markets and the marketplace to make most of the decisions, so the cultural age and its curriculum should be predicated on creating wholes from parts, emphasizing holism, educating people who are holistic, centered, altruistic, and humane, experiencing a great deal more happiness, fulfillment, spiritually, and compassion in life, and living in harmony with other people, cultures, species, and the natural environment.

John Cowper Powys summed this up best when he said, "The whole purpose and end of culture is a thrilling happiness of a particular sort - of the sort, in fact, that is caused by a response to life made by a harmony of the intellect, the imagination, and the senses. (17)

In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to make the transition from what might be called "the economic personality" to "the cultural personality." (18) However, let's leave the final words on this matter to Goethe who said, "live in the whole, in the good, in the beautiful." (19); and Maria Montessori who stated, "education and culture have no bounds or limits." As we have seen, this will not be possible without creating a cultural age, a comprehensive curriculum, and living a cultural life.

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