

DECLINE OF THE ECONOMIC AGE AND RISE OF THE CULTURAL AGE

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This article is about two of the most powerful activities in the world. The first is economics, which is by far the most powerful activity at present. The second is culture, which is poised to become the most powerful activity in the future.

Nothing is more important at this troublesome time in history than understanding and coming to grips with these two remarkable activities and their respective roles in the world due to the current state of the world and prospects for the future.

Let's begin with economics and how it became the most powerful activity in the world to such an extent that it now takes precedence over everything else. While few people use the term "economic age" to refer to the age we are living in at present, calling this age an economic age makes a great deal of sense since economics, economies, and economic growth are accorded the highest priority in the world and have been for a very long time. Here is a "thumb-nail sketch" of how the economic age came into existence, has evolved over the last two hundred and fifty years, and dominates the world today.

THE AGE OF ECONOMICS

Creation and Development of the Economic Age

While economics can be traced back to classical times when it was deemed to be "household management" by the Greeks, it was Adam Smith who made the most substantial and seminal contributions to creation and development of the economic age in theoretical and practical terms when his famous book *The Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776. (1) This is because Smith was the first person in the world to claim that phenomenal increases could be achieved in the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services and creation of material and monetary wealth – which eventually became the principal way of perceiving and defining economics as the most important activity in the world – by breaking "wholes up into parts" and people and organizations specializing in very specific production functions with respect to these parts. Smith confirmed this by using the example of a pin factory to illustrate that many more pins can be produced every day if people and factories specialize in very specific production functions than generalize on many or all production functions. While breaking wholes up into parts and specialization – or the "division of labour" as Smith and most other economists called it at that time and even today - had been going on for centuries due to humanity's insatiable curiosity and incredible ingenuity, Smith was the first person in the

world to connect these two fundamental ideas and turn them into the most powerful factors, forces, and activities in the world.

Smith's contributions help to explain why the Industrial Revolution took off in leaps and bounds soon after his popular book and evocative ideas were published. This led to phenomenal increases in the creation of goods and services, the use of resources, creation of millions of factories, and the colossal expansion in material and monetary wealth compared to earlier centuries.

In order to achieve this, Smith made a fundamental distinction between what he called "*productive*" and "*unproductive*" labour. Productive labour was labour that resulted in the creation of material and concrete products and contributed a great deal to a country's wealth, such as goods and commodities created by people working in agriculture, industry, manufacturing, technology, and so forth. Unproductive labour was labour that didn't create material and concrete products. Smith was obsessed with wealth creation and how it can be produced most effectively due to all the poverty and suffering that was evident and being experienced in Scotland, England, Ireland, and virtually all other parts of the world.

Smith is still recognized and applauded today for creating the foundations for the production of a colossal amount of material and monetary wealth, opening the doors to the economic age, enabling corporations and wealthy elites to play the most powerful role in the world, and laying the cornerstone for conservative and liberal policies, practices, and political parties that are connected with matters like this and are still popular at present.

Coupled with the incredible expansion that took place in the production, distribution, and consumption of products created by productive labour, Smith also made a compelling case that people should pursue their own *self-interests*, accept the fact that an "*invisible hand*" is at work to ensure that everything turns out for the best, and *laissez faire* and *free trade* are the most effective vehicles and political practices to pursue in creating wealth and conducting domestic and international affairs. This explains the colossal increases that have taken place in the supply and demand for goods and services and creation of material and monetary wealth since that time, first in the western world and more recently in other parts of the world as well.

Smith's views on this subject were reinforced and expanded when David Ricardo, who was also an economist, shrewd politician, and clever diplomat, arrived on the scene. Ricardo's principal contribution to economics and the economic age was to formalize economics as a discipline, which was realized in his book *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* published in 1817. (2) Not only did Ricardo confirm Smith's conviction that economics should be given the highest priority in countries and even over politics, but also he developed and promoted the *law of comparative advantage* that is based on maximizing the benefits that can come from international trade for all countries and producing even more material and monetary wealth. In doing so, Ricardo demonstrated

in specific terms why free trade is a much more beneficial policy to pursue than protectionism due to the law of comparative advantage that states that countries should specialize in the things they do best and trade for things other countries do best.

Following on the heels of Smith and Ricardo was Karl Marx, who was also an economist as well as a philosopher, social theorist, and well-known activist. (3) Marx was best known during his lifetime and still today for his strong commitment to labour and the labouring class, contempt for capitalism and capitalists, and especially devotion to communism or socialism that ended up dividing the world into capitalist and communist or socialist components for the better part of the twentieth century.

Marx embraced Smith's distinction between productive and unproductive labour but carried it much further. He did this by focusing on what he called "*the modes or means of production*" and emphasized the power of capitalists and capitalism over labour and labourers in the process. Marx contended that all societies and countries can be subdivided into two principal components: the economic base; and the non-economic superstructure. According to Marx, the economic base includes everything created by productive labour and the non-economic superstructure includes everything created by unproductive labour.

Writ large, this led Marx to conclude that the past can be interpreted in economic terms through what he called "*the economic interpretation of history.*" (4) With this in place, Marx claimed that his "base-superstructure theory" was not only true during his own lifetime, but it is always true, and therefore true at all times and in all places. In other words, the economic base is by far the most important factor in societies, countries, and the world because it is the cause and basis of everything else. It followed from this that the highest priority in the world should be accorded to economics, economies, and the economic base because everything emanates from this, depends on it, and can be traced back to it.

This distinction between the economic base and non-economic superstructure in general and productive and unproductive labour in particular eventually led to making a strong distinction between what came to be known as "*the basics in life*" and "*the frill in life.*" The basics were seen in terms of the economic base, productive labour, and what life and living are really all about; the frills were seen in terms of the non-economic superstructure and what people did in their spare time.

While it wasn't realized at that time and even today, this turned out to be one of the most powerful forces in the world because it placed the priority squarely on the material side of life - which is why Marx's economic interpretation of history is also called *the materialistic interpretation of history* - and marginalized the non-material side, such as the arts, humanities, heritage of history, culture, and eventually the so-called "cultural industries" or what is known as "*the cultural sector*" today. This explains why this sector is seen and valued first and foremost for its "economic impact" by most corporations, governments, and countries. It also explains why these organizations didn't get interested

in this sector until the cultural industries were added to this list since they produce material products such as books, records, tapes, cassettes, films, videos, and so forth that can be mass produced and therefore create much more material and monetary wealth.

Marx and Marxian economics were followed by what is called the neo-classical economics, and therefore neo-classical economists such as William Stanley Jevons, Léon Walras, and particularly Alfred Marshall, whose popular book *Principles of Economics* was published in 1890. (5) According to Marshall, economics - or political economy as he and most other neo-economists called it at that time and even today because the two areas are intimately connected - is really “the study of mankind (humankind) in the ordinary business of life.” According to Marshall and countless other neo-classical economists, economics is related to “that part of individual and social behaviour that is most closely connected to the *production, distribution, and consumption of the material aspects of well-being.*” (6) Consequently, Marshall’s theory of value states that the price, output, and worth of products is determined by the interaction of supply and demand in the marketplace, which he often compared to the functioning of a pair of scissors because both blades of the scissors play an important role in the cutting process.

For Marshall, the ideal economic system functions best when people derive the most satisfaction from their purchases as consumers, corporations maximize their profits and compete as vigorously as possible as producers, and the entire economic system is in a state of “general equilibrium.” By focusing on matters like this and others, Marshall and his neo-classical colleagues took economics and economies out of the theoretical domain and into the daily life of people and countries and therefore much closer to home, or what is now called *microeconomies*. This was music to the ears of most companies, corporations, capitalists, and wealthy elites because it propelled them into the most prominent position in societies, countries, and the world which is still the case today, as well as being as far away as possible from communism and socialism.

Next in this “thumb-nail sketch” of the creation and development of the economic age is John Maynard Keynes. He was an economist much like Marshall and the other economists mentioned earlier, as well as countless others who have also had a powerful effect on the development of economies, the economic system, and the economic age as it is seen, dealt with, and practiced in theoretical and practical terms today. Keynes emerged on the international scene and rose to prominence during the Stock Market Crash of 1928 and then the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939. He set out to explain why these events were happening, what was wrong with economics and the economic system at that time, and what could be done to set things right. He addressed these matters in his book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* published in 1936. (7) This book is concerned with how difficult problems such as these and many others can be dealt with most effectively through an array of monetary, fiscal, governmental, and corporate policies. Keynes made a powerful case for this by contending that governments should play an active, major, and proactive role in the economic and financial affairs of nations and the

evolution of the economic age. This was best achieved by spending public funds and using a combination of monetary, fiscal, and funding policies and practices to give economies a boost when it is needed the most. For Keynes, governments should create budgetary surpluses in times of prosperity in order to have the funds necessary to spend on economic recovery during recessions and depressions.

There is one other group of economists that should be added to this thumb-nail sketch of the creation and development of the economic age. They were and still are called “welfare economists” since they are concerned with the “distribution of wealth” and not only the “production of wealth.” This group included such economists as Arthur C. Pigou, John Hicks, and Alfred Marshall once more in his later years because he made a fundamental distinction between *wealth* on the one hand and community, society, and country’s *welfare* on the other hand. (8) This concern with welfare arose and took place during the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the period immediately after this terrible war. While welfare economics proved to be very beneficial and worthwhile for some countries and parts of the world such as Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries, and eventually many others, it didn’t last long. When economic growth began to pick up steam and increase significantly in the decades following these two tragic events, faith was restored in the neo-classical economics and system and made them the most powerful activities and forces in the world at that time and still today.

Looking back over these developments and many others in the economic domain over the last two and a half centuries, this is largely where matters stand at present with respect to the economic age and the central role it plays in people’s and countries’ lives and the world at large. This is true despite the fact that this is a far more complex system today than it ever was in the past. In order to develop economies effectively today, active involvement in the economic system is imperative on the part of consumers, producers, corporations, governments, and citizens, and therefore billions of people, organizations, institutions, and countries that work in or depend on the economies of countries and the global economy to satisfy their needs and keep economies growing at an impressive rate.

Here, in a nutshell, are the most powerful theories, factors, forces, and activities driving economics, economies, the economic age, and the world today. (9) They include: awarding the highest priority in the world to economics, economies, and economic growth; developing economies in breadth and depth; breaking wholes into parts in order to capitalize on their incredible potential and productive capacities; specialization; treating people as consumers; according the highest priority to corporations as producers of goods and services and creators of economic growth and material and monetary wealth; maximizing profits; relying primarily on markets and the marketplace to regulate economic activities and make most decisions affecting economies; and depending on governments to deal with any breakdowns or difficulties that occur in the economic system. While these theories, factors, forces, and features were confined largely to the western world for the better part of two centuries, they now exist in all countries and parts of the world due to

phenomenal developments and improvements in innovation, communications, technology, transportation, and globalization.

Underlying all these theories, factors, activities, and so forth is an even more powerful and dominant factor. *It is the belief that economics is really “the whole”* and not just *“a very important part of the whole.”* What makes this factor so powerful and persuasive is the age-old belief that *“the whole is greater than the parts and the sum of the parts”* because new qualities and capabilities are added and brought into existence when the whole (any or all wholes) are created that are not in the parts taken separately or even together. This is what gives the whole in general and wholes in particular their phenomenal power and dominance over the parts in philosophical, theoretical, and often practical terms.

While the belief that “economics is the whole” evolved slowly, inconspicuously, and unconsciously over the better part of the twentieth century, it commenced and steadily gained momentum in the world when the most powerful people, classes, corporations, countries, and leaders in the world decided that Marx had discovered a “universal and enduring truth” - and quite possibly “the most universal truth of all” - when he created the economic interpretation of history. For what was concluded at that time and even more so today is that it is no longer necessary to search for another interpretation of history because Marx solved this complex problem *once and for all and therefore at all times and in all places*. This explains why economics, economies, and economic growth are not only accorded the highest priority in the world today, but also this is the only way to go in the future because no other interpretation of history with respect to what is the whole and what are the parts is required today or going forward into the future.

This quickly led to the conclusion that people’s and countries’ needs and wants *in all areas of life and parts of the world* can be satisfied most effectively when economics, economies, and economic growth - or what many people are now calling “*prosperity*” in order to soften its environmental implications, impact, and consequences – are made the centrepiece of the world, life, and living, as well as the principal preoccupation of municipal, regional, national, and international development. Susan Hunt, an astute observer of the world scene and global trends summed all this up best when she said:

The economic ideology, the dominant intellectual framework in the world today, has reduced practically every human value to the categories of economics: production and consumption, basic needs and satisfiers, human rights, scarcity, nature, energy, systems, Cartesian time and space, the assumption that all things are measurable and comparable. (10)

This statement raises an interesting, urgent, and timely question. If creation and development of the economic age is so remarkable and economics really is the whole and will always be the whole, why don’t we just go on living in the economic age in the years,

decades, and centuries ahead and deal to any problems that arise from this before, during, or after they occur, much as humanity has been doing for centuries and is still doing today?

This would be possible except for three fundamental flaws in the foundations of the economic age that need to be addressed. This first and most serious flaw is that virtually no or very little consideration was given to the environmental, human, and cultural “*consequences*” and “*context*” in which economics, economies, and the economic age were and still are situated. The second flaw is that no real or lasting distinction was made between a “*richer age*” and a “*better age*” during this period of time. And the third is that the economic interpretation of history is not the “be all and end all” of interpretations of history as most people think. This makes it imperative to undertake an objective assessment of the economic age in order to ascertain whether or not it is possible for humanity and the world to remain in the economic age forever or enter a new age in the future.

Assessment of the Economic Age

Without doubt, creation and development of the economic age is the greatest human achievement in history. Not only have billions of people and numerous countries had their standards of living and quality of life improved immensely as a result of the economic age, but also this accomplishment cannot be matched by any other human development. This includes explorations in outer space, landing astronauts on the moon, inventing the automobile, airplane, telephone, television, computer, Internet, or cellphone, creating incredible works of art, science, education, and technology, inventing the James Webb telescope, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence (AI), building giant skyscrapers, or combining all these developments together. It is a phenomenal achievement that far outweighs anything else created by human beings.

And this is not all. Not only have levels of production, productivity, and consumption been increased enormously in many if not most parts of the world due to the economic age, but also remarkable advances have been recorded in virtually every sector and segment of public and private life, from agriculture, industry, business, government, education, and medicine to social affairs, the arts, sciences, politics, technology, sports, recreation, and numerous others. This also includes major improvements in people’s health, welfare, well-being, longevity, and medical care, as well as significant reductions in population growth due to decreasing the size of families in order to raise children more effectively and pay for their education and many other needs and requirements.

While attention *was* paid to agriculture, industry, technology, mechanical inventions, specific resources, people as consumers, corporations as producers, politics, and commercial practices during the creation and development of the economic age since they were crucial elements in the world of economies and this age, economics itself was and still is seen and dealt with largely as a “*free-standing and independent discipline*” with no real commitment to addressing its context, consequences, and accountability. This is

because most economists, politicians, corporations, corporate executives, governments, and world leaders believe that “markets and the marketplace” will solve most if not all problems associated with or experienced in the economic age. This was believed in England in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century when this country was seen as the “epitome of the economic age” by most other countries since Britannia ruled the waves, was a global superpower, and had a powerful Royal Navy. In much the same way, the United States is now seen as the epitome of the economic age and has been since the end of the Second World War due to its incredible material and monetary wealth, military might, political influence, and arsenal of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.

For many years, the natural environment didn’t strike back against problems like this and others in the economic age, or, if it did, it was in very minor ways such as holes in the ozone layer and nominal increases in climate change and global warming. However, recently it has started to strike back and strike back with a vengeance in the form of horrendous floods, horrific hurricanes, treacherous typhoons, deadly storms, devastating forest fires, and the sinking of coastal areas. This is also true for the decimation of millions of agricultural crops which is getting worse every year. What is also evident is the fact that the colossal inequalities that exist in income and wealth throughout the world will not be solved by the marketplace, trickle-down effect, and will likely get worse. As economist Vilfredo Pareto concluded more than a century ago through his “*law of income distribution*,” a small percentage of the population in any or all countries will always own or control most of the income and wealth. This is confirmed by the fact that a small percentage of the world’s wealthy elites and powerful corporations own or control most of the globe’s wealth and natural resources. And this is not all. Added to this is the possibility that many more tensions, conflicts, and wars between the diverse peoples, races, and countries in the world will break out as the globe’s natural resources are used up, arable land becomes coveted and scarce, and the finite capacity of the earth is approached.

Added to this is another problem that is even more severe and difficult to address. After the elapse of two hundred and fifty years, it is not possible to insert the natural environment into the theoretical and practical foundations of the economic age *after the fact*. The architectural equivalent to this would be building colossal office towers or gigantic condominiums on sand or mud. At some point, they are bound to collapse because the foundations are not right or do not exist.

This flaw in the economic age can be traced back to the distinction Smith, Ricardo, Marx, and many other economists made between productive and unproductive labour and what this means in terms of the differences between these two very different types of labour and wealth creation. Billions of people who were deemed by Adam Smith and many other economists to be “*unproductive*” have made or are making substantial contributions to creating a “better world,” even if this is not a “richer world.” I am thinking here of countless religious and spiritual leaders, millions of doctors, nurses, teachers, administrators, artists, humanists, activists, and most notably millions of ordinary and down to earth people and

citizens who haven't or aren't creating wealth in the material or monetary sense but are still contributing something vital, worthwhile, and important to the creation of a better world – a world with more peace, kindness, generosity, compassion, and concern for others.

As the dangerous and life-threatening problems we are confronted with today and many others continue to mount and escalate out of control, it becomes steadily more apparent that these problems cannot and will not be solved by economics, developing economies, or relying on the marketplace, economic growth, or the economic age. *This is because this age was and still is designed to produce goods, services, and material and monetary wealth and not designed to deal with problems as vast, dangerous, multidimensional, and complicated as the ones that exist throughout the world today.* The reason for this is not difficult to detect. In the economic age, perception of the world and everything in it is based on a partial, one sector, and highly quantitative and materialistic perspective of the world and everything in it, rather than a holistic, all sectors, and *quantitative and qualitative* perception of the world that is desperately needed to deal with all the difficult problems and complex situations that exist throughout the world today.

And this is not the only problem with the economic age. As developments such as these and many others get progressively worse, it is apparent that the world is rapidly becoming a much more inhumane, impersonal, callous, and chaotic place that is devoid of feelings, emotions, moral standards, ethical ideals, values, and civilized behaviour in the collective sense. How could it be otherwise when the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and culture in the holistic sense have had their funding and budgets cut severely in recent years, and wars are being fought in many parts of the world today without one iota of concern for destroying other peoples' homes, families, schools, hospitals, churches, mosques, synagogues, museums, and libraries, as well as killing children, women, seniors, and men who are treated as "enemies," "collateral damage," and therefore written off?

This is being compounded in some countries by ignoring the environmental crisis entirely or contending that there really isn't an environmental crisis to begin with; passing legislation that enables the richest people and classes to be accorded even more income and wealth by reducing their tax obligations and creating tax shelters for them; advocating spending a much higher percentage of countries' gross or net domestic products on military matters, defense installations, and weapons of war (from the usual 2 % to 5 % advocated by the American Government for all NATO countries and others); suppressing commitment to "diversity, equality, and inclusion" - or what is called DEI - in order to prevent countless people from being included in societies and countries, treated equally, provided with help, and accorded dignity and respect; imposing high tariffs on countries' exports; creating "economic wars" with certain countries in order to control them entirely or take their land and resources; promoting a "dig, dig," and "grow, grow" rather than "conserve, prevent, and rejuvenate" mentality; and reducing foreign aid and assistance substantially.

While most of these activities with the exception of the production of military weapons, defense spending, taking other peoples' and countries' land and resources, and several others are consistent with the policies and practices advocated by Adam Smith and many other economists who were and still are concerned with "wealth creation" first and foremost, the American Government seems to be taking these activities and possibilities to their extreme by making *the creation of wealth* the most important goal and highest priority going forward into the future. Unfortunately, there is also another area where this Government's present policies and practices are inconsistent with those of Adam Smith, but in fact run directly counter to them. It is the decision to commit to "protectionism" rather than "free trade." Smith called this commitment a "*beggar-thy-neighbour*" policy and for good reason. It occurs when a country wants to increase its wealth by implementing policies and practices that are detrimental to the economies of other countries and their trading capabilities. This usually involves instituting protectionist measures such as high tariffs, quotas on imports, and currency devaluations. Smith coined the aforementioned phrase and Ricardo confirmed it in order to draw attention to policies that prioritize one country's gains and other countries' loses. This eventually leads to a 'lose, lose' rather than 'win, win' situation for all countries, since it makes it impossible to enjoy the benefits that come from free trade and the law of comparative advantage indicated earlier.

While the aforementioned policies, practices, strategies, and tactics are the rights and prerogatives of all sovereign countries and independent states, they do not provide a viable, beneficial, or desirable direction for humanity and the world to go in the future. In fact, they are much more likely to end up as a prescription for disaster and the demise of the economic age that is already in a state of severe decline and descent.

The consequences of this are predictable. Not only will this create more havoc, discontent, and disorder in the world and increase the risk of having many more wars, but also it will intensify the environmental crisis even more, expand the inequalities that exist in income and wealth throughout the world rather than decrease them, heighten the polarizations and disharmonies that are apparent in all parts of the world, activate more conflicts over land and resources, and make it impossible to create a *better* world for all people, countries, and the world at large even if it turns out to be a *richer* world.

The problem here is that there always is "an economic problem" that must be dealt with and take precedence over everything else. We have all seen this at work. As soon as concern is expressed for the life-threatening and dangerous problems that exist in the world today such as destruction of the earth, the environmental crisis, and unequal distributions of income, they are pushed aside because there is an economic problem that must be addressed first, such as inflation, deflation, increases in the cost of living, decreases in the standard of living, insufficient housing and accommodation, low rates of economic growth, and on and on it goes. This doesn't need to happen. But in order to prevent it, it will be necessary to create a new type of age in the future with a different perspective on the world and everything in it. Albert Einstein realized this many years ago when he said, "we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking that created them in the first place."

And this brings us to interpretations of history and whether Marx really did solve this problem “once and for all.” This problem can be addressed in many different ways depending on what perceptions are used and how history evolved in the past. Looking back over the course of history, it is clear that Marx was living at a time when economies were booming, numerous economic developments were taking place in Great Britain and elsewhere in the world, and the western world was at the height of the Industrial Revolution. This caused Marx to conclude that economics was not only the most powerful force in the world, but also this was true in the past and would also be true in the future.

Fortunately, recent research is revealing that this has not always been the case. In fact, when the holistic perception provided by culture is taken to interpretations of history rather than the partial, economic perception, it is clear that culture and cultures are the real foundations and essence of life and living on earth as well as interpretations of history. (11) And what is true for human beings in holistic terms is also true for other species. They also have cultures and cultivate them in much the same way that human beings do.

THE AGE OF CULTURE

Origins and Foundations

Just as the origins and foundations of the economic age can be traced back to Adam Smith and publication of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, so the origins and foundations of the cultural age can be traced back to Edward Burnett Tylor and publication of *The Origins of Culture* in 1871.

This insightful book appeared when anthropologists began travelling to many different parts of the world in the late nineteenth century to study groups, races, genders, classes, tribes, societies, and countries in depth and on the ground. What they discovered was that people in these areas and parts of the world had words to describe all the specific activities they were engaged in as they went about meeting their individual and collective needs and working out their complex associations with the natural environment, other people, other species, and the world at large. However, what they didn't have and needed desperately was a word that described how all the multifarious activities people were engaged in were woven together in different combinations and arrangements to create “complex wholes” and the “total ways of life of people” made up of countless parts.

Culture was the word they chose to designate and describe this holistic process and phenomenon, not economics. They did this because creation and development of anthropology *as a discipline* was perceived, defined, and dealt with from the very beginning *in holistic rather than partial terms* as all aspects, dimensions, and manifestations of people, groups, races, societies, and countries' lives, living, activities, ways of life, and interactions with the world, as well as how they combine everything together to create cultures in the all-encompassing sense.

This is why Edward Burnett Tylor, who is generally regarded by many scholars to be one of the first if not the *first* anthropologists in the world, defined culture formally as a word, term, discipline, and reality on the very first page of his book *The Origins of Culture* 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*. (12) Tylor defined culture (and cultures) in this holistic and all-inclusive sense for a very specific and important reason, namely to explain and describe what he and other anthropologists found when they studied different people, groups, races, societies, and countries in real terms, on the ground, and in a great deal of detail. (13)

Unfortunately, this holistic definition of culture was largely ignored outside the anthropological domain because the world was deeply entrenched in the economic age at that time and especially how economics, economies, and economic growth took precedence over everything else. Nevertheless, it is on this holistic and all-encompassing perception and definition of culture in general and cultures in particular that we should seek to construct, build, and cultivate a cultural age in the future. (14) One of the quintessential reasons for this is that this holistic definition provides humanity with an all-embracing understanding of culture in general and cultures in particular. Not only is this perception of the world very different from all other perceptions of the world such as the economic one since it sees the world “*as a whole*” and not just countless and separate parts, but also its holistic capability is imperative if we are to be successful in coming to grips with the life-threatening problems that exist in the world today, especially in terms of saving the natural environment and the earth and creating the new lifestyles, values, ideals, and ways of life that are necessary for the future.

Since the appearance of Tylor’s holistic definition of culture in general and cultures in particular, a number of major developments have taken place in the world that are even more expansive than the holistic definition which is confined to human beings. While culture was limited to human beings for centuries and for a very specific reason – namely to assert the superiority and dominance of human beings over other species – over the last century or so a great deal of research by biologists, ecologists, zoologist, botanists, horticulturalists, and so forth has revealed that plants and animals have cultures in the holistic sense just as humans do, and what is more, manifest these cultures in their everyday lives and overall ways of life much like human beings. It is expansion of this definition of culture to include other species that leads to the conclusion stated earlier that all species have culture and create cultures, and therefore culture and cultures – not economics and economies as most people, institutions, and countries think - are the *real foundations and essence of life and living in the world for all species and not just the human species*. (15) This development brings other species and the natural environment into the realm of culture and creates a far more expansive holistic definition of culture. *It is on this greatly expanded holistic definition of culture that we should seek to create and cultivate the cultural age in the future*. This is because the holistic definition of culture sees things in terms of wholes

rather than parts and leads to the phenomenological difference between the whole and the parts that is of crucial importance going forward into the future and entering a cultural age.

There is one other aspect of this holistic definition of culture and cultures that needs to be examined and clarified here in order to create the origins and foundations for a cultural age. It is the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and cultural industries, or what most people, organizations, governments, corporations, foundations, and educational institutions call “*the cultural sector*” today as noted earlier. Not only have these activities been associated with culture and cultures for numerous centuries and far longer than Tylor’s all-encompassing definition in 1871, but also they constitute a very prominent component of culture and cultures that must also be taken fully and forcefully into account. This is because cultures and cultures cannot be seen in holistic terms because they are too vast, multidimensional, qualitative, and invisible to achieve this and it is not possible to see how all the many diverse parts of culture and cultures are woven together to create wholes and overall ways of life. This can only be realized by using specific parts of culture and cultures such as the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and cultural industries in general and the specific activities contained in these parts in particular as “*symbols*” to open the doors to culture and cultures in the all-encompassing sense.

Included here, for instance, are musical compositions, dances, plays, poems, stories, literary works, architectural creations, monuments and sites, food, foodstuffs, and cuisines, books, films, videos, and so forth that provide the gateways that are required to visualize and open the doors to culture and cultures in holistic terms. A good illustration of this is the often-stated phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Phrases, illustrations, and symbols like this and many others are frequently used in the arts, heritage, and cultural field because they play a prominent role in acquiring knowledge, insights, and understandings of culture and cultures in the all-embracing sense. Armed with this technique for entering the realm of culture and cultures as wholes through their symbolic parts, we can proceed to the next stage in this captivating and compelling process.

The Rise of the Cultural Age

There is no doubt that a great cultural awakening is taking place in the world today. What separates this awakening from all other awakenings is the fact that the present cultural awakening is global, whereas all other and earlier awakenings - such as Spain’s golden cultural awakening and the remarkable Buddhist cultural awakening - were regional or religious and only became global much later. This contrasts markedly with today’s cultural awakening because millions of Black and Indigenous people as well as millions if not billions of colonized people and marginalized groups throughout the world are engaged in this far broader and deeper awakening and are connecting or reconnecting with their original cultures as wholes and total ways of life, and with this, their roots, traditions, values, languages, lifestyles, ideals, and ways of life.

This is also true for millions of organizations in all sectors of society and domains of public and private life that are now seeing and treating their organizations in holistic rather than partial terms as dynamic, organic, and complex wholes and overall ways of life. Included here, for example, are social, political, sports, and recreational organizations, as well as countless corporations, businesses, and thousands of others that are seeing themselves and their collective entities as “cultural wholes” made up of countless interacting and interrelated parts, just like cultures. (16) This awakening also includes millions of “*cultural* tourists” who want to experience the different cultures of the world in depth, breadth, and where they are located, as well as through books, films, videos, and digital devices that are devoted to this subject and constitute a prominent part of this great cultural awakening. This made this awakening a world phenomenon from the very outset.

And this is not all. Many people are talking about the need to “*change the culture*” and “*systemic cultural change*” - or what they deem to be change from the present age or prevailing state of the world - in order to create the new values, ideals, cultures, and ways of life that are imperative going forward into the future. This is being accompanied by the rapidly held belief that what is most needed in the world at this crucial time is not “partial, partisan, and piecemeal change” but rather “transformational, transitional, and transcendental change” if humanity is to be successful in dealing with the complex problems in the world.

The time has come to capitalize on this great cultural awakening and remarkable potential of culture, cultures. and the thoughts and findings of countless cultural scholars, historians, and practitioners to set the stage for a very different kind of age in the future. Several decades ago, Jean d’Ormesson, a distinguished journalist and cultural scholar from France, foresaw the need for this major transformation or paradigm shift and captured it most effectively when he said, “culture used to look backward in order to understand the world; now, all of a sudden, it is looking forward in order to change it.” (17) This also explains why Joel S. Kahn had this to say about the role of culture in the world in his book *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture* published at the turn of the century:

Culture is a word on everybody’s lips these days. Hardly a moment seems to pass when we do not hear on the radio or television, see in newspapers and magazines, or read in academic texts some account of the world of the cultural. Governments at all levels announce cultural policies and provide funding for cultural activities; intellectuals announce the need for cultural initiatives or bemoan the loss of traditional cultural values; famous cultural icons - musicians, artists, novelists - themselves culture makers, are increasingly sought out for their opinions on the state of the world; the new field of cultural studies takes the academy by storm. And small wonder – the image, the presentation, things quintessentially cultural have, as cultural theorists like Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson have argued, quite literally taken over our lives. (18)

Just as the economic age is based on an “*economic worldview*” that enables people, organizations, and countries to see the world in partial, economic terms, so the cultural age is based on a “*cultural worldview*” that enables people, organizations, and countries to see the world in holistic, cultural terms. Johan Huizinga, an outstanding cultural scholar and historian from the Netherlands who studied numerous cultures in the world in depth over many years, captured culture’s holistic power, potential, and capabilities best and expressed its relevance, worth, and benefits most succinctly and simply when he said:

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 cultural functions is present, it will reveal itself as order, strong structure, style, and rhythmic life of the society in question. (19)

When this statement is extended to include all species and the natural environment and not just the human species - which is imperative today and going forward into the future - it provides the ideal foundation and perfect point of departure for the cultural age since it is holistic and expansive rather than partial and limited in nature. This also eliminates the fundamental distinction Adam Smith and many other economists made between “productive” and “unproductive” labour, which unfortunately still exists in many parts of the world today. This is because culture in the holistic sense confirms the fact that all types of labour are productive, valuable, and have important contributions to make to societies, countries, cultures, and the world at large and not just some types of labour. It also focuses attention on the crucial role that “*strongly developed spiritual, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic values*” can and must play in the overall scheme of things, which is very much lacking in the economic age and needs to be corrected in the cultural age. Not only will these strongly developed activities and values help rectify the severe imbalances, disharmonies, and polarizations that exist in the world between the material and non-material dimensions of development and life, but also they will reduce the demands we are making on the natural environment, other species, and the world at large.

Writ large, this will also play an instrumental role in shifting the priority in the world from “*wealth*” to “*well-being*.” There is a reason for this and why it is so imperative. As we have seen, *developing economies* is a highly specialized, concentrated, partial, and ***one-dimensional activity*** based on creating and producing goods, services, and material and monetary wealth by breaking wholes up into parts, specializing in very specific production functions, and relying on markets and the marketplace to make most decisions and solve many if not all problems that emanate from this. In sharp contrast, *cultivating cultures* is a far broader, deeper, all-inclusive, and ***multi-dimensional activity*** predicated on creating well-being in all its diverse forms and manifestations, but also achieving balance, harmony, and synergy between all the different parts of cultures, much like cultivating gardens. (20)

This is because cultures, like gardens, are holistic entities that are greater than their parts and the sum of their parts. Here, as well, Johan Huizinga had something powerful and meaningful to say that enhances the case for a cultural age as well as protection and preservation of the world's valuable resources, natural environment, and other species:

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. (21)

We have all seen, experienced, and enjoyed many examples of these *higher* and *better* states, especially ones involving the arts, humanities, heritage of history, spirituality, and compassion to sustain the present preoccupation with this subject for a moment longer. Think, for example, of all the many states and activities like this that take place outdoors in natural and environmental settings, such as theatrical productions in forests or on and around lakes, dance performances beside gushing streams and babbling brooks, popular and classical music concerts in parks, the commons, or conservation areas, spiritual experiences in mountains and breath-taking geographical sites, and the list goes on and on. Not only do these states, activities, festivities, and events provide aesthetic experiences and mental and emotional highs that enhance and enrich natural settings, local surroundings, and people's lives that are already exquisite and captivating to begin with, but also they create reverential and ethereal moods and modes of thinking, feeling, being, becoming, and belonging that are greater than the natural features and conditions themselves. What a great objective this would be for humanity and the world to pursue and realize in the future, not only in terms of playing a major role in coming to grips with the environmental crisis and the destruction of the planet, but also enhancing and enriching the beauty and sanctity of nature, the natural environment, and the earth far beyond what they are today.

In fact, the potential exists here to connect, engage in, and experience two of the greatest paradises on earth –*nature and the natural paradise* and *culture and the cultural paradise* - in the holistic sense. (22) Both these states exist on planet earth and can be accessed through all the diverse activities, modes of transportation and communication, symbols, and technological devices that are available to all people and countries today.

In the case of the cultural paradise, this consists of all the many different cultures that exist in the world, from the individual, group, organizational, community, town, city, rural, and regional level to the national, international, species, and extraterrestrial level. This will expand, enrich, and enhance our knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of all the fascinating cultures and civilizations in the world, as well as enable us to cultivate both these paradises far more effectively in the future than has been the case in the past and still at present. This is because nature and the natural world need to be brought into the cultural

realm in a much more profound and powerful way in order to create many more harmonious relationships and synergistic connections between these two types of worlds.

The New Economics and the Cultural Age

In the economic age, culture and cultures are seen, understood, and dealt with as part of economics and economies. In the cultural age, economics and economies will be seen, understood, and dealt with as part of culture and cultures. This is because culture is defined and dealt with first and foremost in holistic rather than partial terms in this age.

The distinguished cultural scholar Ruth Benedict realized the crucial importance of the holistic power and potential of culture many years ago when she said, “*The whole determines its parts, not only their relation but their very nature.*” (23) This is because the cultural whole includes economics and economies as well as all other activities. Moreover, if you change the whole - which is the case in the cultural age - you change the parts. It is this fact - and it is a fact not a theory or wishful thinking - that opens the doors to seeing economics and economies as a fundamental part of culture and cultures. This gives rise to what is best described as “*the new economics.*” rather than the existing economics.

In a cultural age, economics would no longer be seen and treated as a free standing and independent discipline as it has been in the past and still is at present in many ways. On the contrary, it would be seen and treated as a part - and indeed a very fundamental part - of culture because it would still be badly needed but in a substantially larger *natural, human, and cultural context.*

What are some of the implications and consequences of this? In the first place, economics and economies would no longer be given the highest priority in the world and dominance over everything else. This might be necessary in certain situations such as a famine or flood, but not in general terms because other activities such as the destruction of the earth and the environmental crisis would be given more attention, a far higher priority, and dealt with before anything else since this is what is most imperative in the world today. Gone would be the practice of giving economics priority over everything else as well as dealing with economic problems before anything else as noted earlier.

In order to realize the new economics, two requirements are imperative. The first is to reduce pollution, polluting substances, phenomenal mounts of hazardous chemicals and human waste, make electricity rather than wood, coal, gas, and oil the principal source of power and energy in the years ahead, and most essentially, bring an end to *conspicuous consumption* and *forced obsolescence* which are making incredible demands on the earth and globe's finite resources. Developments like these, and many others, are needed more than ever to come to grips with the environmental crisis and the destruction of the earth in actual and verified terms. This also includes creating cleaner, greener, sharing, caring, and humane economies; implementing carbon taxes, carbon pricing agreements, and “cap and

trade” policies when necessary; making the transition from gas-guzzling cars, trucks, vans, and planes to electric vehicles; and achieving the transition from “quantity-first” to “quality-first” practices, lifestyles, and ways of life.

This also includes creating carbon-neutral towns, cities, regions, and countries by balancing carbon dioxide emissions with offsetting amounts of renewable energy; planting millions of trees to absorb carbon dioxide from the air; utilizing alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power; and numerous others. These developments have been accompanied in recent years by legal and political efforts to protect other species through such projects as the One World, One Health initiative, recognition of animal rights and enforcement of their rights in the courts, adhering to the creation and declaration of the Earth Charter, publication of articles and books on Earth Law, and many others.

The second requirement is to reduce the demands we are making on nature and the natural environment in the first place, and to a far greater extent. This is where the arts, humanities, and cultural heritage enter this transformational process in a far more powerful and compelling way since most artistic, humanistic, heritage, intellectual, and spiritual activities are low in resource utilization and environmental destruction because they are pursuits that are “people and human intensive” rather than “material and capital intensive.”

Situated at the very middle of this is having many more “*experiences*” because they are remarkably low in resource use and environmental requirements, as well as buying fewer “*products*” that are high in resource utilization and environmental demands. This will focus much more attention on well-being rather than wealth, as well as qualitative and non-material developments rather than quantitative and material ones. Think about it for a moment. How much damage is done to nature, the natural environment, other species, and the planet when we meditate at home, engage in forest bathing, take long walks in the country, sit in comfortable chairs listening to music, visiting art galleries and museums, watching football or basketball games, or attending theatrical performances at the local arts center? This becomes crystal clear when we compare this with buying another car to put in the driveway to impress our neighbours, or living in a twelve-room, six bathroom house when this is not needed. While this will reduce jobs in the quantitative and material sector, true enough, it will increase jobs in the qualitative and non-material sector.

Underlying all this should be creating a much stronger commitment to what is known in cultural and horticultural circles as “*permaculture*,” or activities and technologies that work *with* nature rather than *against* it. (24) In order to activate and achieve this much more exalted and compatible relationship between human beings, nature, other species, and the natural world, economics and economies will have to be seen and dealt with in “green terms” as highly-valued components of culture and cultures. It follows from this that the real challenge of the future will not be to downplay the importance of economics and economies, but rather to position them in a far larger framework. Such a development will bring with it enormous benefits and rewards because a much higher priority will be placed

on environmental conservation and preservation, treating people as citizens rather than consumers, and increasing the potential and use of activities in the cultural sector such as the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and so forth much more frequently. In fact, partialism, the partial perspective, and wealth are to the world and economic age what holism, the holistic perspective, and well-being must be to the world and cultural age.

Here again, Johan Huizinga had something profound, prophetic, and timely to pass on that is imperative in the cultural age but largely ignored in the economic age:

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 overgrowth of its separate components. It then needs a pruning knife, a human decision to focus once again on the essentials of culture and cut the luxuriant but dispensable. (25)

What are the essentials and what are the luxuriant and dispensable in this case? Surely they include making it possible for all people and all countries to experience decent standards of living and a reasonable quality of life; not straining the world's finite resources, fragile eco-systems, and limited carrying capacity to the breaking point; reducing the colossal ecological footprint we are making on the natural environment, the earth, and the lives of other species; eliminating the colossal inequalities and injustices that exist in income and wealth; expanding our knowledge and understanding of culture and all the diverse cultures in the world; creating a declaration of human responsibilities to complement and match the declaration of human rights; eliminating profit maximization and replacing it with realistic rather than excessive profits, or perhaps even eliminating it altogether with what Thomas Aquinas and many other medieval scholars called "*the just price*" when they discussed the problem of excessive usury many centuries ago.

What is also required is to realize far more sustainability, harmony, and peace in the world and far fewer conflicts and wars; providing many more opportunities for all people, countries, and species and especially young people and future generations to live full and fulfilling lives; making a commitment to diversity, inclusion, compassion, and kindness; and eliminating hate, anger, fear, mistrust, and hostility from the world. With these essentials in mind and cutting back on the luxuriant and dispensable in place, let's delve more deeply into what is required to create a cultural age and enable it to thrive and flourish.

Creation of the Cultural Age

It is one thing to describe the cultural age in idealistic and theoretical terms. It is quite another to realize it in concrete and practical terms. Having dealt with first requirement, it is time to deal with the second one. This is the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in this fundamental paradigm shift and making the cultural age a reality.

This age will not become a reality without proactive and powerful developments coming from four major groups of stakeholders: people and organizations working in all the different fields of culture; people and organizations working in political affairs and governments; corporations and the corporate community; and the public at large.

Of these four groups, people and organizations working in all the different fields of culture have the most important role to play and responsibilities to assume in opening the doors to a cultural age. Not only is this group actively involved in the arts, humanities, heritage of history, cultural industries, cultural development and policy, and all the diverse psychological, sociological, anthropological, ecological, and biological perceptions of culture on a full-time, part-time, professional, or voluntary basis, but also their leadership is critical in providing the motivation, inspiration, and commitment that are needed to set this transformative process in motion and enable it to flourish.

Since this group encompasses many different disciplines, activities, and fields, what is most needed at this time is to coalesce this vast and highly dispersed group into a cohesive, coherent, and integrated force and powerful global community because it is spread all over the place at present. If this group doesn't provide the proactive initiatives and affirmative actions that are required, it is very likely that the cultural age will not become a reality and the marginalization of culture, cultures, and cultural sector will continue, despite the fact that the present direction is not viable or desirable in the future.

There are many ways people and organizations working in the many different areas, disciplines, activities, and fields of culture can fulfill their roles and execute their responsibilities. They can create the courses, programs, and materials - as well as the aesthetic, artistic, humanistic, heritage works, and technological devices - that are needed to produce concrete results. This is required to broaden, deepen, and intensify people's individual and collective knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and consciousness of the complexities, intricacies, and essence of all the diverse cultures and cultural pursuits in the world. It is also required to enhance awareness and respect for the similarities and differences between all the different cultures in the world and the cultures of other species.

And this is not all. They can also expand the consciousness and use of the natural and cultural heritages of all the diverse peoples, countries, and cultures of the world, as well as the entire natural and cultural heritage of humankind and the valuable work of UNESCO in this area. This will help to stimulate the development of all the different communications systems and technological devices that are required to celebrate the best in human nature, creativity, conduct, and character; reduce violence, terrorism, and racism; and create better interpersonal, interorganizational, and intergenerational bonds, connections, and relationships. While many resources already exist in this area, what is needed now - and needed more than ever - is to create the new ones that are urgently required, and most importantly, taking a much more systematic, coordinated, and integrated

approach to producing, utilizing, and sharing cultural resources, materials, and activities in these and other areas and make them accessible to all people, organizations, and countries.

This group can also activate and foster many more interactions, interconnections, exchanges, and agreements between the diverse peoples, cultures, countries, and civilizations of the world. This is especially important with respect to those that are experiencing major difficulties and discrepancies, open hostilities and animosities, and on-going conflicts, battles, and wars. Initiatives and activities such as these are needed to pave the way for major improvements in intercultural, multicultural, and international relations, thereby promoting greater sensitivity to the differences that exist between the multifarious peoples, countries, and cultures of the world. They can also spread the word that it is time to open the doors to a cultural age, explain why this is so necessary, and indicate what this group can achieve by using their own activities as guides, illustrations, signs, metaphors, and symbols of something much greater, grander, and more inspiring.

The importance of this going forward in the future was foreseen many years ago by the Romanian cultural scholar and statesman Mircea Malitza when he said:

Cultures in watertight compartments are doomed to oblivion. Dialogue is essential. The choice between the development of a national culture and an increase in exchanges with the outside world is a false one. Interdependence cannot be denied. The cultures which have blossomed are those that have had the advantage of innumerable influences, received and transmitted in accordance with a process of unceasing enrichment. (26)

Most importantly, this group can embrace and promote the holistic perception and definition of culture and cultures despite resistance to it from governments, corporations, and even some people and organizations working in the cultural field. It is important to recognize and accept the fact that when people say they are “*products of their culture,*” they usually mean they are the products of all activities in their cultures and not just some activities. This generic requirement will never be realized by perceiving and defining culture and cultures in narrow terms since this makes it possible to regulate them, downplay them, underfund them, and prevent them from playing the role they are capable of playing in the world. We will never come to grips with the globe’s most life-threatening problems and set things right as long as we are living in an age that marginalizes culture and cultures and sees everything in the world from a partial rather than holistic perspective.

Next to people and organizations working in all the different disciplines, areas, and fields of culture, people and organizations working in the political and governmental domain have an extremely important role to play and responsibilities to assume. They must also play a leadership role, but in very different way than they do at present.

In order to achieve culture's transformative, transitional, and transcendental potential, politicians and governments will have to recognize and pay close attention to the great cultural awakening that is taking place in the world today, why it is happening at this particular time, and how it is manifesting itself and impacting on all parts of the world. Many of the problems people who are engaged in the great cultural awakening today are confronted with, such as millions of Black and Indigenous people as well as millions if not billions of people from colonized countries and marginalized groups, are not receiving the attention, recognition, and financial opportunities they deserve from governments and the present political system. This is because their problems are seen as secondary compared to the production, distribution, consumption, and accumulation of goods, services, and material and monetary wealth.

Without doubt, a *new system of politics* is needed to deal with the world's problems and come to grips with them. However, let's be clear on this point. We are not talking about governments and political systems of the right, left, or centre here, despite the fact that they obviously have an important effect on all this. Rather, we are talking about a political system – as well as governments - that are committed to dealing equitably with all citizens and community groups and not just some of them; achieving sustainable development and the UN Social Development Goals (SDG's); overcoming vast inequalities in income and wealth; decreasing consumption demands and expectations; maintaining democratic values and institutions as well as political ideals, protecting the world's natural resources, and achieving a great deal more caring, sharing, and kindness in the world.

At the centre of this new political system should be commitment to the highest, wisest, and most essential requirements of governance, governments, politics, and the political process, as well as cultivation of culture and cultures in both theory and practice. It is commitment to the whole, holism, and striving to achieve balance and harmony between all the diverse parts of the whole, rather than focusing on the parts of the whole and especially "selective parts" which is the case today. In order to achieve this more elevated and idealistic state of affairs, it will be necessary to act in the best interests of all people, citizens, activities, countries, and species and not just some, as well as institute cultural developments, policies, practices, and actions from the bottom up and not just the top down that has been the case in the past and present. If this holistic commitment is not endorsed and implemented by governments and political leaders - as well as international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Economic Forum, and others - it will not be realized in terms of deeds and actions.

This is because all other people, organizations, sectors of societies, and countries in the world are involved in and committed to attending to their own needs, jobs, professions, families, activities, and work. While they may be committed to the importance of the whole, holism, and achieving vital, viable, sustainable, and harmonious relationships between the parts of the whole in principle, this is not their primary concern or basic

responsibility. They see this, and rightly so, as the responsibility of governments, politicians, and the political process, since this commitment is imbedded in the constitutions of most if not all countries to treat all people equally and fairly as well as without bias or discrimination.

As difficult as this responsibility is, if politicians and governments don't stand up to wealthy elites, powerful corporations, lobbyists, and special interest groups and be accounted for and accountable to all citizens and sectors of society, the economic age will continue to exist and favour the rich far more than anybody else.

Many essential developments will be required by governments, politicians, and international organizations to realize this constitutional principle in fact and not just in words. Among the most basic priorities are: bearing down on environmental sustainability and accountability; creating far more equitable distributions of income and wealth for all citizens, countries, and parts of the world; conducting an all-out assault on abject poverty and excessive unemployment; and increasing foreign aid and development assistance as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), especially among the wealthiest countries in the world. Others are decreasing oppressive debt loads and adverse financial conditions in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East that need it; improving terms of trade and eliminating high tariffs that are imposing major hardships on countless people and numerous countries; and making it possible for poor people, classes, and countries to access the capital, credit, technological expertise, entrepreneurial acumen, and educational training they need to take control of their destinies and lives.

In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to create more effective and efficient structures and frameworks for governmental planning, policy development, and decision-making. This is essential if sustainable development, human welfare and well-being, environmental regeneration, and global harmony are to be achieved and maintained in the future. This is especially important with respect to departments or ministries of culture that are highly specialized, partisan, and exclusive rather than holistic, egalitarian, and inclusive in nature. In order to realize this, governments will have to make the transition from administrative structures based on breaking cultural wholes up into many small and separate parts and creating vertical structures and silos. What is required most going forward into the future are structures and administrative frameworks that are horizontal rather than vertical, and based on commitments to dealing with cultures as wholes and situating them in the natural, historical, human, and cosmic environment at all levels.

Just as new governmental and administrative structures are needed, so are new types of political and governmental leaders. Going forward, these leaders will have to have a great deal more cultural knowledge, understanding, expertise, and acumen, take a much broader and deeper approach to decision-making, and have a different vision of the future.

In order to accomplish this, political and governmental leaders will have to learn far more about culture and cultures in both holistic and partial terms, confront the risks and dangers as well as realize the benefits and rewards that are inherent in this, and focus on cultivating cultures and not just developing economies. (27) It is especially important for politicians who are entering the realm of culture for the first time, or need to learn much more about culture, cultures, and how they evolve and function than they know at present.

The types of leaders that come quickly to mind in this regard are Mahatma Gandhi, who made learning about the different cultures of the world a high priority during his lifetime and travelled throughout India to see how his country's culture and cultures should be developed in the future; Léopold Sédar Senghor, an accomplished poet and prominent cultural advocate who was first president of Senegal and believed that culture is "the alpha and omega of any sound development policy;" Ignacy Jan Paderewski, a pianist, composer, and former prime minister of Poland; Václav Havel, a playwright, author, and last president of Czechoslovakia; Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany; and Jacinda Ardern, former prime minister of New Zealand. Leaders like this, and others, are urgently needed to help bring the cultural age into existence as well as guide it through its formative stages of development. For what is needed most are leaders like these that have broader and deeper perspectives on the world and everything in it, a better understanding of the realm of culture and cultures in the total scheme of things, and the courage and convictions that are needed to award a much higher priority to well-being for all people, countries, and species.

In order to deal with policies, procedures, practices, and requirements as ambitious, difficult, and far-ranging as this - as well as ensure that culture and cultures are used for constructive rather than destructive purposes - it will be necessary for governments and political leaders to develop a strong public sector to offset the size and power of the private sector, ensure that corporate, financial, political, and military power is not concentrated in too few hands, establish democratic and benevolent forms of government and governance rather than authoritative and dictatorial ones, create cultural agencies such as arts councils and media agencies that are situated at arm's length from governments and the political process, and democratize and decentralize development, planning, and decision-making.

And this brings us to the roles and responsibilities of corporations and the corporate community, which in many ways may prove to be the most difficult roles and responsibilities in the cultural age of all. There is a reason for this. It will not be possible to shift from wealth to well-being and from the economic age to the cultural age without giving up some of the most fundamental commitments and privileges of corporations today. This includes commitment to profit maximization, preoccupation with the bottom line, catering to the needs and desires of their shareholders, lobbying governments relentlessly, making stronger commitments to environmental preservation and sustainability, and focusing on citizens' needs and overall well-being.

A good start in the right direction in this regard would be commitment to seeing corporations and their futures in cultural rather than commercial terms, especially those advocated by corporate scholars and practitioners such as Elliott Jaques and his concept of “corporate culture,” John Kotter and his theory of leadership and the management of organizations, and especially Edgar Schein and his holistic concept of the cultures of organizations in his book *Organizational Cultures and Leadership*. (28)

According to Schein, organizations as cultures usually evolve over long period of time and consist of a “shared pattern of basic assumptions” that the members of organizations acquire and develop collectively as they deal with their internal and external needs, demands, expectations, and the difficulties confronting them. Cultures in this sense involve organizations’ visions, mission statements, worldviews, values, languages, environmental setting, customs, beliefs, and ways of doing things. In Schein’s opinion, there are three principal layers of organizational culture: *artifacts*; *espoused values*; and an *underlying assumption*. Especially important in this regard are employees’ and clients’ needs, voices, leadership, sense of belonging, and especially making culture a priority in the communities, towns, cities, regions, and countries where they are located.

Developments like these and many others make it possible to create and cultivate cultural policies and practices that are *transformational*, *transcendental*, and *redistributive* rather than partial, piecemeal, partisan, or sectoral in nature. (29) While these latter policies and practices are often preferred by corporations as well as by governments, politicians, and international organizations because they are predicated on moving forward slowly, deliberately, and one step at a time, unfortunately proceeding in this fashion leaves no room for systemic cultural change or making the transition from an economic age to a culture age since the emphasis is on maintaining the status quo, chipping away at problems one at a time, and dealing with problems sequentially rather than simultaneously.

In the future, such policies, procedures, and practices should be *transformational* in the sense that they bring about fundamental changes in human behavior, lifestyles, and ways of life, decrease the demands being made on the natural environment and world’s scarce resources, and reduce the severe inequalities that exist in societies and countries. They should be *transcendental* in the sense that they expand and elevate people’s awareness, appreciation, and devotion to the non-material dimensions of development and life, as well as enhance their commitment to achieving higher and loftier goals and ideals for humanity, and living happier, healthier, and more fulfilling, spiritual, and compassionate lives. And they should be *redistributive* in the sense that they direct income and wealth from people who are already wealthy to the people who really need it.

And this brings us via a rather circuitous route to the public at large. While this group is not required to play as immediate or forceful a role as people and organizations working in the cultural field, governments and politics, and corporate affairs, ultimately their roles and responsibilities are the most important of all. This is because things will not

change - and change for the better - until people advocate for systemic cultural change and enter a cultural age. In order to do this, this largest group of all will have to participate actively in living lives that are more qualitative, non-material, creative, and harmonious in character. They will also have to commit to conservation of the world's resources, fight for much more inclusion, equality, justice, and participation in the world in general and among oppressed and marginalized people and countries in particular, live their lives in communion, solidarity, and collaboration with other people, countries, cultures, and species, and elevate life and living to a much higher plane of existence, mindfulness, consciousness, and awareness.

Is it possible for people and organizations in this last group to institute and achieve these objectives? Surely it is. As the great world cultural awakening has demonstrated in recent years, people in many parts of the world have achieved and are realizing remarkable changes in the world and their own lives through aggressive engagement in environmental and peace protests, as well as participating in initiatives espoused by colonized countries and oppressed groups that have been calling for major cultural changes and real reforms. In so doing, they have demonstrated that it is possible to get things done by acting persistently and collectively rather than occasionally and personally. Millions of people are no longer willing to accept colossal disparities in income and wealth, lack of political concern for their current problems and basic needs, exploitation by powerful corporations, and procrastination with respect to climate change, marginalization, exclusion, polarization, and well-being. While a great deal remains to be accomplished in this area, the bottom-up, collective approach to problems like this and others reveals that there are grounds for optimism and enthusiasm in this respect rather than pessimism and anxiety.

Let's leave the last thoughts and words on this matter to Mahatma Gandhi, who was a real "people person" and believed that "the culture of a nation resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people." He also said, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. *But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.* (30) It is matters like this and many others that are making what the transition from developing economies to cultivating cultures and creating a cultural age as a reality is really all about and designed to accomplish. It is about creating a better world for all people, all countries, and the world as a whole.

Notes

1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2023).
2. David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: Dover Publications, 2004).
3. Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 volumes (London: Hamondsworth: Penguin, 1976).
4. M. M. Bober, *Marx's Interpretation of History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1965).
5. Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (London and New York: MacMillan, 1920).
6. In his later years, Alfred Marshall made a shift from concern with the creation of “wealth” to concern for “welfare,” much like the other welfare economists mentioned in the text. However, Marshall also made this statement: “the economist, like everyone else, must concern himself with the ultimate aims of man.” Unfortunately, he never got around to examining the “ultimate aims of man” in any real depth, thereby having to settle for his neo-classical view of the “content and concerns” of economists without examining them from a much broader, deeper, and more fundamental perspective. Had he been able to do this, economics might be a very different discipline today since Marshall was one of the principal individuals to create the neo-classical system and age we are living in today.
7. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London: Macmillan, and New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1936).
8. See, for example, Arthur C. Pigou, *The Economics of Welfare* (London: Palgrave Macmillin 2013), and John Hicks, *Value and Capital* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975).
9. For a far more detailed description of the creation and development of the economic age over the last few centuries, see D. Paul Schafer, *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2008), Part I, The Age of Economics, pp. 9-136.
10. Susan Hunt, ‘The Alternative Economic Movement,’ *Interculture*, Vol, 22, No1. (1989), p. 3.
11. D. Paul Schafer, *The Great Cultural Awakening: Key to an Equitable, Sustainable, and Harmonious Age* (Oakville, ON: Rock’s Mills Press, 2024), See Chapter 8 on ‘The Cultural Interpretation of History,’ pp. 149-171. While creation of a cultural interpretation of history is far beyond the confines of this article, I have provided a major section on it in this chapter of this book due to its importance going forward into the future.
12. Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, *The Origins of Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 1, (insert and italics mine).

13. Many anthropologists, cultural scholars, and historians have defined culture in holistic terms as “the complex whole or total way of life of people and countries” since that time. See, for example, Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture: Voltaire, Guizot, Burckhardt, Lamprecht, Huizinga, and Ortega y Gasset* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 115-160; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780 to 1950* (London, Penguin, 1966), *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1981), and *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); UNESCO, *Second World Conference on Cultural Policy*, Mexico City, 1982 (Paris, UNESCO, 1982), p. 41; Clifford Geertz and Robert Darnton, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3rd. ed. (New York, Basic Books, 2017); Edward T. Hall *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966); Leslie A. White, *The Concept of Culture* (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1973); and many others.

14. It should be noted here that countless perceptions and definitions of culture have been created and used over the centuries, from Marcus Cicero in classical times (“culture is the philosophy or cultivation of the soul”) to the present day. This has caused enormous difficulties in the cultural field in general and people, organizations, and countries in particular because no one is ever quite sure which perception and definition of culture is used in conversations, newspapers, books, articles, and scholarly publications. Speaking generally, these perceptions and definitions can be divided into two inter-connected components: holistic, generic, and universal definitions such as the ones provided by most anthropologists and cultural historians as “culture is the whole or total way of life of people and countries” mentioned above; as well as partial, specific, and particular definitions such as the arts, humanities, heritage, cultural industries, and more recently sports and recreation, or what is most often called “the cultural sector” today by people working in cultural and related fields in the world and countless others. More information on this can be accessed in my book *The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic Whole* which traces the evolution of culture as an idea and a reality over the course of history and concludes that culture and cultures are not limited to human beings and people but include other species as well.

15. D. Paul Schafer, *The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic Whole* (Oakville, ON: Rock’s Mills Press, 2022). See Chapter 9 on the ‘Behaviour and Ways of Life of Other Species,’ pp.193-211.

16. D. Paul Schafer, *The Great Cultural Awakening: Key to an Equitable, Sustainable, and Harmonious Age* (Oakville, ON: Rock’s Mills Press, 2024). See, for example, the research and writings of Elliott Jacques and his concept of corporate culture, John Kotter and his theory of leadership and management of organizations, and especially Edgar Schein and the concept of “the cultures of organizations” in his informative book *Organizational Cultures and Leadership*, 5th. Edition (New York Wiley, 2016).

17. Jean d’Ormesson, *Cultural Policy Dossier*, No. 22 – 3/81 (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1981).

18. Joel S. Khan, *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture* (London: Sage Publications 1995), Preface, p. ix.
19. Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture: Voltaire, Guizot, Burchhardt, Lamprecht, Huizinga, Ortega y Gasset op. cit.*, p. 216 (italics mine).
20. D. Paul Schafer, 'Making the Transition from Developing Economies to Cultivating Cultures: Key to Life and Living in the Twenty-first Century.' Posted on the Home Page of the World Culture Project Website, 2025. For a much more expansive treatment of this subject, see: D. Paul Schafer, 'Horticulture and Human Culture,' Posted on the Hot Topics section of the World Culture Project Website at www.worldcultureproject.org.
21. Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture, op. cit.*, pp. 219.
22. Brian Holihan, *Thinking in a New Light: How to Boost Your Creativity and Live More Fully by Exploring World Cultures* (Sunnyvale, CA: Full Humanity Press, 2016). See Chapter 13 (pp. 272–300) for a practical technique for studying and exploring cultures in depth and breadth as well as finding a paradise in the world and your own life through experiencing culture and cultures.
23. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1963), p. 36.
24. Permaculture is seen by many scholars as a land management system that mirrors natural ecosystems through creating a self-sustaining, resilient, and productive human environments that are extended beyond agriculture and nature to include such matters as ethical land use, resource and productivity conservation, and most importantly sustainable development. It was coined originally by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren to indicate *permanent* agriculture and culture, and in so doing, emphasizes whole systems models and systems that combine and connect human needs with sound ecological principles and practices, thereby reducing resource inputs and outputs as well as waste and pollution.
25. Karl J Weintraub, *Visions of Culture, op. cit.*, p. 219-220 (inserts and italics mine).
26. Mircea Malitza, 'Culture and the New World Order: A Pattern of Integration, ' *Cultures*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1976 (Culture, Society, and Economics for a New World (Paris: Unesco Press and la Baconnière, 1976), pp. 97 -105.
27. D. Paul Schafer, 'Making the Transition from Developing Economies to Cultivating Cultures Through the Creation of a New Global Narrative, *International Journal of Architecture and Engineering*, (Rome, EdA., Esempli di Architectura, 13 (1), January, 2026), pp. 54-65.
28. Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th. ed. (New York: Wiley, 2016).
29. D. Paul Schafer, 'A Cultural Model of Development.' Posted on the Hot Topics Section of the World Culture Project Website at www.worldcultureproject.org
30. Mahatma Gandhi, *Our Creative Diversity: Report on the World Commission on Culture and Development* (Paris: World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995), p. 73 (italics mine).

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