



A Japanese Garden in Kyoto, where Culture and Nature meet in an integral way

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MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM DEVELOPING ECONOMIES TO CULTIVATING CULTURES THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NEW GLOBAL NARRATIVE

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Abstract

Over the last two and a half centuries, developing economies have been accorded the highest priority in the world. While this has dramatically improved living standards and the quality of life for billions of people and numerous countries, it is not capable of coming to grips with the world's most life-threatening problems, most notably the environmental crisis, vast inequalities in income and wealth, wars over land and resources, and conflicts between diverse people and countries. To address these issues, a new global narrative is essential, one grounded in the ideas, knowledge, and contributions of numerous cultural scholars, historians, and practitioners. This is needed to make the transition from developing economies – which is a *one-stage process* based primarily on specialisation, partialism, and inorganic, mechanistic, materialistic, and market-driven activities – to cultivating cultures as a *two-stage process* mainly based on holism, the natural world, ecology, permaculture, horticulture, and organic, people, and species-driven activities, *as well as harmonising and overcoming crucial polarisations and divisions during the second stage of this process.* Through the cultivation of all the diverse cultures in the world and reconnecting with your own culture and the cultures of others, it is possible to experience a “paradise on earth” by drawing on all of humanity's knowledge and understanding of cultures and using all the diverse technological techniques and digital devices that are available for all people and all countries in the world at all ages and geographical levels.

Keywords: development, economies, life-threatening, transition, cultures, narrative, harmony, balance, reconnecting.

1. Perspectives towards Developing Economies

Over the last 250 years, developing economies have been accorded the highest priority in the world. While numerous benefits have been derived from this, it has become increasingly apparent over the last few decades that the costs of developing economies outweigh the benefits, and this trend is likely to worsen in the future if no action is taken. Hence, creating a new global narrative to facilitate the transition from developing economies to cultivating cultures is the most effective way to address this situation.

While developing economies are the result of many factors and contributions from countless people and organisations, there is no doubt that several very distinguished economists led the way in this regard. This is because they laid the theoretical and practical foundations for developing economies and the economic era in which we currently live (Schafer 2008, pp. 9-135). No economist was more critical in this regard than Adam Smith (1723-1790), who in his famous book *The Wealth of Nations*, set this remarkable process in motion and gave it a powerful push in the right direction when this book was published in 1776. This is because Smith was the first person in the world to claim that phenomenal increases could be realised in the production of goods and services and the creation of material and monetary wealth by “*breaking wholes up into parts*” and people and organisations “*specialising in very specific production functions*” (Smith 2023). He clinched the case for this by using the example of a pin factory to illustrate in empirical

terms that many more pins could be produced every day if people and factories specialised in specific production activities rather than generalising to many or all production activities. While breaking wholes up into parts and specialisation – or the “division of labor” as Smith and most other economists called it at that time – had been going on for millions of years due to people’s insatiable curiosity and incredible creativity, Smith brought these two ideas together and into prominence by turning them into two of the most dominant factors in the world today.

These contributions help to explain why the Industrial Revolution took off in leaps and bounds about the same time that Adam Smith’s famous book and evocative theories were published and led to phenomenal increases in the production of products, utilisation of natural resources, creation of millions of factories, and a colossal expansion in material and monetary wealth compared to earlier times.

Another one of Smith’s major contributions was making a strong distinction between what he called “productive” and “unproductive” labour. According to Smith, productive labour is labour that results in the creation of tangible and material products, such as those produced by people working in agriculture and industry. Unproductive labour is labour that doesn’t produce tangible and material products, such as the activities engaged in by artists, teachers, religious leaders, civil and menial servants, and others.

Coupled with the incredible increases that were taking place in production, consumption, and material wealth created by productive laborers, Smith made a compelling case that people should pursue their own self-interests, believe that an “invisible hand” is at work to ensure that everything turns out for the best in the end, and *laissez-faire* and *free trade* are the most effective policies to pursue in domestic and international affairs. This explains the colossal expansion that occurred in the supply and demand for goods and resources in the Western world, eventually extending to the entire world.

While most economists and politicians were firmly committed to the beliefs of Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith (1723-1790), British economist and politician David Ricardo (1772-1823), an English economist Alfred Marshall (1842-1924), and most classical and neoclassical economists that solutions to most, if not all, humanity’s economic and financial problems should be left to “the marketplace” and the “iron-clad laws governing supply and demand” without much interference, John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), a pioneering British economist, made a robust case that governments should get actively involved in the economic and financial affairs of nations. This was best achieved by spending public funds and employing a variety of monetary, fiscal, and funding policies to provide economies with a powerful boost when they were needed most. For Keynes, the most important factor of all is the level and character of “aggregate demand,” or the total of consumer, corporate, and government expenditure, saving, investment, interest rates, additions and withdrawals from the income stream, liquidity preference (people holding on to their money rather than spending it), and especially government expenditure which is the case today. For Keynes, governments should create budgetary surpluses during periods of prosperity to have the funds necessary for economic recovery during recessions and depressions.

Looking back on these developments and numerous others over the last two hundred and fifty years, this is largely where matters stand at present concerning the development of economies and the crucial role they play in people’s and countries’ lives through the creation of goods, services, and material and monetary wealth, even though this is now a much more complicated affair than it was in the past. To develop economies effectively, active involvement is imperative on the part of consumers, corporations, and governments, as well as billions of people and organisations that depend on economies to keep them growing and satisfy their needs. While many benefits have been derived from this since Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, all the many recessions, depressions, stock market crashes, business cycles, inflation, deflation, interest rate changes, government debts, and wars that have occurred in the world since that time confirm the fact that economies can easily get off track and cause challenging problems for people, countries, and the world at large.

Despite problems like this, these are the most powerful and fundamental factors, forces, and ideas driving economies and the world today. This involves awarding the highest priority to economics and developing all the diverse economies in the world; breaking wholes into parts to capitalise on their full potential and productive capabilities; specialisation; treating people as consumers; placing a very high priority on corporations as the producers of goods, services, and wealth; profit maximisation; relying primarily on markets and the marketplace to regulate economic activities; expecting governments to deal with any breakdowns that occur in the economic system through monetary, fiscal, and funding policies; and producing as much material and monetary wealth as possible.

2. Assessment of the World Situation and Present Predicament

Without a doubt, the development of all the world’s economies and the global economic system is one of the most outstanding human achievements in history. Billions of people and numerous countries have seen their standards of living and quality of life improve immensely as a result of developments in economics since Adam Smith laid the theoretical and practical foundations for it several centuries ago. It is a phenomenal achievement that any other human achievement can’t match, be it explorations in outer space, landing astronauts on the moon, inventing the car, airplane,

telephone, television, computer, internet, cellphone, or all of these inventions, creating remarkable works in the arts, sciences, education, and technology, inventing the James Webb telescope, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital technologies, or constructing giant skyscrapers, magnificent cathedrals, and exquisite mosques. It is a colossal achievement that far outweighs all others.

While adequate attention was given to agriculture, industry, technology, mechanical inventions, specific types of resources, people as consumers, companies as producers, politics, and governmental economic policies that were necessary over the last two hundred and fifty years because they were basic components in the development of economics, economies, economic growth, and the world economic system, economics developed largely as a “*free-standing and independent discipline*” with little or no consideration given to its broader, deeper, and more all-encompassing position or context in the world. This is because most economists, politicians, and world leaders believed that “*markets*” and the “*marketplace*” would solve any problems arising from the functioning of economics and economies.

As problems like these continue to mount and others begin to manifest themselves more frequently and severely in the world, it becomes steadily more apparent that these difficulties will not be solved by the development of economies and the present world economic system. This is because they were designed and still are to create goods, services, and material and monetary wealth, and not designed to deal with problems as complex, multidimensional, life-threatening, vast, and dangerous as climate change, the environmental crisis, massive inequalities in income and wealth, wars over land and resources, and many others (Schafer 2008, pp. 9-135).

Is there a way out of this disturbing situation and tragic predicament? Indeed, there is, but in order to realize it, the world and everything in it will have to be seen and dealt with from a far more all-encompassing perspective. The answer to this situation and predicament lies in the realm of culture, not economics. It involves seeing and dealing with life and living in the world in cultural and holistic rather than economic and partial terms, defining culture in general and cultures in particular as “*complex wholes*” and “*the total ways of life of people and countries,*” according to culture and cultures a central rather than marginal role in the world of the future and the lives of people, cultivating all the diverse cultures around the globe in breadth and depth and situating them effectively in the natural, historical, human, and global environment, and entering a cultural age and enabling it to flourish (Schafer 2008, pp. 139-258).

The fact that culture’s all-inclusive capacity focuses on the whole and not just a particular part or parts of the whole should be applauded and capitalised on rather than downplayed and ignored. As Ruth Benedict, the distinguished anthropologist and cultural scholar, pointed out many years ago, “*The whole, as modern science is insisting in many fields, is not merely the sum of all its parts, but the result of a unique arrangement and inter-relation of the parts that has brought about a new entity*” (Benedict 1963, p. 33). This new entity and insightful statement was reinforced later in her book when she said, “*The whole determines its parts, not only their relation but their very nature*” (Benedict 1963, pp. 36). In other words, when you change the whole, you change the parts and the character of the parts.

If this holistic perception and definition of culture as the complex whole or total way of life of people, groups, societies, and countries had been recognised, adopted, and utilised when it was first defined in print by Tylor in 1871 (Tylor 1958, p. 1) and confirmed by numerous anthropologists after that, the world would be a very different place today. The focus would be on the all-encompassing perception and definition of culture, and by implication, cultures much sooner. Moreover, attention would have been given to the fact that people and countries that do not take the natural environment and its impact on everything and every species into account run the risk of overextending themselves, collapsing, and even disappearing entirely from the world.

In fact, it is rapidly becoming apparent in more and more regions and parts of the world that culture and cultures, not economics and economies, are the real foundations of human life on earth, as well as the essence of life and living in the world for all species and not just the human species. Being seen and adopted in this holistic way means that economics and economies are really “*part of culture and cultures*” rather than the reverse, which is the case today (Schafer 2022, p. 149).

One of the most valuable benefits of this holistic perspective on culture and cultures is the ability to see, understand, and engage with the world as a whole, or the way of life composed of countless parts, something that is and still is very much lacking in the world at present. This ability not only makes it possible to see and understand the world in all-encompassing terms, which is of vital importance at present and in the future, but also makes us aware of all the diverse relationships that exist - *or do not exist* - between the parts of this picture. Visualised and dealt with this way, culture and cultures provide the perspective, context, and container that are required to see and come to grips with the significant imbalances and disharmonies that exist in the world today, such as the relationship between people and the natural environment, the material and non-material dimensions of development and life, the arts and the sciences, human rights and human responsibilities, different races and genders, technology and society, rich and poor people and affluent and low-income countries, the self and the other, unity and diversity, and many others.

Many of these current imbalances and disharmonies are having disastrous effects and consequences at this troublesome time in human history due to their polarisation and colossal swings that are taking place in the pendulums of power, such as the one between the arts and the sciences, which has produced deep and painful cuts in funding for numerous artistic, humanistic, and heritage activities, courses, organisations, artists, and teachers over the last few decades while simultaneously providing massive increases in the funding of scientific activities, projects, courses, organisations, scientists, and educators. While addressing and overcoming severe imbalances and disharmonies like these and many others will not be easy, clearly, the most essential step that can be taken in the right direction at present is to see and deal with relationships in holistic and harmonious terms, rather than partial and disharmonious ones. As a result, the concepts of partialism, specialisation, polarisation, and separation, which have shaped the past and present situation, must be replaced in the future by holism, the holistic perspective, harmony, balance, and unity.

This does not mean that economic and scientific needs and activities should or will be downplayed or ignored. On the contrary, they may be even more crucial in the future because they will be seen from a substantially broader, deeper, and more fundamental perspective, situated more effectively in the proper environmental, human, cultural, and cosmic context, and dealt with in a more enlightened and responsible manner (Schafer 2008, p.196, cf. Fig. 2, A Cultural Model of Development).

There is another essential benefit here that should not be allowed to escape our attention and be ignored, but instead utilised thoroughly and frequently in the years and decades ahead. It is the fact that when culture and cultures are seen and defined as complex wholes and total ways of life of people and countries, it is possible to bring things together rather than split them apart - "*to unite rather than divide*" - since this is what creating wholes and total ways of life from many different parts is all about, designed to accomplish, and urgently needed at this time. It is even more essential going forward into the future because we have become remarkably skilled at breaking wholes up into many different parts through specialisation while, at the same time, have lost our capacity for connecting the parts to form wholes, thereby explaining the enormous number of polarisations and divisions that exist in the world today and needs to be overcome in the future.

3. A New Global Narrative for Humanity in the Future

In order to capitalise on these benefits and come to grips with the life-threatening and dangerous problems that exist in the world today, a "*new narrative is required for humanity and the world.*" This new narrative should be based on culture and cultures in the all-encompassing, holistic sense, and, therefore, on ideas, concepts, words, and terminologies that differ from those that drive the global economic narrative today.

This narrative involves shifting from concepts, ideas, and words like production, consumption, productive labor, unproductive labor, capital, capitalism, and wealth that are concerned with and related to the development of economies to words such as culture, cultures, nature, the natural environment, trees, gardens, and well-being that have to do with the cultivation of cultures as complex wholes and overall ways of life, as well as the "harmonisation," "balance," and "synergy" that are needed if cultures in the holistic sense are to evolve properly and function effectively in the future.

This new narrative can be traced back to Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), the great Roman orator and statesman, who defined culture formally for the first time in history more than two thousand years ago as, "*Cultura animi philosophia est*" or "Culture is the philosophy or cultivation of the soul" because it is derived from the Latin verb "*colo*" or "*colere*" meaning to "grow," "nurture," and especially "*cultivate*." Many centuries after this, Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet, 1694-1778), who was also a strong advocate of culture, rhetorically asked himself the following question countless times: "Do I plant, do I build, do I *cultivate*?, as well as the statement "we must cultivate our garden" (Weintraub 1966, p. 23). Not only can this question and statement be traced back to the origins of culture in the etymological sense because they also have to do with cultivation, but they are also intimately connected to planting, watering, trimming, weeding, and harmonisation. By pooling the efforts of all people, Voltaire felt it is possible to create and cultivate cultures, societies, countries, and civilisations that are capable of blending wisdom, morality, material welfare, order, and well-being together to form dynamic, organic, and harmonious wholes that are made up of countless different parts, activities, elements, and so forth. In order to realise this, all the parts must be present and balanced in order to create symbiosis and synthesis between all the many diverse factors, forces, and activities that constitute cultures (Weintraub 1966, pp. 19-74).

Seen and understood in this way, this "*new narrative*" and "*cultivation terminology*" share a great deal in common with activities such as agriculture, ecology, biology, botany, and zoology, and therefore, the cultivation of human, plant, and animal species, as well as horticulture, silviculture, and especially *permaculture* that are concerned with activities and actions that work with nature rather than against it. Whereas economics and economies are primarily inorganic, mechanistic, industrial, system-oriented, and computer-driven in character, culture and cultures are organic, dynamic, regenerative, and evolutionary.

This explains why trees are often used as metaphors for culture and cultures. When culture and cultures are defined in the holistic and all-encompassing sense, they are very similar to trees with roots, trunks, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit. Seen and dealt with in this way, myths, mythology, worldviews, ideologies, axioms, cosmologies, heritages, and so forth are the roots, economic and scientific endeavors, technological tools, political pursuits, social processes, behavioral practices, environmental features, and so forth are the trunk and branches; and artistic and humanistic creations, ethical beliefs, value systems, intellectual achievements, and religious, philosophical, and spiritual ideals are the leaves, flowers, and fruit (Schafer 2022, pp. 208-236).

Kaj Birket-Smith (1893–1977), a Danish philologist and cultural anthropologist, carried this “tree metaphor” a step further by linking and comparing it to human culture and cultures when he stated (cf. Fig. 1):

Culture is like a tree, a fabulous tree in which each branch is formed differently from its neighbour, each flower has its own colour and fragrance, and each fruit has its own special sweetness. This wealth and abundance have developed naturally. Each culture and each person bear their individual stamps, but the branches are all shoots of the same trunk and are fed by the same sap. If the branches are cut and detached from the trunk, the flowers wither. We are all members of the great society of mankind [humankind]; our national cultures are part of the culture of the whole world, which we must continue building up (Birket-Smith 1965, p. 9).



Fig. 1. The Tree in a natural setting, linking the earth and sky, and reflected with tones of light.

What is true for nature and the natural world in general and trees, crops, and so forth in particular is also true for the cultivation and functioning of their various elements or parts. One of the best ways to realise this is through the creation, study, and cultivation of gardens. Just as there are many types of machines, industries, systems, computers, and so forth in the economic domain, so there are many diverse kinds of gardens in the natural and cultural domains.

Speaking generally, there are two basic types of gardens. The first are gardens composed of the same flowers, such as tulips and tulip gardens in the Netherlands and Turkey, and roses and rose gardens in England and elsewhere in the world. These gardens are magnificent when they are in full bloom and cultivated and harmonised properly by arranging their plants and flowers judiciously and removing the weeds that are also a fundamental part of gardening. Gardens like this are similar to “*monocultures*” in the human domain because most people are the same or very similar because they come from identical or very similar genetic stocks and ethnic backgrounds. In contrast to this, the second type of gardens is composed of many different flowers. This type of garden is similar to “*multicultures*” in the human domain because they are composed of many different kinds of people from diverse genetic backgrounds and ethnicities, which is more often the case today. Regardless of the specific type of garden, however, all gardens need a great deal of cultivating, harmonising, weeding, watering, trimming, pruning, and attention if they are to grow, function, flourish, and be displayed correctly. Added to this are many other types of gardens that can also be very

beautiful when they are cultivated and cared for carefully, such as English country gardens and Japanese gardens (cf. Fig. 2). Here, every leaf, flower, rock, shrub, and pool of water is positioned in just the right place in order to achieve the best possible effect and open the doors to such experiences as tranquillity, spirituality, stillness, silence, and the sublime.



Fig. 2. A unique Japanese Garden, Kyoto - here Culture and Nature blend sublimely.

This makes gardens and their cultivation ideal metaphors, analogues, prototypes, or symbols for thinking about and cultivating cultures (Schafer 2010). This is because the focus is on the whole (cultures and gardens) and not just a part or parts of the whole (shrubs, plants, flowers, and so forth), as well as the need to harmonise all the different parts in order to achieve just the right effect and a harmonious whole.

4. Cultivating Cultures

As we have seen, developing economies are primarily a highly specialised, focused, partial, and *one-stage activity* that is based on creating goods, services, and material and monetary *wealth* by breaking wholes up into parts, specialising in particular production functions, and relying on markets and the marketplace to solve most if not all the problems that arise from this. In contrast, cultivating cultures is a much broader, deeper, holistic, and *two-stage activity* predicated on creating *well-being* in all its diverse forms and manifestations, but also, and equally as important if not more important, achieving balance, harmony, and synergy between all the different parts of cultures and relying on people and experts in their respective fields rather than markets and the marketplace to make the decisions, much as they do in cultivating beautiful gardens. While cultures like economies exist at all levels – local, community, town, city, rural, regional, national, and international – they are very different from economies because they are wholes and overall ways of life that are far greater than the parts and the sum of their parts because new qualities and capabilities are brought into existence when these wholes and ways of life are created that are not in the parts taken separately or by themselves as indicated earlier.

In order to achieve this far more expansive, vaulted, value-packed, all-encompassing, and harmonious state of affairs, economics and economies in the *partial, specialized, and one-dimensional sense* will have to be seen and dealt with in the future as essential components of culture and cultures in the *overall, holistic, and two-dimensional sense*. It follows from this that the challenge of the future is not to downplay the importance of economics and developing economies at all levels in the overall scheme of things, but rather to incorporate and position economics and economies properly in the all-inclusive and quintessential realm of culture and cultivating cultures. What partialism, the partial perspective, and wealth are to the world of the present, holism, the holistic perspective, and well-being should be to the world of the future.

Just as developing economies and living in an economic age have their practical objectives and theoretical ideals, so do cultivating cultures and living in a cultural age. Included among the objectives and ideals of a cultural age are seeing and dealing with the big picture of the world rather than a specific or essential part of it; enhancing and harmonizing community, town, city, regional, national, and international cultures in holistic terms; treating human beings as people or citizens of countries rather than consumers of commodities and maximisers of their satisfaction in the marketplace; companies and shareholders earning reasonable rather than excessive or maximum profits; policies based on the needs and interests of all people, countries, and cultures and not just wealthy elites, powerful corporations, and privileged countries; and people, corporations, and governments making decisions and being accountable for them rather than relying on markets and the marketplace to make most of their choices for them.

To successfully cultivate cultures at all levels in holistic terms, it will be necessary to create “a set of comprehensive cultural indicators” that is consistent with these practical and theoretical requirements. These cultural indicators will have to provide more all-embracing, effective, and specific ways of evaluating the state of cultures in the world and improving people’s, countries,’ and the globe’s well-being far more effectively than the economic indicators, which are mainly limited to gross or net national product, per capita income, rate of economic growth, and a few others more recently. These are still the principal indicators that virtually all countries, governments, and people use today, despite concerted attempts by the United Nations and other international agencies to add other vital indicators to this list, such as education, health care, longevity, and, in the case of Bhutan, “gross national happiness.” Some see this indicator as a substantial improvement in economic indicators. However, it is not used by most people, countries, and governments at present because happiness is a very difficult concept or feeling to pin down, define, and measure in quantitative or tangible terms.

Shifting attention from economic wealth to cultural well-being is the key to the creation and utilization of this greatly expanded set of comprehensive cultural indicators. In the creation of these indicators, four matters stand out above the rest. First, these indicators must come from many sources, disciplines, and policy fields, and be capable of being combined and prioritized. Second, the *best* indicators in each area must be selected for inclusion in the final set of indicators. Third, the final indicators will need to be refined over time to enhance their effectiveness, coverage, applicability, and sustainability. Ultimately, the resultant indicators must be consistent with the nature and relevance of the problems and needs that exist in the world today and in the future.

While it will take time to develop and refine this set of comprehensive cultural indicators; fortunately, most of the important ones already exist and only need to be pulled together, enhanced, and used rather than created and developed from scratch. Included among these indicators are: *environmental indicators* such as the state and rate of climate change and global warming, quantity and quality of natural resources such as fresh water clean air, and minerals, as well as levels and amounts of toxicity, pollution, and waste; *economic indicators* such as the standards of living of people and countries, income and employment rates, and future economic prospects and possibilities; *health indicators* such as longevity, the availability and quality of health care programs, medical facilities, and hospitals, disease control and prevention centers, and recovery rates from substance abuse and debilitating diseases; *social indicators* such as participation levels in community, regional, national, and international activities, the provision and state of safety and security measures as well as crimes, violence, and hate; *artistic, political, spiritual, and scientific indicators* such as the quantity and quality of artistic, governmental, and scientific offerings, services, facilities, and organizations and their stability and effectiveness over time, freedom of expression, diversity of arts, religions, and spiritual options and offerings, and availability of scientific and technological knowledge and digital services; *educational indicators* such as student-to-teacher ratios, access to excellent elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and adult education for all genders, races, and income groups, student achievement and drop-out rates as well as debt loads and deficits, and the availability of qualified teachers and life-long learning opportunities; and *recreational indicators* such as different sports, parks, and conservation areas, walking and hiking trails, and other pursuits and facilities. Development of these cultural indicators, which would likely be an ideal project for AI (artificial intelligence), will require a great deal of international collaboration, consultation, and compromise, as well as monitoring and enforcement, since many of them already exist but are not taken seriously compared to the economic indicators.

Concern for these matters brings us to the second step in this two-stage cultivation process. It is coming to grips with the destructive disharmonies and polarities that exist in the world today between many key activities and forces, as well as the dire need to create harmonious relationships between and among them in the future. While this second step does not exist in developing economies because problems like this are expected to be self-correcting or dealt by the marketplace if they get out of hand, this is a crucial step in the cultivation of cultures because countervailing measures and corrective mechanisms will have to be established and put in place by people and organisations whenever and wherever these difficulties exist and manifest themselves in the world. Many cultural scholars and historians have expressed an urgent need for this, such as Eleonora Barbieri Masini (1928-2022), an Italian professor of Futures Studies for Human and Social Development, who said, “Culture in the future is the crux of the future.” (Masini

1994, vol. 1, p. 6) and Johan Huizinga who put his finger on this crucial and most quintessential global necessity of all when he declared:

The realities of economic life, of power, of technology, of everything conducive to man's (humanity'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 (Weintraub 1966, p. 216).

Addressing this specific requirement and achieving it in practical terms will not be possible without harmonizing the severe disharmonies that exist at present between the arts, humanities, and heritage of history on the one hand and the physical, natural, social, and human sciences on the other hand. This is because they underlie and affect so many different activities in the world and in life. This severe disharmony exists today because the sciences are deemed to be part of the "economic base" and therefore the basics in life; in contrast, the arts, humanities, and heritage of history are deemed to be part of the "non-economic superstructure" and consequently the frills in life.

This severe imbalance and disharmony need to be rectified without delay by substantially increasing the priority and funding accorded to the arts, humanities, and heritage of history, so that they are synchronised and in harmony with the sciences (Schafer 2024, pp. 219-243). This is imperative because the world has become a very inhumane, callous, impersonal, and indifferent place in recent years due to these and many other imbalances and disharmonies that are increasingly devoid of feelings, emotions, empathy, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, and ethical conduct and ideals. How could it be otherwise when artistic, humanistic, and heritage activities have been drastically cut in countless educational institutions and governments in the world? Only a profound change in this area and harmonisation of these very human and humane activities will correct this highly polarised situation.

This is desperately needed in the world today because the arts, humanities, heritage, and related activities are not only valuable in their own right as *ends in themselves* capable of bringing a remarkable amount of joy, happiness, beauty, and reflection into people's and countries' lives as well as the world at large, but also as *means to other ends* that contribute significantly to significant improvements in people's overall health and well-being, make valuable contributions to economic growth and developing economies, facilitate countless social interactions, exchanges, and relationships between different people, groups, and organisations, celebrate civic events and political occasions as well as the creation of countries' constitutions, national flags, and anthems, reduce the giant ecological footprints we are making on the natural environment, and many others. And this isn't all. They also, and most quintessentially, provide the *signs, signals, myths, legends, metaphors, rituals*, and especially *symbols* that are needed to understand culture and cultures in the holistic sense, cultivate cultures at all geographical levels, and open the doors to a more friendly and compassionate world and cultural age.

These are not the only reasons why the significant disharmony that exists between the arts, humanities, heritage, and the various sciences needs to be corrected and brought to an end. This is also required to make substantial contributions to reducing the tremendous impact we are having on the natural world and other species. This is because many artistic, humanistic, and heritage activities are much more "labour-intensive" than "material or capital-intensive" in nature, as well as yield "fulfilling and lasting experiences" rather than "concrete and material commodities." Think about it for a moment. Much less damage is done to the natural environment, other species, and utilising scarce resources when people are sitting in comfortable chairs in their own homes listening to music, watching a theatrical or dance performance on television or at their local arts facility, or painting pictures rather than buying another car to keep in their driveway to impress their friends, neighbors, and visitors. Surely, what is needed more than anything else at this crucial time in the history of humanity and the world is a quantum leap in the evolution and cultivation of the arts, humanities, and related activities (Schafer 2025).

Conservation and sustainability achievements like this won't occur without addressing the many other significant imbalances, disharmonies, divisions, and polarisations that exist in the world mentioned earlier. Nor will they occur without dealing with problems like these and others before or when they happen, rather than after they happen, and it is too late to do anything about them; they multiply rapidly and escalate out of control. Developments like these, and many others, are also needed to put humanity and the world in the best possible position to confront and come to grips with the world's most dangerous and debilitating problem now and in the future, namely the disharmony between people and the natural environment, and the urgent need to resolve it in the future:

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 (Weintraub 1966, pp. 219)

We have all seen and experienced many examples of this, especially ones connected to the arts, to sustain the present preoccupation with this matter for a moment longer. Think, for instance, of all the many artistic activities that take place outdoors in natural settings, such as in forests or on lakes, rather than in concert halls. I am thinking here of the Donauinselfest held in the middle of the Danube River in Austria, the Glastonbury festival in Pilton, England, the Osaka cherry blossom festival in Japan, the Orvieto festival in Italy, the Tanglewood music and light festivals at Tanglewood and Tanglewood Park in the Berkshire area of the United States, the Shakespearean Festival in Stratford, Canada, the remarkable castle strategically perched on the top of a steep hill overlooking Lake Bled in Slovenia as well as the historical Church - *Our Lady of the Lake* - situated on an island in the middle of this exquisite lake, dance performances beside gushing streams and bubbling brooks, music in parks and conservation areas, and the list goes on and on. Not only do these festivities, presentations, and events provide profound aesthetic experiences and emotional "highs" that enhance and enrich natural settings and local surroundings that are extremely beautiful to begin with and behold, but they also create spiritual, reverential, and ethereal states that are far deeper than the natural conditions and settings themselves. What a great objective this would be for humanity in the future, not only in helping to overcome climate change, global warming, and the environmental crisis, but also in enhancing the beauty of nature and the natural world far beyond what it is today.

It is clear from this that many states of existence and the sublime can be created and cultivated in the world that are "higher and better than the given natural conditions." The potential exists here to experience these states through all the actual and potential activities and technologies now available to people and countries, which can be used to expand and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the world's diverse cultures and how to cultivate them more effectively. This is a very stimulating process and an exciting opportunity because it has the potential to bring immense pleasure, happiness, fulfilment, and inspiration into the world and our lives.

5. Reconnecting With Your Culture (RWYC) and other Cultures in the World

Given the importance of cultivating cultures at all levels and in all parts of the world, it is time to connect with our own cultures and the cultures of others around the world. The best place to start this process is with our own cultures at the community, town, or city level.

While several organisations are involved in activities like this, one that is making an outstanding contribution to this area is *Reconnecting With Your Culture* (RWYC). Olimpia Niglio (University of Pavia, Italy), an Italian architect, internationally acclaimed for cultural heritage studies and restoration, has founded this organisation on the 20th July 2020, in conjunction with several friends and colleagues, including an internationally known cultural geographer and heritage scholar Rana P.B. Singh in Bharat-India, an established artist and heritage expert Kevin Alexander Echeverry Bucurú in Colombia, and an activist of spiritual and cultural-heritage awakening Alberto Blanco-Urbe Quintero in France. They were, and still are, concerned about the lack of opportunities available for children and young people to learn about culture and cultures in general, as well as their own cultures and heritages in particular.

Creation and development of this organisation could not have come at a better time. In specific terms, RWYC is designed to help children and young people in the five-to-seventeen age category, with assistance from their teachers and parents, to explore and experience their cultures and heritages in their own localities, towns, and cities, and share their findings and results with their classmates. The pedagogical framework for this is outlined in the RWYC Guide Book, which is available in several languages and divided into three significant sections.

The first stage in this "three-stage process" involves preparing students adequately for their "treasure hunt," which includes selecting a suitable place to begin the hunt, devising an appropriate route and timetable with their teachers and parents, and taking such things as cameras, cellphones, notebooks, and sketch pads to document their findings. The second stage involves recording their experiences in various ways, such as creating sketches, painting pictures, taking photographs, recording songs, tasting symbolic foods, interviewing long-time residents, writing stories, and making maps, among other methods. The third stage involves sharing their findings with their fellow students, parents, teachers, and others in the vicinity. In Japan, for instance, a major international art exhibition was held in 2025 by RWYC Japan and RWYC International, featuring works from participating students, schools, and countries worldwide.

In the course of its work, RWYC also created the "Tokyo Charter." Developed in 2021, this charter consists of a general preamble followed by nine specific articles that include emphasising and enhancing local concepts of cultures and heritages; respecting the diversity of cultural and heritage expressions in neighborhoods, communities, and countries; creating responsible citizens and citizenship; dialoguing in such areas as cultural knowledge, understanding, and awareness; creating inclusive and holistic capabilities and competencies; promoting local cultural policies and practices; establishing relationships with municipal governments and international institutions such as UNESCO; and others.

What is possible for RWYC students, teachers, and parents in the world today is also possible for all students, teachers, parents, as well as adults, senior citizens, and even elderly people. This is possible due to the widespread

availability of various technologies, AI capabilities, digital devices, signs, symbols, and materials that are now readily accessible to virtually everyone. This includes outstanding paintings, exquisite music, precious craft objects, superb plays, enticing architectural creations, captivating historical monuments and sites, enchanting stories, symbolic cuisines, admirable humanistic actions and deeds, and many others in all countries in real, visual, or virtual terms.

According to Brian Holihan, a cultural scholar who has delved deeply into the diverse cultures of the world by studying and learning about them on the one hand and travelling to many countries and parts of the world to have in-depth experiences with their cultures, patterns, themes, characteristics, symbols, and achievements on the other hand, there is a real “paradise on earth” just waiting for us to enjoy, cherish, and appreciate as a result of this. Brian has made the case for this in his book *Thinking in a New Light: How to Boost Your Creativity and Live More Fully by Exploring World Cultures*. In Chapter 13 of this book, Brian sets out a very effective way for us to broaden, deepen, engage in, and connect with this paradise on earth by “looking at, with, and beyond cultures,” or what he calls “the AWB circle” (Holihan 2016, pp. 272-298). An additional advantage of this book is that Brian applies this technique to many cultures in Asia that are rapidly expanding in appreciation and appeal throughout the world.

6. Cultivation of Cultures in Practical Terms

As we have seen, developing economies have been driven mainly by corporations, economists, wealthy elites, inventors, inventions, and investors. They have been able to take advantage of such influential factors as specialisation, vast concentrations of capital, numerous natural resources, myriad machines, millions of factories, and the production of countless products. The arts, humanities, heritage of history, culture, cultures, and many other activities like this have been grossly underfunded and marginalised in this process because they have been and are seen and treated as leisure-time activities, frills, and their economic contributions were and are deemed to be “very small” as stated earlier.

When we look back at these developments from a holistic, cultural perspective rather than a partial, economic perspective, it is clear how valuable art galleries, museums, cathedrals, mosques, temples, libraries, monuments, historic sites, arts and cultural centers, symphony orchestras, theatre and dance companies, humanist contributions, and all the precious deeds and materials created by them were and have been over the last two centuries.

When countries are at peace, it is easy for people and countries to take their music, literature, stories, dances, architectural masterpieces, kind deeds, historical achievements and sites, flags, anthems, emblems, and so forth for granted. However, when they are under siege, at war, and invaders are bombing their precious artistic, historical, and cultural treasures to bits, there is usually a sudden realisation of how priceless and incredibly important these precious assets are, and quite possibly, the most essential of all for citizens, countries, and cultures. This is because they have a great deal to do with feelings of national identity, belonging, bonding, and pride of place, what is in their hearts, minds, souls, spirits, and deeds, their health and well-being, educating young people and future generations in their most cherished values, ideals, lifestyles, and ways of life, what they say about their cultures, contributions of past and present generations to their cultures, and how essential it is to preserve, protect, and keep them safe, secure, and intact. Living close to nature and understanding and feeling the echoes and invisible messages of the spirit of nature will provide bliss and eternal peace.

There are many ways people, groups, and organisations working in these areas and fields can fulfil their roles and responsibilities in this area. They can, for instance, create artistic and humanistic works as well as the educational courses, programs, and resources that are needed to broaden, deepen, and intensify people’s personal and collective knowledge, understanding, and consciousness of the intricacies, complexities, and essence of culture and cultures. They can also enhance awareness of the similarities and differences, as well as the strengths and shortcomings that exist in and between all the different cultures and civilisations in the world, as well as the cultures of other species. They can also create all-inclusive portraits, maps, and cultural landscapes of their own cultures and those of others, exploring how these cultures can be cultivated most effectively in the future. Additionally, they can promote appreciation for and the use of the natural and cultural heritages of countries, as well as the entire natural and cultural heritage of humankind.

They can also facilitate the enhancement and use of all the different communications vehicles and media devices that are available to celebrate the best in human nature, conduct, and character, contribute to reducing conflicts, racism, terrorism, and wars in the world, and create deeper and more interpersonal, interorganizational, and intergenerational bonds and relationships between people and countries. While many resources already exist in these areas, what is needed now - and needed more than ever - is a far more systematic, integrated, and comprehensive approach to producing, utilizing, and sharing these abilities and activities, as well as extending them beyond certain groups and making them accessible to all. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) had something sagacious and powerful to say here when he claimed, “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” (Gandhi 1995, p. 73).

Finally, they can foster and activate many more interactions, interconnections, exchanges, and agreements between the diverse peoples, countries, civilizations, and cultures of the world. This is especially important concerning nations, civilizations, and cultures that are experiencing major conflicts, open hostilities, festering animosities, or are engaged in conflicts and wars. Initiatives and activities like these and others are desperately needed at present to pave the way for greatly improved intercultural, multicultural, and international relations and understanding between people, countries, and cultures, as well as to promote more sensitivity, civility, and acceptance of all the diverse peoples, nations, cultures, and species in the world. They can also spread the word that it is time to enter a cultural age, explain why this is so essential, and reveal what this age can and should be all about using their works and experiences in their respective fields as guides, symbols, signs, illustrations, prototypes, and archetypes. This is necessary to move the arts, humanities, heritage, history, culture, and cultures in general - and cultural cultivation and policy in particular - out of the margins and into the mainstream of modern life in all parts of the world.

This is why people and organisations working in the various areas and fields of culture have a crucial role to play and responsibilities to assume in facilitating the transition from developing economies to cultivating cultures. While these people and organisations are spread across many different sectors and disciplines at present, what is urgently needed at this crucial time and going forward into the future is to create a coherent, cogent, and powerful "global cultural community." If these people and organisations don't provide the initiative, leadership, and transformative skills and abilities that are imperative for this, cultivating cultures in the holistic sense will not happen, the marginalisation of the various fields of culture will not be realised, and entering a cultural age will not be achieved. If this occurs, it will be to the detriment rather than the enhancement of all people, countries, the world, and the natural environment as a whole.

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