

MAN, CULTURE, CIVILISATION

I. MAN AND CULTURE

The problem of culture may rightly be regarded as one of the cardinal problems of the 20th century. Why is it that in this century sociologists, philosophers, historians, anthropologists, art critics and many others have been dealing, ever more intensively, with general questions of philosophy and culture? Why has "culturology" arisen as a science and is being ever more widely established?

The root-causes seem to lie in the great social changes that have taken place in these dynamic times of ours.

First, there are in the modern world two different types of civilisation, two opposite types of culture, corresponding to the two differing social systems, a fact that must generate an acute interest in the relationship between culture and the whole aggregation of social relations.

Second, the scientific and technological revolution now going forward across the world has focussed mankind's attention on science and technology, and has turned the 20th century into an "age of science." Small wonder then that the headlong spread of science in every sphere of social life has forced men to take a closer look at what is happening to the other areas of culture, such as morality, art, politics, law, and so on. Will they be able

to withstand the pressure of science, will they have to undergo transformation, and which way will it run?

Third, great masses of people in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been awakened to vigorous cultural activity and are joining ever more actively in the general process of cultural development.

Like no other social problem, that of culture is linked with man's own destiny. Man creates all the values and benefits of culture, and shapes culture, while simultaneously being moulded and educated by culture. He is at one and the same time the subject of culture and the object of its influence. "Man—culture—civilisation" is a topic that is suggested by the social relations of our epoch, and by the characteristically rapid social change in our day.

Culture results from human activity, a statement that will probably be accepted by all culturologists, whatever their school of thought or view of the essentials of this phenomenon of culture and its place within the system of social relations. The full range of man's diverse activity, from production to the highest manifestations of the creative freedom of the human spirit, are given meaning through cultural values, benefits, standards and symbolic sign systems, which are embodied in abstract philosophical systems, moral codes or the melodies of oratorios. But the point is to establish what type of human activity may with good reason be qualified as cultural, and whether any individual activity does leave any perceptible mark on the development of human civilisation? Through the answer to this question runs the demarcation line between the various schools and trends in modern culturology.

Only one type of human activity, namely, *creative* activity, can be quite obviously referred to the sphere of culture. By creative activity we mean such processes which break with the accepted rules, patterns and stereotypes and create new ones. Mankind would cease to exist if it abandoned its reproductive activity. One of the most important, global consequences of the current scientific and technological revolution and of the industrial character of material and spiritual production is that products tend to be standardised. Aircraft, cars, or machine-tools blue-printed in the design office go into production and

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are reproduced in batches of millions of similar, stereotyped units. The reproduction of unique specimens of spiritual culture provides access to them for broad masses of people all over the world. The industrial age is an age of reproduction; never before in human history have standards, fashions, stereotypes had such all-embracing importance as they do today. This produces the first antinomy of modern culture:

A) The culture of our day is more dynamic, changing and mobile than ever before.

B) Our age is one of standardisation, and stereotyped reproduction.

As in any antinomy, premises A and B are diametrically opposite while each is unquestionably valid. Mass production is bound to continue snowballing towards the ever greater role of reproduction. But, at the same time, there is also a growth in the share of creative activity, with a steady increase in the number of new specimens being introduced into batch production, an unprecedented rate of scientific discoveries and the shortening of time it takes to apply them to production. It is no way out of the antinomy to reduce in volume the reproduction of new specimens, but to introduce the creative element into the process of any human labour, including reproduction itself. It would be naive to imagine that the time will come when a new, unique specimen will be produced by any act of labour. But man can and must introduce new elements into the process of batch production and improve its technology, techniques and organisation of labour. Culture is a creative, constructive activity of the individual, social group or masses as embodied in definite material and spiritual values, benefits, standards and institutions. Culture should not be reduced to *the result* of this activity alone, that is, to an aggregation of material and spiritual values, because it is, above all, *the process* of their creation, distribution and consumption.

Culture is the process of embodying the individual's spiritual resources and of transforming his creative power and potential into cultural values and benefits. At the same time, culture is the process of disembodiment of the values accumulated over long centuries of history, and transforming them into the individual's spiritual resources. The dialectical unity and inter-penetration of these processes constitute what we call cultural activity.

Assimilation of all the accumulated cultural values, of everything that has been handed down from earlier civilisations, is a necessary condition and the basis of activity in creating new values. If the product of material or spiritual creative effort remains at the disposal of its creator alone and has not been made accessible to others, it cannot be regarded as a cultural phenomenon. Consequently, in the process of cultural activity we find an endless ebb and flow between embodiment and disembodiment.

In studying this process we are inevitably faced with another difficulty: are all acts in human creative activity to be referred to the sphere of culture? Are, for instance, the delirious writings of the graphomaniac to be regarded as a product of cultural activity and a cultural phenomenon? To what extent do children's drawings make up a part of culture?

The answer seems to require the definition in each instance of the extent of novelty and departure from the habitual stereotypes in the given product. Where a musical work is performed by a novice and a master, the novelty of interpretation by the former is close to zero, and by the latter comes to a novel rendering. However, "novelty" alone is no guarantee that a product of creative effort is a cultural phenomenon. It is society, definite social classes and groups, that determines *the value* of the work in the process of its functioning. It is social practice alone that helps to distinguish the truly novel specimens of material and spiritual creation from the counterfeit, which is designed to produce an outward effect, but is empty of content.

Thus, the sphere of culture does not include the whole of human creative activity, but only that which produces truly novel specimens, whose social value is confirmed and verified in the social practice of definite classes and groups.

Another reason why culture does not boil down to a simple aggregation of accumulated values is that together with an axiological aspect it also has a *normative* one. There is such a thing as civilised behaviour, culture in every-day life, production, where the term "culture" is taken as a definite rule, standard of behaviour, every-day activity, productive effort, and so on. Lack of culture implies failure to observe or ignorance of these rules, which is an obstacle to human intercourse. Because of

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this normative aspect, culture operates as a regulator of social life. It determines not only *what* a man should know but *how* he is to carry through the process of socialisation.

That culture has a normative aspect is also revealed through a definite symbolic sign system of rules of behaviour, marks of attention, etc.

Finally, culture is inconceivable without special *institutions* (establishments and organisations) which conduct the production and distribution of its values. The more developed a culture, the greater the number of such official and unofficial institutions set up in the country. The more democratic a state's social system, the greater the possibilities open to its citizens for participation in the work of such institutions, and the more accessible these institutions are for the millions.

The values, standards and institutions of culture give a static cross-section of it but do not show how it functions. It is the production, distribution and consumption of cultural values and benefits that are the main "stages" of this functioning. Consequently, culture constitutes a complex and dynamic system which is intimately connected with other social systems, and which ultimately depends on the economic system of a given society.

In the present period, we find two contradictory tendencies in the development of one and the same system of culture.

A) The increasing "materialisation" of culture.

B) The growing role of the spiritual aspect of culture.

Both these contradictory tendencies turn out to be valid. In effect, today science increasingly coalesces with production and becomes its "spiritual potential." Take design, which arose at the junction of production and art and has been widely developed; the increasing importance of monumental art, which is closely connected with construction. On the other hand, there is the growing role of general education, mental labour in production processes, and socio-psychological elements in the organisation of the production process. All this warrants the assumption that the material and the spiritual aspects of culture are being *integrated*. Today, the "materialisation" of culture appears to be running more intensively than the growth of its spiritual aspect. This creates the illusion that spiritual culture is being "suppressed" by material culture, a point we shall deal with in greater detail below.

Having considered the system of culture in the most general terms, let us return to the question before us: what is *man's* relationship with this system, and how is his assimilation of culture, past and present, realised. At this point, we find another antinomy in the theory of culture.

A) Man is free to choose from the whole wealth of the values and benefits of spiritual culture at the disposal of society, those which best meet his orientations and principles.

B) Man is not free to choose cultural values, because his choice is socially determined.

Here again both contradictory propositions are valid. Dialectical thinking shows the way out of the difficulty. Of course, man's choice of cultural values, benefits and standards is socially determined, for it depends, first, on the level of development of the economic system and social relations in his country. And it is this that determines the range of the cultural values and benefits which society offers to the individual, together with the extent to which these are accessible to the broad masses of people. Let us recall, for instance, that the level of economic and social development in some African countries is such that a large section of the people cannot even receive an elementary education.

Second, the choice of cultural values is always determined by the outlook, orientations and standards accepted in the social group to which the individual belongs. Man cannot live in a society and be free from society, and from national, class or group orientations towards the values and benefits of spiritual culture.

Third, the choice is determined by the extent of the individual's socialisation, education and upbringing. It is only natural that cultural values and benefits which convey complex information on many planes should be inaccessible to an individual with little education and inadequate training.

Finally, the choice is determined by the general development of civilisation within the world system. For instance, in the 19th century people were unable to see films, hear radio broadcasts or watch television...

This, however, does not rule out some *freedom of choice*, provided we bear in mind that it is relative and not absolute.

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A great debate is now on about *conformism* (whether of the individual or of the mass) with respect to cultural values. The antinomy we have been considering seems to shed some light on this complex problem. Conformism does not at all consist in a limitation on the individual's choice of cultural values and benefits, for as we have seen it is always socially determined and therefore limited. Conformism appears wherever the individual in fact repudiates freedom of choice within the limits allowed him by social determination. Within these limits, the individual's freedom with respect to culture is manifest in:

a) his selective approach to cultural values and standards in accordance with his own inclinations, tastes, principles and mental make-up;

b) his original creative approach to the assimilation of these values and standards;

c) his creative activity in producing new cultural values as an embodiment of his spiritual world.

Conformism is a conscious—or more frequently unconscious—rejection of the possibilities of making a choice of cultural values within the limits of social determination. The mechanism of exercising this choice implies a study of man's cultural environment.

Society does not exert an influence on the individual directly, but through the social and cultural environment in which man lives. Within one and the same society, the possibilities for the individual's cultural development differ depending on the type of community (large industrial centre, medium or small town, or village), place of work, the immediate surroundings, and so on. The cultural environment is a social one, because man's social status within the structure of society also determines the environment in which he finds himself.

We think that the study of the cultural environment should run along these two main lines:

a) analysis of the material elements of the cultural environment (cultural institutions and establishments, the articles of culture in use by the population, cultural standards in production, every-day life); and

b) analysis of the personal elements of the cultural environment, that is, the group in which the individual finds

himself, its educational and cultural level, standards, requirements, orientations.

The material and personal elements of the cultural environment are closely allied and interact with each other, exerting an influence both on the individual's communion with cultural values and standards, and on his independent creative activity in the sphere of culture. It is through the influence of the cultural environment that the individual shapes his attitude to cultural values and standards. The cultural environment operates as a key factor which determines the individual's choice of cultural values and the dynamics of his cultural activity.

There is need to make a study of the cultural environment both at the individual's place of work (business) and in his every-day and family surroundings, because these two spheres may either harmonise and complement each other or sharply clash with (and even contradict) each other. In the latter instance, the influence of one of these spheres of the cultural environment operates as the dominant one.

What has been said above shows that the individual's cultural activity is socially determined and does not constitute a sphere of absolute freedom, as some schools and trends in culturology assume. On the other hand, it is impossible to deny the individual's relative freedom in his choice of cultural values and types of cultural activity which help him to avoid conformism.

How progressive this or that type of culture is depends on the extent to which the broadest masses of people—the working people—have the opportunity of communing with the true values and achievements of culture, and of participating in creative activity and producing new values.

The two opposite types of culture in the modern world—the bourgeois and the socialist—differ not only in content but also in the extent to which the masses of people participate in assimilating and creating them. Whereas every version of the theory of "admass" culture seeks to establish and justify the withholding of the highest achievements of national and world culture from the "admass" man, the main aim of the socialist cultural revolution is to eliminate the élitist type of culture.

The principal flaw in the theory of "admass" culture, whether presented by its advocates or its critics, is, we think, that it

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tends to establish a situation in which the highest achievements of spiritual culture are alienated from the bulk of the population.

Of course, the various social groups in the socialist countries also have far from the same levels of cultural development, but the general tendency in the development of culture in these countries is towards a gradual evening out of the inequalities in the distribution of cultural values and types of cultural activity between the various nations and nationalities, social groups and parts of the country.

The dilemma faced by culture in the modern world today is the following: is the genuine "high" culture to remain the province of a small circle of the elect, or is it to be placed within the reach of every member of society.

More than any other sphere of social life culture is the arena in which the individual reveals and asserts himself and displays his creative potential. Therein lies the great humanistic essence of culture. But the degree to which this humanistic essence is manifested depends on the type of civilisation.

II. CULTURE AND CIVILISATION

The term "civilisation" has several meanings. In the most general sense it is contrasted with man's primitive state and denotes a definite level of economic and cultural development. In a narrower and more specific sense it is frequently taken to mean a definite type of spiritual activity or, even more narrowly, a type of culture. That is how Arnold Toynbee sees it in his writings and, after him, so do many other culturologists.

We feel that this use of the term is not sufficiently strict. "Civilisation" should not be reduced to a definite historically rooted type of culture. From ancient times, philosophical tradition has taken "civilisation" to include a definite type of economic system on the basis of which the corresponding culture arises. In this sense, "civilisation" has greater scope of meaning than "culture".

Culture can be viewed in the "vertical" (historical) and in the "horizontal" plane. *In fine*, modern culture contains the whole history of mankind's cultural development.

Not a single "layer" of cultural development has disappeared

in history without trace; every new type of culture has included all the valuable elements of the earlier one, so that a "horizontal" cross-section of culture shows a history of its development beginning with man's emergence to the formation of present-day culture.

A "vertical" cross-section of culture shows its *present* state, its different types now existing across the world. In our opinion "civilisation" is a certain localised type of culture in a given country at a given historical period. Consequently, civilisation is a localisation of the cultural-historical process in time and space. For example, the slave-holding culture of antiquity existed in the forms of ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, which were substantially distinct from each other. In this sense, "type of culture" is a broader term than "civilisation," because one and the same type of culture may include a number of different civilisations.

Finally, there may function within one and the same civilisation different spiritual cultures reflecting the interests and the status of opposite social groups within the framework of the same society, in the same country.

Every civilisation is concrete in historical terms and ranges over a period which may be dated with relative precision. Within the limits of the same socio-economic system there may be a succession of civilisations depending on the progress of science and technology. Hardly anyone will insist that the civilisation of Britain today is the same one as that of a century ago, although the socio-economic and political system of British society has fundamentally remained unchanged. Civilisation is characterised by the sum total of the elements of material and spiritual culture of society.

Civilisation is heteronomous, because the development of new technology, science and art in one country swiftly spreads across the world through modern communications. Take the remarkable spread of television in every country in the postwar period, and the development of continental and inter-continental television systems. It would now be naive to presume that any important cultural achievement could long remain an exclusive preserve of a single country.

Consequently, civilisation is an open-ended system and is heteronomous.

At the same time, civilisation is always indissolubly connected with a country's socio-political system and the features of its culture. There is no civilisation outside the national specific. In this sense, civilisation has a national framework and is a closed, autonomous system. At this point we arrive at another antinomy:

A) Civilisation is international and heteronomous.

B) Civilisation is national and autonomous.

The answer here is that world civilisation (in terms of the level of economic and cultural development achieved on the globe as a whole) does not exist otherwise than as a sum total of national civilisations. In developing its national civilisation, each people makes a contribution to the development of world civilisation, which is why the development of world civilisation has run and continues to run in national forms only.

The premises set out above suggest another important conclusion characterising present-day civilisation, namely, the *unevenness* of its development.

A distinction must be made between the national features of civilisation, and this applies to any, including similar type civilisations and different-type civilisations. The type depends on *a*) the character and level of economic development; and *b*) the socio-economic system. That is why the civilisations of, say, the USA and France are of the *same type*, while those of the USA and Bulgaria are of different types.

We believe that it is not right to attempt to determine the type of civilisation without considering the prevailing socio-economic relations. An exchange of cultural values and an interaction of cultures can of course (and does) take place between different types of civilisations, but there can be no convergence of them into a single type. Such is the objective regularity governing the development of the modern world and it must be reckoned with. Therefore we cannot accept the idea, so popular in modern culturology, about "one industrial civilisation" or one civilisation of the "industrial society." While scientific and technological development in countries with different socio-economic systems may have common features and similarities of material form, the substance of their spiritual culture is quite different, and does not warrant their classification as the same type of civilisation.

In the present period two tendencies operate in the development of civilisation in accordance with the two parts of the antinomy formulated above. On the one hand, there is throughout the world a gradual bridging of the gap between the various types of civilisation. Even as early as the beginning of this century virtually entire continents were still in a state of primitive backwardness, and a considerable number of peoples across the globe did not have any developed national culture. Today, many of these peoples have their own national alphabet and are successfully developing their own culture. This tendency is very pronounced in the Soviet Union, where in the last fifty years dozens of nationalities have obtained an alphabet of their own, have trained a body of intellectuals and have produced a literature of their own. Peoples which had once remained by the wayside of universal cultural progress are now actively participating in it. Take the Mansi, a small people belonging to the Ugro-Finnish language group in the extreme north of the Urals and Western Siberia, which was totally illiterate and had no alphabet of its own up until 1917. Now every young Mansi can read and write, and there are many Mansi specialists, among them agronomists, zootechnicians, teachers, doctors, engineers and writers. Every year, hundreds of books are published in the Mansi language. Although the contrasts between national civilisations are still pronounced, there is a clear tendency towards a *bridging* of the gap between them, and consequently, of bringing the levels of the different civilisations closer to each other. This process is especially rapid in the countries of the socialist system.

In contrast to the 19th century, it is now virtually impossible to find anywhere in the world survivals of the tribal system in a more or less "pure" form.

On the other hand, the rapid development of the civilisations of once backward nations and peoples has led to the emergence of a number of "intermediate" (so-called marginal) types of civilisation and this has added complexity to the overall picture of the history of world civilisation. The second tendency leads to a consolidation of national civilisations and the emergence of new types. Any modern historian who ignores this tendency runs the risk of coming up with a stereotype, which will give no idea of the whole complexity of world civilisation today.

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In place of the old manual implements of labour the scientific and technological revolution has everywhere been introducing complex mechanisation and automation. Everyone has heard of the successes achieved in introducing self-programming automated devices in various branches of the economy and culture. There is a steady development of new and ever more complex and perfect machines, instruments and devices. It is safe to say that in the 70 years of this century mankind has received more new specimens (particularly in the sphere of science and technology) than throughout the whole of mankind's earlier history.

The last 70 years marked a great leap forward in the development of civilisation and culture. At the same time, the mechanisation and automation of production and the snowballing of scientific and technological development have brought about a marked disproportion in the development of different areas within culture itself. Neither ethics, nor art, nor any other area of spiritual culture can boast of the same great achievements and rapid pace of development as science. No wonder, this century has come to be known as the "age of science." However, *the number* of scientific discoveries is not the only consideration. The latest scientific discoveries have proved so fundamental that they largely changed man's conceptions of the world which had been shaped over the centuries, and have led to the emergence of new branches of science which, like cybernetics or genetics, have immediately come to the forefront of human knowledge.

It is this rapid development of science and the concomitant advance in technology that has produced the theory of a "cultural lag," that is, the lag of all the other areas of culture behind progress in scientific knowledge. What is more, some culturologists have come to regard scientific development as presenting an immediate hazard to culture, meaning above all ethics and art. That is the origin of the idea often repeated in modern writings, about a disproportion and discrepancy between civilisation and spiritual culture. We feel that this is not the right approach, as it would be more correct to speak of the contradictions in the rate of development in material and spiritual culture, because the latter is an inalienable part of civilisation. The point is not only that scientific and technological development is outrunning the pace of progress in other areas of culture, but also in the influence exerted by scientific and

technical progress on culture, and on man's way of life and mental make-up.

This has produced another antinomy, which is so typical of our dynamic times:

A) Scientific and technical progress results in a tempestuous development of culture.

B) Scientific and technical progress leads to a growing unevenness in the development of various areas of culture.

There is no doubt that the second premise is valid, but is it right to see this unevenness as a "cultural lag"? We do not think it is. First, science itself is an inalienable part of culture, which is why its progress means progress for culture as a whole (and that is what premise A states). Second, there has always been unevenness in the development of culture and its various areas; let us recall in this context the development of Hellenic art or of philosophy in early 19th-century Germany. But this priority development of one area of culture in a given period did not result in a "destruction" of culture. That is why there is hardly any ground for the dark prophecies now being pronounced over the current priority development of science. Finally, whether the development of culture is harmonious or otherwise depends not only on its intrinsic laws but also, and above all, on the social system, and on society's capacity for anticipating the negative effects of "technicism" and preventing them as far as possible.

There is nothing inevitable or fatal about the contradictions and discrepancies in the development of various areas of material and spiritual culture. It depends on the socio-economic and political system and on the activity of society to harmonise the process of cultural development, and display a capacity to avert a lopsided and twisted development of the component elements of its cultural system.

A general tendency of the present period is a steady alignment of the material and spiritual areas of culture, a growing interconnection between science, art and ethics, on the one hand, and material-practical activity and culture in production, on the other. The facets of material and spiritual culture are becoming more and more relative and mobile, so that a part of spiritual culture like science is simultaneously becoming a key factor in the

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development of material culture. The very process of reproduction of spiritual values has acquired a truly industrial character. Only a scientific analysis of these processes helps to understand the tendencies in the development of spiritual culture, development—and not destruction, let us note—as a result of the rapid pace of scientific and technical progress.

Fear of the computerised robot, as of other scientific achievements, springs from the prospect of a total substitution of automatons for human labour. Futurologists say that even a high level of material welfare will not save mankind, if the “work-leisure” equilibrium is upset, so that leisure is allowed to grow unchecked. The prospect of all the days of a man’s life being filled with entertainment and the consumption of “admass” culture, what is this but the prospect of a destruction of genuine culture?

There is evidence that such fears are quite groundless. The experience of the frontrunners in applying automation shows that in the foreseeable future, at any rate, it will not lead to any depreciation of labour. What it does in fact is re-distribute manpower by reducing the requirements in unskilled and increasing requirements in skilled labour. This kind of re-distribution, far from depreciating human labour in general, should actually help to appreciate it. US statistical data indicate that from 1958 to 1969 the labour force in the electronics industry increased by over 100 per cent, in calculating machines and office equipment by almost 100 per cent, and in plastics and synthetic materials by over 50 per cent. In all the developed countries there has been an annual growth in the number of engineers working in industry, while the number of researchers has been doubling every 10 years. Consequently, the actual experience of applying automation does not at all bear out the pessimistic forecasts of a “devaluation” of human labour.

Finally, fear of science and technology springs from the development of the terrible means of destruction and mass annihilation. If the capacity of the mass destruction weapons continues to increase at the same pace, mankind will be able to destroy all living things, together with itself and all its cultural values. There is no doubt whatsoever about this being a very real danger. Yet, it can be averted by the united power, reason

and will of men, so that the inexhaustible power of the atom is entirely geared to peaceful constructive labour.

Once again we find that we have returned to man. The fate of civilisation is in his hands. All the riches of culture and civilisation have been created by men, and on them alone depends the preservation and multiplication of this wealth. Civilisation can progress only when it is connected with the development of the human personality. Progress which carries human destruction and degradation and destroys the riches of culture cannot be called progress.

What we have tried to show here is that the development of culture and civilisation is contradictory and entails a number of antinomies, which we have called the antinomies of culture. The way out of these antinomies lies in man's practical activity as he transforms the world and creates and remoulds culture and civilisation.