

CULTURE AND CULTURES CRUCIAL LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

D. Paul Schafer

There is mounting evidence to confirm that culture and cultures will play a powerful role in the world of the future. As this occurs, people will have to learn a great deal more about culture and cultures if they want to live creative, constructive, and fulfilling lives, and communities, cities, countries, and the world as a whole are to function effectively.

There are many reasons for this. In the first place, culture and cultures are growing rapidly in importance in all parts of the world today and are destined to play a much more forceful role in the world of the future. Many developments throughout the world confirm this. One is the escalating importance of culture and cultures in individual, institutional, municipal, regional, national, and international affairs, as confirmed in the 1980s and '90s by the creation of the World Decade for Cultural Development and the World Commission on Culture and Development by the United Nations and UNESCO.¹ Another is the increased emphasis accorded to culture and cultures by countries and governments. Whereas culture and cultures were largely ignored at this level three or four decades ago, virtually every country and government in the world today is pursuing measures intended to develop culture and cultures, from passing legislation to protect the heritage of history to executing plans, programs, and policies to increase citizen participation in cultural life. Yet another development is the use of terms such as global culture, corporate culture, media culture, political culture, popular culture, elite culture, social culture, youth culture, economic culture, cyberculture, and environmental culture in public and private discourse. Use of these terms indicates that people are becoming much more "culture conscious," as well as more aware of the important role culture and cultures are playing in the world. A final development, and perhaps the most telling of all, is the establishment of numerous courses, programs, centres, institutes, and chairs in cultural studies in post-secondary educational institutions throughout the world. All these developments, and many others, indicate that culture and cultures will play a much stronger role in the world of the future than they have in the past or do at present.

In the second place, every culture in the world is going through a period of pronounced transformation and change. This is due to many factors, such as the medical, scientific, economic, political, social, demographic, technological, and

communications changes going on in the world today, as well as globalization, computerization, digitization, and commercialization. There is scarcely a group of people anywhere in the world that is not wrestling with these changes and with them, the need to determine how they want their cultures to develop in the future.

In the third place, there is the erosion of cultural values, identities, traditions, customs, and ways of life that is occurring in many parts of the world at present—values, identities, traditions, customs, and ways of life that have been built up over decades and often centuries.

In the fourth place, there is much more interaction going on between and among all the different cultures in the world today. While this brings with it many benefits and opportunities—such as learning a great deal more about customs, traditions, and lifestyles that are very different than one's own—it is also increasing the likelihood of cultural conflict and confrontations in the future.

Finally, and most importantly, there is the need for people to play a positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive role in the development of their own culture and the cultures of others. If, as many educators, scholars, and political leaders are predicting, the world is moving into a period of intense cultural interaction, transformation, and change, it only makes sense for people to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of their own culture and the cultures of other countries. While it may never be possible to fully transcend the limits of one's own culture and cultural conditioning, surely the world would be a much better and safer place if people knew and understood a great deal more about their own culture, other cultures in the world, the emerging global culture, and especially the reasons for cultural differences.

Given the need to learn more about culture and cultures, it is imperative to come to grips with the basic changes that are going on in the cultural field today. Fundamental changes are taking place not only in perceptions and definitions of culture but also in the dynamics, characteristics, composition, and functioning of cultures.

Speaking in general terms, there are two main ways of visualizing and defining culture. The first has to do with “the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and finer things in life,” and the second has to do with “the whole” or “the total way of life” of people and countries. The first is usually referred to as the traditional or classical way of visualizing and defining culture, whereas the second is usually referred to as the holistic or anthropological way of visualizing and defining culture.²

Throughout history, culture has most often been visualized and defined in terms of the arts, humanities, heritage of history, and finer things in life. This way

of perceiving and defining culture is deeply rooted in the practices of most countries and their educational institutions, media outlets, and governments. In recent years, there has been a tendency as indicated earlier to add the “cultural industries” to this list, largely in recognition of the important role these industries now play as “communication channels” or “carriers” of culture.

There are many advantages to visualizing and defining culture the first way. Not only does it highlight many of humanity’s most valuable activities and worthwhile pursuits, but it puts the emphasis on things that are concrete, tangible, and specific. Paintings can be seen, films, videos, television programs, and plays can be watched, music can be heard, art galleries and museums can be visited, and books can be read. Presumably this is why most countries, governments, educational institutions, and media outlets prefer to define culture in these terms for funding, administrative, trade, policy, planning, and pedagogical purposes.

During the nineteenth century, however, a second way of perceiving and defining culture emerged to rival the traditional way. It was based on visualizing and defining culture in terms of “the whole” or “the total way of life” of people and countries. This practice commenced when anthropologists and sociologists began studying human collectivities on the ground and in the field in many different parts of the world. They immediately discovered that there were all sorts of words to describe the specific activities that people were engaged in—economic, social, political, agricultural, religious, recreational, artistic, educational, environmental, and so forth. However, there was no word to describe how all these activities were woven together in various combinations and arrangements to form a whole or total way of life.

Culture was the word they used to designate this holistic process and describe this phenomenon. This is why Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, one of the world’s first anthropologists, defined culture formally as “that *complex whole* which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a person] as a member of society.”³ His intention was not to downplay or disregard “the parts of the whole,” but rather to recognize and emphasize that the parts are always combined together in different combinations and arrangements to form a whole that is greater than the parts and the sum of the parts.

During the last few decades, there has been a discernible trend throughout the world towards defining culture in these much more expansive terms. After several decades of defining culture using the first, more restrictive definition, UNESCO has stated to define culture in terms of the whole or total way of life of people and countries. This was confirmed at the Second World Conference on Cultural

Policies in Mexico City in 1982, as noted in the last chapter.

This trend towards a holistic conception of culture is being driven not only by UNESCO. It is also being espoused by people and countries in all parts of the world. When people and countries are in no danger of losing their culture, it is easy to define culture in the first sense. However, as soon as culture is threatened or there is a real danger of losing it, it is amazing how quickly there is a sudden realization of its holistic character. Clearly there is nothing quite like the threat of cultural extinction or foreign domination to bring about a rapid realization of the holistic nature and all-encompassing character of culture.

When culture is defined in this way, it is concerned with all groups, classes, activities, institutions, and people and not just some of them. Culture is all-inclusive in this sense. It is education as well as economics; the sciences as well as the arts; recreation as well as religion; sports and social affairs as well as technology and communications; popular music as well as classical music; politics as well as industry, and on and on it goes.

This is what more and more people in the world mean today when they say they are “products of their culture.” They are saying that they are the products of everything that exists in their culture, or their culture *as a whole*. Presumably this is why Wole Soyinka, the African Nobel laureate, views culture as “*source*”—the source from which all things flow and to which all things return.⁴ It is a way of thinking about and visualizing culture that has much more to do with culture as “the whole” than it does with culture as “a part or parts of the whole.”

When culture is visualized in these terms, it is concerned with the entire way people “visualize and interpret the world, organize themselves, conduct their affairs, elevate and embellish life, act in the world, and position themselves in the world.”⁵ This shines the spotlight squarely on the worldviews, values, and value systems that people use to bind all the component parts of their culture together to form a whole or total way of life, and consequently on such key relationships as the relationship between people and the natural environment, consumption and conservation, materialism and spiritualism, affluence and poverty, the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of life, and many more.

Thus it becomes clear why a shift is occurring in the world from the traditional way of viewing culture to the holistic way.

Without a much better understanding of the worldviews, values, and value systems that people use to bind the component parts of their cultures together to form an organic and integrated whole, it may not be possible to come to grips with the host of difficult, demanding, and dangerous problems confronting the world. This makes broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of the

holistic character of culture a categorical imperative.

So is learning about cultures. If fundamental changes are going on in how culture is perceived and defined, fundamental changes are also going on in the way cultures are perceived and defined, especially in terms of their composition, character, characteristics, and functioning.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was customary to view cultures largely in uniform, homogeneous, and closed terms. The focus was on developing cultures that were internally inclusive, externally delineated, concerned with similarities much more than differences, and preoccupied largely with creating a national identity, soul, and spirit. While this led to the creation of many valuable artistic, scholarly, literary, and philosophical works, it also contributed to intensive and excessive nationalism, the fighting of two world wars, the slaughter of millions of people, and the clash of different cultures and civilizations.

International events over the last fifty years have served to alter this situation, although there are still many exceptions to the general rule. For one thing, it is now generally recognized that there are very real dangers when cultures are uniform, homogeneous and closed. Mircea Malitza, the Romanian scholar and statesman, summed this problem up most effectively 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 which have had the advantage of innumerable influences, received and transmitted in accordance with a process of unceasing enrichment.⁶

As a result of realizations like this, and many others, cultures are becoming much more diverse, open, and heterogeneous today. Developments in transportation, trade, communications, technology, politics, finance, and globalization are making it impossible to shut out influences from other parts of the world. Moreover, there is much more cultural interaction and exchange going on today, not only between cultures, but also within them. While this has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still a great deal of interracial, ethnic, and cultural mixing going on as a result of demographic developments and tourist activities, migratory movements, interracial marriages, texting and mass media linkages, and transformations in social structures and institutions. As a result of these developments, and others, most cultures are becoming more pluralistic, multiracial, and diverse, with many different ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic

groups, subcultures, and social, economic, political and technological activities interacting under one roof. This brings with it a new set of cultural requirements and problems, especially as more conflicts now take place within countries than between countries.

This necessitates *new* understandings of the challenges facing cultures. Whereas the challenge in earlier times was to achieve “unity in similarity” through a homogeneous way of life and uniform national identity, the challenge today is to achieve “unity in diversity” through heterogeneous ways of life and multiple identities. This will require the development of many more links and connections between and within all the diverse subcultures, racial groups, ethnic and religious communities, and different activities that comprise cultures. Coexistence, cross-fertilization, dialogue, exchange, and cooperation—rather than isolation, separation, delineation, and competition—are now the order of the day.

If profound changes are going on in the composition, dynamics, and characteristics of cultures, profound changes are also going on in the international character of cultures. It would not be far off the mark to say that virtually all cultures in the world today—including the smallest, most remote, most inconspicuous, and marginalized—are becoming “world cultures” in the sense that they are compelled to deal with all the changes going on in the world and are unable to tune out developments taking place elsewhere. While in previous decades and centuries it was possible for cultures to remain isolated, today this is no longer possible.

Viewed from this perspective, one of the biggest challenges confronting people and countries in all parts of the world today will be to maintain adequate control over the decision-making processes affecting their cultures and ways of life while simultaneously learning to function effectively in a global world. People know their cultures must change. What they are opposed to—and opposed to in increasing numbers—is not change, but rather developments that serve the interests of corporate and affluent elites rather than themselves. This is why people everywhere in the world are demanding the right to decide for themselves how their cultures will change, as well as how they will order the component parts of their cultures and cultural life to form a cohesive and coherent entity.

Given all the changes going on with respect to culture and cultures in the world today, there is an urgent need for people to learn much more about culture and cultures in the broader, deeper, and more fundamental holistic sense. This is an exceedingly difficult task since few educational institutions provide opportunities to do this at present. This means that if people want to learn more about culture and cultures in this sense, they will have to do so largely through

self-discovery, self-instruction, lifelong learning, adult education and extension courses, and personal observations and experiences, until educational institutions catch up and make the changes that are required to incorporate this type of learning into their programs.

It is one thing to learn about culture and cultures when they are visualized and dealt with in terms of the arts, humanities, heritage of history, cultural industries, and finer things in life. Here, knowledge and understanding come from products and activities that can be seen, touched, talked about, traded, transported, and enjoyed. However, when culture and cultures are thought about in holistic terms they cannot be understood in this concrete, material, and specific sense. They are far too complex, vast, and multidimensional to do so. Moreover, as noted earlier, it is not possible to *see* culture and cultures as wholes or to see the organizational principles and practices that are used to create them. Nor is it possible to *know* all the myriad activities, institutions, worldviews, values, value systems, and parts that comprise them. This means that people must learn to *sense* and *feel* how culture and cultures are structured and put together as wholes, as well as to piece together general impressions and visualizations of culture and cultures from a variety of sources, experiences, perspectives, and possibilities.

For Giles Gunn, an internationally recognized cultural scholar, the best place to start to get to know culture and cultures as wholes—and indeed any type of human whole—is through the parts and the dynamic interplay that is constantly going on between and among the parts and the whole:

We cannot understand the parts of anything without some sense of the whole to which they belong, just as we cannot comprehend the whole to which they belong until we have grasped the parts that make it up. Thus we are constantly obliged to move back and forth in our effort to understand something “between the whole conceived through the parts which actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivates them” in an effort “to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explication of one another.”⁷

It follows from this that if people want to learn more about culture and cultures in general and their own culture in particular in the comprehensive and all-inclusive sense, they should start with their own specific part of the whole. This could be their job, life, or geographical location in the world. However, it is not their job, life, or geographical location considered in isolation, but rather as part of the larger fabric of their culture as a whole. In other words, it is the details of their own specific circumstances and experiences considered in terms of the larger

cultural context within which these circumstances and experiences are situated.

To progress further in this area, it is necessary to focus attention on things and institutions that function as wholes, and therefore have a great deal to tell us about how culture and cultures function in the holistic sense. The most obvious examples of this are people's families, neighbourhoods, communities, towns, cities, and regions.

Every family is a whole composed of many interconnected parts. This is apparent as soon as family members transcend their own specific experiences and become aware of the family as a holistic entity. When this happens, it is apparent that families are constantly evolving and changing in the comprehensive sense, as changes take place in the lives of individual family members and especially in the relationships between and among family members. The similarities to cultures here are striking, since cultures are also constantly evolving and changing as dynamic changes take place in the component parts that constitute them.

Nor is this all. Families also provide countless other ways to learn about culture and cultures. Not only is every family member distinct, different, and unique—thereby providing valuable learning opportunities for all family members—but every family is also deeply rooted in a specific culture or several different cultures. This brings with it a wealth of possibilities. It is amazing how much people can learn about their own culture and the cultures of others by exploring the genealogical roots and historical traditions of their family members. This is especially true when past and present family members come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and cultural origins, or when they have been involved in a single culture over a long period of time.

What is true of families is also true of neighbourhoods, communities, towns, cities, and regions. These complex entities are also wholes composed of many interrelated parts. As such, they provide ideal learning opportunities and models for people interested in broadening and deepening their understanding of how culture and cultures are put together and function.

Like families, neighbourhoods, communities, towns, cities, and regions also possess all sorts of fascinating treasures located just beneath the surface. Furthermore, they are close at hand. And yet, how often do we take the time and trouble to dig deeply into these human collectivities to acquaint ourselves with the fascinating array of programs, activities, resources, and experiences that are available to enrich our understanding of them, and therefore our own culture and possibly other cultures in the world? A little curiosity here can bring numerous rewards by opening up a vast panorama of possibilities, including exposing the numerous layers and levels of a culture, its diverse ethnic and racial groups,

countless multicultural events and activities, unique customs and traditions, and scintillating sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes. These help to broaden and deepen our knowledge and understanding of neighbourhoods, communities, towns, cities, and regions, and with them, culture and cultures.

It is through intensive examination of these possibilities that it is possible to slowly but surely piece together images or impressions of the distinctive character and ambience of the aforementioned entities as organic and dynamic wholes. Amos Rapoport explains this process in terms of cities:

In dealing with the urban order, it may be useful to begin with the sensory, experiential qualities of cities which are also organized and ordered. Cities, among other things, are physical artifacts, experienced through all the senses by people who are in them. They are experienced sequentially as people follow different paths and use different movement modes through them. Cities look, smell, sound and *feel* different; they have a different character or *ambience*. This is easily felt, but it is very difficult to describe.⁸

Familiarity with the distinctive character and ambience of various places provides a valuable step towards what Raymond Williams, the cultural scholar and historian, calls “*the structure of feeling*” of cultures. While this structure of feeling is less specific than more traditional notions of national identity and national cultural character—but also less prone to nationalism, chauvinism, and racism—it represents the bundle of beliefs, convictions, axioms, myths, and assumptions used to bind cultures together and determine people’s actions, attitudes, preferences and behavioural characteristics in them:

More overt and explicit than some underlying collective unconscious but less determinate and intellectualizable than an ideology, a structure of feeling is the “particular and characteristic colour” that the ensemble of the values, beliefs, and practices of a given culture imparts to the experiences of its members. In particular, a given culture’s structure of feeling will at least influence if not determine the patterns of response of its members in resolving or coping with the dilemmas and contradictions that confront them in their daily lives. For Williams, the principal aim of cultural analysis is to discern and understand this structure of feeling as it manifests itself throughout the entire range of a given culture’s expressions.⁹

For people interested in learning about “the structure of feeling” of their own culture and the cultures of others—and therefore the worldviews, values, value

systems, codes, recipes, and ordering processes that people use to create the structure of feeling of their cultures as wholes—it is helpful to turn to artists, scholars, architects, critics, and other creative people. These are the people who possess the intuitive and sensorial skills as well as the expressive, imaginative, and communicative abilities that are needed to “sense” how cultures are put together as structures of feeling and as dynamic and organic wholes made up of countless parts, and who communicate this to others. They are able to do so through their ability to create signs, myths, legends, metaphors, stories, similes, and especially symbols that “stand for the whole” and convey a vast amount of information about the whole, as we discussed in the chapter on arts education. Think of the symbolic importance of artistic works by Rabindranath Tagore and Ravi Shankar for Indian culture, Gabriel Garcia Márquez for Columbian culture, Gabriela Mistral for Chilean culture, and Astor Piazzolla and Jorge Luis Borges for Argentinian culture as ideal examples of this. If, as Gandhi maintained, “a nation’s culture resides in the hearts and the soul of its people,” then without doubt the arts are the gateway to cultures in this sense.

While artists, scholars, architects, critics, and other types of creative people are excellent vehicles for helping people to visualize, sense, feel, and understand cultures as wholes through the symbolic works they create, they are not the only means of doing this. The cultural industries also do so, because they provide the communication channels and distributive mechanisms, devices, and networks that are needed to make the works of artists, architects, scholars, critics, and other types of artistic people known to the general public. Athletes and sports organizations play an important role as well because they represent parts of cultural wholes that transmit strong messages and signals about the structure and characteristics of their cultures through sports. Anthropological, sociological, and cultural interpretations of history are also important because they tend to deal with the totality of cultures, and therefore the patterns, value systems, social structures, interrelationships, and worldviews that constitute cultures. Personality studies help us understand culture in the all-inclusive sense because, as Ruth Benedict contended, cultures are really “personalities writ large.” Philosophical studies and theological treatises also have much to say, because they deal with human conduct in a variety of spiritual, religious, and cultural settings. And ecological, economic, geographical, and historical studies reveal how cultures imprint their ways of life and structures of feeling on very distinct parts of the world’s geography as well as the natural, historical, and global environment.

What is steadily unfolding here are some of the most important ways people can broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of culture and cultures

in general and their own culture and cultures in particular. When this is combined with other learning opportunities—visits to libraries, use of computer facilities and internet sites, formation of workshops and study groups, lifelong learning programs, adult education and extension courses, foreign language studies, visits to ethnic cultural centres, travels to other countries to experience other people’s cultures first hand, and so forth—a broad spectrum of options and opportunities emerge that help people to learn much more about culture and cultures outside the formal educational system.

Many of the “new learning communities” that are springing up around the world have an important role to play in this regard. Awareness of this role emanates from the fact that there is an intimate connection between culture, cultures, and the learning process, since culture and cultures impact on the learning process and the learning process impacts on culture and cultures.

This is evident in a variety of ways. When culture and cultures are understood in holistic terms, they provide the context or “container” within which all education and learning takes place. As such, they influence what people learn, how they learn, and why they learn. This process is often called “enculturation,” since it describes the process whereby people are prepared for participation and citizenship in the specific cultures in which they are living and working. This takes place through exposure to—and education in—the worldviews, values, value systems, and lifestyles that are most characteristic of these cultures and form the basis of cultural life.

New learning communities can play a valuable role in this by helping people to see more clearly the strengths and shortcomings of their own culture as well as their cultural conditioning and enculturation process. This serves a useful purpose because it helps people discover what needs to be learned about their culture to function effectively in it and live a cultural life, as well as to assess their culture in objective and impartial terms to see where it comes up short. The most obvious example of this is the impact that all people’s cultures are having on the natural environment and the dire need to change this.

Since many of the new learning communities exist outside the formal educational system, they are also in a better position to help people assess the worldviews, values, and value systems of their cultures, thereby helping them to ascertain what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in their culture. Worldviews, values, and value systems based on exerting or imposing control over nature, promoting excessive consumption and production, accepting inequalities in the distribution of income, wealth, resources, and power, fostering and promoting social and economic inequalities, and treating people unfairly should be contested

regardless of one's own cultural conditioning and enculturation process. Goethe provided wise advice in this regard when he said, "Your own epoch you cannot change. You can, however, oppose its trends and lay the groundwork for auspicious developments."¹⁰

Ultimately, there is no substitute for providing comprehensive cultural education in all educational institutions and systems throughout the world. This education should start early in life and end late, as well as be incorporated fully into children's early development, extended through their elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education, sustained later in life through adult education and extension courses, and, equally essential, maintained during the final stages of life.

Unfortunately, few educational institutions in the world are equipped to provide the kind of comprehensive cultural education that is required at this time. This is due to the lack of qualified and well-trained teachers in this field, as well as the fact that very few teaching and learning materials are available that discuss culture in general and cultures in particular as complex wholes and total ways of life. While some schools provide "multicultural days" that are designed to introduce students to different cultures in the world through their food, foodstuffs, cuisines, dances, customs, and traditions—and others celebrate specific ethnic holidays and events for similar purposes—these activities are usually extracurricular rather than curricular in nature and therefore fall far short of the fully developed, lifelong cultural education that is necessary.

To be effective, cultural education should encompass four distinct components. The first component is learning about the "*nature and meaning of culture in general and cultures in particular in all their diverse forms and manifestations.*" This is necessary because there is a great deal of misunderstanding, confusion, and controversy throughout the world today over the nature and meaning of culture and cultures that needs to be clarified and rectified through exposure to all the principal manifestations of culture and cultures that exist in the world. In order for this type of education to be effective, it should reveal that perceiving and defining culture in terms of the arts, humanities, heritage of history, finer things in life, and the cultural industries—which is still commonplace in most educational institutions, corporations, foundations, and governments today—is only one of a number of basic definitions of culture and cultures that exist. Others, including anthropological, sociological, ecological, biological, and cosmological manifestations of culture, are gaining greater acceptance because they are more relevant to the problems confronting humanity at present and the need to find successful solutions to these problems in the future.

The second component should focus on "*the fundamentals of culture and*

cultures.” This is essential because all cultures are predicated on certain underlying axioms, worldviews, values, values systems, principles, beliefs, and ideals that shed light on how these cultures are structured as dynamic and organic wholes as well as on how they function in the world in both theoretical and practical terms.

The third component should concentrate on studying “*the contents and parts of culture and cultures.*” This should include all the different activities that make up culture and cultures, how some of these activities act as symbols and gateways to broader and deeper understandings of culture and cultures through this symbolic process, and especially what cultural scholars have had to say about the importance of these matters. This is a crucial component in cultural education because it is impossible to see or know culture and cultures in the holistic sense without selecting the parts that are the most representative. It doesn’t take a great deal of imagination to think of how pictures, portraits, images, and visualizations of all the different cultures in the world can be created through this miraculous symbolic and all-encompassing process.

The final component of a comprehensive cultural education should deal with the “*context of cultures.*” This involves studying how culture and cultures are situated in the natural, historical, and global environment—in other words, in space and time—as well as how they are affected by a host of factors and activities such as economics, politics, technology, the world system, worldviews, values, and beliefs. This is one of the most critical elements in cultural education of all because “context determines contents,” as Ruth Benedict consistently contended.

Initially, cultural education should focus on the cultures of the countries people are living in. However, eventually it should fan out and be complemented and enriched by courses that juxtapose, compare, and contrast the different cultures of the world: African, Asian, North American, European, Middle Eastern, and South American; western and eastern; northern and southern; indigenous, imposed, and imported; homogeneous and heterogeneous; popular and elite; and so forth. There is a vast spectrum of knowledge, information, ideas, and ideals in these cultures that needs to be pulled together and presented in one place, as well as classified in different ways and made available to people on a regular, sustained, and systematic basis. Just as it is possible to learn a great deal about all the religions in the world from courses in comparative religions, so it is possible to learn an enormous amount about all the cultures in the world through courses in comparative cultures. If, as the old saying states, “all is known by comparison,” then comparisons between cultures are very valuable because they reveal an incredible amount about the similarities and differences that exist between and among all the diverse cultures of the world— similarities and differences that are

due to significant differences in those cultures' origins, historical development, customs, traditions, traits, behavioural characteristics, functioning, and overall ways of life.

All this will broaden, deepen, and enrich people's lives in numerous ways. Studying the rich cornucopia of cultures that exists throughout the world will make it possible to cultivate more effective ways of seeing, acting, behaving, believing, valuing, and living in the world; to accept and appreciate other people, customs, traditions, cultures, and civilizations; to expand consciousness and mindfulness, enhance welfare and well-being, and improve individual and collective well-being, behavior, and lifestyles; to increase employment opportunities; to learn other languages; and, in sum, to experience a great deal more happiness, fulfillment, and creativity in life. Without a much better understanding of all the diverse cultures in the world, it is difficult to see how the world can ever become a more secure, harmonious, and peaceful place for all people, cultures, and countries.

¹ The World Decade for Cultural Development and the World Commission for Culture and Development were created in 1988 and 1993 respectively. The aims of the Decade were to ensure that the cultural dimension was taken into consideration in all economic development planning; to assist in the preservation and enrichment of cultural identity, including promotion of the arts and safeguarding of the national heritage; to broaden participation in cultural activity; and to foster international cultural cooperation. The aims of the Commission were to broaden and deepen understanding of culture and cultures and the way culture and cultures function throughout the world. See *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* (Paris: EGOPRIM, 1995).

² See D. Paul Schafer, *Culture: Beacon of the Future* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), chapter 2, for a detailed analysis of the many different concepts and definitions of culture that have evolved over the course of history and are in use throughout the world today.

³ Edward Burnett Tylor, *The Origins of Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p.1 (emphasis and insert mine).

⁴ Wole Soyinka, "Culture, Memory, and Development," *International Conference on Culture and Development in Africa, April 2-3, 1992* (Washington: The World Bank, 1992), p. 21.

⁵ Schafer, *Culture: Beacon of the Future*, p. 40.

⁶ Mircea Malitza, "Culture and the New World Order: A Pattern of Integration," *Cultures*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Paris: UNESCO Press and La Baconnière, 1976), p. 102.

⁷ Giles Gunn, *The Culture of Criticism and the Criticism of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 95.

⁸ Rapoport, "Culture and the Urban Order," p. 51.

⁹ Jere Paul Surber, *Culture and Critique: An Introduction to the Critical Discourses of Cultural Studies* (Boulder, Col.: Western Press, 1998), p. 238.

¹⁰ King (ed.), *Goethe on Human Creativeness*, p. ix.

D. Paul Schafer is Founder and Director of the World Culture Project based in Markham, Canada. He has worked in the arts and cultural fields for more than fifty years as an educator, author, advisor, administrator, and researcher. Information on Paul's publications can be accessed in the 'Hot Topics' and 'Publications Section' of the WCP website at : www3.sympatico.ca/dpaulschafer