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CULTURAL EDUCATION AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

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It is well known that alongside other dimensions of education, cultural education has always been one of the central themes in human life and spiritual maturation. This is because there is no such thing as a person without culture. Some individuals possess a higher level of culture, while others demonstrate a lower one. In other words, every individual, every family, every community, and even every profession has its own distinct and historically shaped culture. Culture emerges together with a person's language, consciousness, and thinking even before one becomes literate or formally educated. The formation of consciousness and the emergence of language constitute the first steps of personal culture. Even before acquiring formal education, the human ability to draw, sing, create melodies, and observe customs and rituals indicates the initial formation and development of culture.

As an individual begins the path of growth, they gradually become more educated and ascend to higher levels of cultural development. This process inevitably requires culture to exist in close unity and interdependence with art and enlightenment, reinforced by a certain worldview. Wherever there is a human being, there is culture, and this culture determines their level of enlightenment as well as, to a certain extent, their ideological beliefs and worldview. Based on these considerations, cultural education should be evaluated as a vital spiritual factor in human life, making it necessary to assess and analyze the role of culture separately and in depth.



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From this perspective, the concept and phenomenon of “culture” cannot be fully understood without examining such processes as the relationship between culture and nature, culture and language, and the cultural uniqueness of the human being. The fundamental questions concerning the real existence of culture are inseparably linked to the dialectics of these relationships.

One of the key determining factors in the emergence of culture is nature. For this reason, the relationship between nature and culture has remained one of the central themes of cultural studies for many decades. Numerous studies of this relationship demonstrate that culture possesses an extra-biological character and cannot be reduced to purely natural principles. Nevertheless, the cultural principle inherent in human beings is nothing other than nature transformed through human activity. This raises an important question: is nature opposed to culture, or are they harmonious and complementary?

In any case, the boundary between nature and culture is extremely delicate, unstable, and multifaceted. From the very beginning of human existence, individuals have both experienced the influence of the natural environment and, at the same time, exerted influence upon it. The processes of adapting to nature and transforming it according to human needs have led to the development of altered and cultivated nature. Although human beings separated themselves from the natural environment, they have nevertheless continued to remain a part of it to a certain degree. Specific geographical locations, particular territories, and their unique natural features have historically played a decisive role in shaping the national character, traditions, customs, language, and consciousness of human communities, and they continue to do so today.

Since ancient times, human survival has depended on adaptation to living environments. People created tools and household items from available natural materials, constructed dwellings, domesticated wild animals, cultivated the land,



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and grew crops. Through these activities, humans simultaneously adapted nature to their needs and transformed the natural environment, thereby creating an artificial living environment—the so-called “second nature.”

This “second nature,” created by human beings, represents the natural form of cultural existence. It signifies that the products of transformed nature, while remaining material, simultaneously enter the sphere of human life and fulfill social functions within it. At first glance, culture may appear to be an artificial phenomenon created by humans, distinct from nature. In reality, however, nature and culture are inseparably interconnected, since culture emerges from nature through human interaction with it. All cultural objects are created from natural materials.

For this reason, cultural scholars place significant emphasis on analyzing the category of “activity.” In this sense, cultural studies regard culture as the product of collective human life activity, as coordinated modes of communal existence, and as systems of norms and rules organized to satisfy both group and individual needs.

The existence of local cultures represents an objective and natural form of the overall cultural existence of humanity. Some local cultures resemble one another due to similar conditions of origin, while others differ significantly because the circumstances of their formation were distinct. However, despite their diversity, there is no such thing as a culture belonging to “no one.” Every individual culture embodies the unique experience of life practices of a particular people or community. This experience, in turn, endows each national culture with its distinctive characteristics and defines its uniqueness.

This factor was examined in detail by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his theory of “geographical determinism,” in which he concluded that culture initially emerged in tropical regions favorable for human life, whereas its development became



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associated with temperate climatic zones that demanded greater effort and adaptation from human beings. Extremely harsh natural conditions require excessive labor and energy simply to survive. As Rousseau emphasized, such severe environments do not contribute to the development of culture, since all human efforts are directed solely toward preserving life.

Thus, life in mountainous regions inevitably leads populations to develop a distinctive economic structure, oriented not toward agriculture but toward pastoralism, and to form a unique system of values that differs fundamentally from agrarian ways of life. Likewise, the customs, lifestyles, diets, and clothing of plain-dwelling or nomadic steppe peoples are closely determined by geographical and climatic conditions.

It should also be noted that, unlike older generations who tend to be more conservative (from Latin *conservativismus*, meaning preservation and loyalty to established values), young people are generally more open to accepting innovations that bring about cultural change. Consequently, the outcome of cultural diffusion may be either the enrichment of cultures or their destruction.

The assimilation of elements of foreign cultures is referred to as *assimilation* (from Latin *assimilatio* – to merge, adopt, or become similar), while adaptation to them is known as *acculturation* (from Latin *acculturare* – to approach or bring closer; *cultura* – education, development). These processes can affect individuals, groups, ethnic communities, regions, and entire nations.

Moreover, sufficiently developed and stable societies possess greater capacity to effectively absorb innovations and use them to their own advantage. In contrast, weak and unstable cultures and societies are unable to accept innovations that differ sharply from their traditional cultural elements. As a result, such societies may reject foreign elements, often accompanied by serious cultural upheavals, or even face cultural decline and extinction. Thus, Western Europe, upon



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discovering the New World, actively adopted certain elements from it, including agricultural crops, precious metals from the Americas, and various cultivated plants. Indigenous American civilizations, however, were unable to withstand contact with Europeans; their developing civilizations were destroyed, and a large portion of the indigenous population was annihilated.

For this reason, the dynamics of traditional cultures differ significantly from those of modern society. Patriarchal families, built upon stable interpersonal relations and communal support, contrast sharply with contemporary societies, where individuals are increasingly evaluated based on personal abilities and achievements, and interpersonal bonds are weakened.

An equally important role is played by social movements – freely organized communities that create various organizational forms to achieve specific goals. The most disorganized and destructive forms of social movements are popular uprisings and rebellions, well known from history. Religious and national movements may manifest both in violent forms and in more peaceful expressions. The same applies to modern social movements, such as environmental, feminist, animal rights, sexual minority, and fundamentalist movements.

As a rule, social movements arise to support particular groups of people, realize ideal goals, or prevent certain actions. Therefore, for cultural dynamics, it is crucial to justify the value of these movements and to assign them positive meaning.

In this sense, one of the most significant factors of cultural dynamics is the emergence of ideas capable of mobilizing large groups of people and justifying the necessity of transforming the world. However, while new ideas may stimulate rapid cultural change, dominant values and established worldviews within a culture often exhibit strong inertia and resistance to innovation. If the cultural situation changes sharply while dominant values lose their effectiveness without



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being replaced, this may lead to cultural crisis and even collapse. In such cases, swift action by the intellectual elite is required to promote new ideas and integrate them into mass consciousness.

Thus, culture represents an effort to transcend nature and to move beyond the limits of instinct. It emerges because humans have succeeded in overcoming the organic determinism inherent in their species. Many animals are capable of creating structures resembling culture – such as beehives, bear dens, or beaver dams—but in all these cases, animals are governed by instinct and genetically programmed behavior. They cannot act beyond what is predetermined by nature and are incapable of free creative activity. Only human beings, through conscious activity, are capable of overcoming the contradictions between nature and culture.

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