

## CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

**L.A. Kokhanova**

*Journalism Department, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia*

**Keywords:** Culture, culturology, civilization, spirit, mind, humankind, mass media, communication, education, ethics, aesthetics, art, theater, music, computer network, functional illiteracy

### Contents

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Culturology
  - 2.1. Culturology as a Science
  - 2.2. Culture and Civilization
  - 2.3. Cultural Universalities
- 3. A Typology of Culture
  - 3.1. Culture as Activity
  - 3.2. Literature
- Glossary
- Bibliography
- Biographical Sketch

### Summary

In this article emphasis has been placed on the legitimacy of an increasing variety of culture as the epicenter of the spiritual life of a society. A renewed civil society should be aware of the standardization of spiritual life, of the unification of ideas and thoughts, and of people becoming anonymous. The more new ideas and thoughts that appear, the richer becomes society. Free competition of minds gives rise to unity of operations; this is the dialectics of culture. Cultural pluralism expands the sphere of involvement of diverse social layers in the development and implementation of cultural policy. Cultural movement breeds many alternative characteristics and frequently has the most unpredictable results. And this is good, since there are no unambiguous solutions in culture. Culture lives in a world of multiplicity.

The second technological revolution has not yet resolved one of the most complicated problems of modern civilization: how to develop the spiritual life. It has only proved that such development cannot be attained by refusing the achievements of culture, profaning them in favor of everyday needs and undeveloped tastes. This task is not removed from today's agenda. The solution depends on the content of cultural values and their distribution. Thus, frequently popular values do not testify at all to a high level of these values, sometimes directly dictating a low cultural level. It is true that values are constantly changing. How to bring them to a higher level? Stereotypes about "spreading of culture in the great mass of the population" were completely compromised, because culture and violence are incompatible; culture comes from

within, not from outside. Attention should therefore be given to people of a wide range of cultures to ensure the greatest intellectual, political, and economic possibilities.

Only democratic and educated society can enter the era of the noosphere, the sphere of spirit and reason, consciousness and abstract thinking. Culture should be capable of reflecting the future spiritual shape of the society of global humanism as one of educated and intelligent people

## **1. Introduction**

As we enter the third millennium, humankind has approached the noosphere: a sphere of spirit and mind. Without a doubt, the further evolution of the planet will be guided by mind. Reality proves that the future of the world depends mainly on the possibilities of human intelligence. Therefore, people understand that their objectives of being educated and constantly acquiring new knowledge, as well as being capable of interpreting and solving vital problems with creativity, will eventually come to fruition.

The future of civilization and its success depend on the ability of society to put into practice its objectives of progress not only in social and cultural matters, but also with the spiritual and intellectual state of the people. The cultural development of humankind is impossible without firmness of purpose and real action. It is impossible to estimate the value of present and future cultures without a serious critical analysis of the past.

## **2. Culturology**

### **2.1. Culturology as a Science**

Today the world community is devoting even greater attention than previously to the problem of culture as a fundamental form of human activity and acquaintance with the environment. Cultural survival has become a global problem. The cultural aspect of society has become the most topical. That is why the humanities and philosophical sciences include culturology, which deals with the theoretical problems of culture, and is extremely important.

Philosophy appeared about 2500 years ago, ethics appeared in the third century B.C.E. Aesthetics was accepted as a separate science several centuries later, during the century of education (i.e. the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century). A century later, in the nineteenth century, the science of sociology was born. Culturology is a child of the twentieth century. It appeared as a result of a new approach to the world, due to the growing comprehension of the values of different cultures and their interaction. Culturology played a special role in the cultural and harmonic development of people and has become an important part of social science, contributing to human knowledge.

Thus, culturology is one of the fundamental social sciences integrating various systems of human knowledge. Culturology creates a system of different scientific knowledge about culture. It functions as a methodological basis for investigating the most common consequences of the development of culture as a creative process that preserves the values of humankind. It should be considered a science studying the structure and

features of the spiritual sphere and extended reproduction of spiritual values. The main objective of culturology is to achieve cultural perfection of people. Culturology is a science studying and developing ways to achieve this objective. This approach is required by urgent necessities, reevaluation of values, the strain on social and economic reality, and essential reforms in all spheres of human life.

On the one hand, humankind reached an intellectual golden age of its scientific knowledge by the end of the twentieth century. On the other hand, a geopolitical redistribution of the world has taken place. Europe is united. Many countries of the former USSR have joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Cultural and spiritual values are being rebuilt on the territory of the former USSR. In terms of global cultural, a completely new picture of the world is evident. It reflects a new state of spiritual culture and its motives and powers.

So it is only natural to ask: what is culture today? What is in store for it in future? What is a spiritual world of humans? How do different processes of intellectual and moral development of an individual and cultural communication between people take place? What is the role of cultural knowledge in the education of a person?

Nowadays more attention is paid to the concept of sustainable development of the earth and humankind. This concept includes the following:

- people all over the world must have the right and possibility to live in fruitful and healthy collaboration with nature;
- the environment must be considered part of any developing process in human society;
- all aspects of cultural life should be organized to correspond to the requirements of both the present and future generations;
- it is necessary to reduce the difference in living standards between the rich and the poor taking into consideration the fact that now three-quarters of the world's population consume just one-seventh of the world's revenue;
- all measures must be decisively taken to reduce the negative influence of human civilization on the biosphere.

### **2.1.1. Culturology for Cultural Knowledge and Education**

The prospects for education are not limited for anyone today. But here lies the main problem of society: educational systems do not reflect the latest world developments, including in the field of culture.

However, it is necessary to take into account different possibilities of continuous systems of education. As the English scientist R. Owen stated, “the school teacher's fescue [a small stick used to point out the letters in teaching children to read] is an Archimedean screw, which will turn the world upside down.” “Oh, how many different wonders education has in store for us,” the Russian poet Pushkin echoed. The Great Charter of Universities signed in 1638 in Paris, in the Sorbonne, united different universities all around Europe and proclaimed the following principal: the higher school

is an institution for the reproduction of culture. Today thousands of universities and colleges all over the world are providing young people with the knowledge accumulated by humankind.

In Russia, by the year 1999 89% of the working population had higher and secondary education. However, there is still a contradiction between the knowledge received and educational and cultural levels. According to the research carried out by sociologists, only 3% of the students of technical high schools take an interest in poetry. Very few people in the technical professions are familiar with art or classical music. A narrow specialization limits people's inner world. This is true not only of Russia. Many other countries face the same problems.

Everyone realizes that it is necessary to pay more attention to humanities education. Many educational specialists and public figures are concerned that secondary and higher schools do not give enough knowledge of cultural and moral values. Therefore they suggest their own approach to this problem. For example, the experience of M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University may be of interest as it introduced humanities to natural science departments. At the same time, students of humanities faculties are offered courses in natural disciplines. The students of Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities of Culture also study humanities and cultural sciences.

Students have obtained new resources with computer networks. One example is the Faculty of Journalism, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University. Students were working in the Internet through *www.russianstory.com* during the year issuing *Russian Story News Digest*. At the same time they were attending the course "Worlds of Art" presented by Governors State University's College of Arts and Sciences, Division of Liberal Arts, in Illinois, USA. Their professors offered students lectures on computer networks and homework. Having accomplished their tasks students returned them via the Internet. The course provided knowledge of world culture that appeared to be very useful for the students. Other examples of the latest changes in this sphere are courses on history of the world and domestic culture, on ethics and aesthetics introduced in middle and higher schools.

Culturology has been developed as a course for students and postgraduate students studying theoretical and historical problems of culture. It provides general information about the essence and scope of culturology, its approaches in studying social reality; it also touches upon the main problems of culturology.

The aim of the course is to show students the various phenomena and tendencies of the spiritual life of a modern society, including modern Russian society, to teach them to perceive and appreciate the peculiarities of cultural development in new historical conditions. It is possible to solve the problem when the concept of "a literate person" or "an educated person" does not differ from that of "a person of culture."

### **2.1.2. The Definition of Culture**

Paraphrasing Hegel, who wrote about art, it could be said that culture often is almost the only key to understanding the wisdom of peoples. And this is true, because culture is

not just a lofty activity, it is a real power that develops humanity in people. It is the second universe created by humankind. Its development depends on the progress of civilisation. The main motive powers of culturology are linking times, and the dialectic of the thoughts and feelings of previous generations that are influencing the deeds and destiny of modern human beings. The artist and philosopher N. Rerikh interpreted the word “culture” as “a veneration of light” (“cult” veneration, “ure” light). He asserted that the care of culture is a gate to the future.

In traditional understanding, the word “culture” (from Latin *cultura*) originally meant cultivation, a processing of the earth. The term was later interpreted by the Romans to apply to human beings and came to denote bringing up and education, namely the “cultivation of people”. Cicero introduced the term “culture” as meaning mental activity. In this sense culture is opposed to bad manners, barbarity, and wildness. In the Russian scientist V. Dal’s dictionary of terms, culture means “processing and maintenance, cultivation; mental and moral education.” This definition faced serious changes during its historical evolution.

It should be noted that modern scientific literature is characterized by a growing number of definitions of culture. Sir Edward Tylor published the first scientific definition of culture in 1871. Over the next 50 years eight further definitions were introduced, then in the following 30 years (from 1920 to 1950) this number increased to 157 scientific definitions. In 1968, Moles in his book *Sociodynamique de la Culture* recorded 250 definitions of culture. In Russian culturology about 50 definitions of culture were introduced after 1960.

Static definitions of culture brought order to ideas and feelings. They interpreted it as a “screen” of knowledge, an original “receiver” for information. In opposition to this point of view, modern science treats culture as a “creation of life.” It considers culture to play a creative role in transforming nature and society. As a result, there has been a constant enrichment of material and spiritual values and perfection of human beings.

Thus, culture in modern understanding is a whole complex of material and spiritual values created by humankind during history. Culture means a degree of knowledge and practical usage of the laws of nature and public life by people.

The Russian scientist Vladimir Bibler considers that there can be several definitions:

- (i) Culture is a form of simultaneous objective reality and relations between different generations: previous, present, and future cultures. It is a kind of a dialog and interconnectivity of these cultures.
- (ii) Culture is a form of self-determination of the individual from the person’s point of view, it is a form of determination of our life, consciousness, thinking; so culture is a form of free choice of people’s destiny in its historical meaning and general responsibility.
- (iii) Culture is a prime formation of the world.

All these definitions appear to show culture as activity. From this point of view culture can be considered a specific human experience, people’s internal and external world;

moreover, it is connected with the creative activities of humankind. It has a special meaning for creation and functioning of material and spiritual work. One of the directions of this activity is devoted to nature.

### **2.1.3. Culture and Nature**

“Cultural” and “noncultural.” What is their relationship? How do culture and chaos correspond to one another? These are the main questions for science researchers. “Chaos is an order, but a specific one” according to the Russian academician V. Sadovnichy. Indeed, chaos results in the appearance of “complete ignorance,” which characterizes people’s attitude towards nature. At the same time, people themselves belong to nature. The environmental culture of society is one of the most serious problems today. For example, 20% of the Russian population lives in an ecologically harmful environment. There is no doubt that lifetime environmental learning of the whole population is of paramount importance. First of all, to increase knowledge and arrange participation in long-term projects for solving environmental problems. The second stage of education should cover cognitive and emotional spheres simultaneously.

The well-known Russian scientist and academician D. Likhachev introduced the term “ecology of culture.” Its introduction caused the immediate appearance of the phenomenon. Today “ecology of culture” represents a separate field of continuous environmental education. Its aims are set forth adopting a culturological approach. They are:

- Planning of environmental culture and ethics, interpretation of quality of the environment;
- Close ties between methods and contents of lifetime environmental learning, as well as between mind and emotions;
- Factors defining the content of learning;
- Modern strategy: lifetime environmental learning for sustainable development.

The principle of continuity has another connotation: it should be continuous not only during the lifetime of individuals, but also across centuries. Without understanding of the past, it is difficult to understand the present or to foresee the future of culture. As Democritus said, “nature and education have much in common.”

The main principle of “the reasonable basis” of the pedagogical system of Aristotle was the expediency or similarity to nature, which has been followed up to the present. He asserted that “nature” is the beginning of all living things existing according to “the law of nature.” The same ideas can be found in the works of Kamensky, Rousseau, and Pestalozzy. Of course, this principle has slightly changed in our epoch to the harmonic development of a person and society. But it has preserved the main essence; unity of nature, culture, and education.

A feeling for nature was developed in each Greek person as a derivative of the feeling for personality. It was done “for the sake of” attaining perfection, obtaining “virtues,” including spiritual and external beauty, and the ability to execute civil duties in the

community. In Greek, it was called *calogotics* meaning “for the sake of something.” It allowed our ancient predecessors to make the human being “the head of nature.” Aristotle considered nature to be the ultimate objective in educating people, when “objective meant not a definite bound, but the best results.” This “bound” was human civilization.

## **2.2. Culture and Civilization**

The term “civilization” has many meanings. It is possible here to specify at least three major meanings. In the first meaning, it is a problem of culture and philosophy, going back to the time of the German romanticists. In this case, culture is not identical to civilization. The organic nature of culture is opposed to a still technical world of civilization. The second meaning of the word assumes movement of the world from pieces to unity. The third meaning is pluralism of separate civilizations.

It is important to study the development of the term civilization as the integration of the important social and cultural aspects of life. N. Danilevsky uses the term cultural historical types, Oswald Spengler advanced cultures, Arnold Toynbee civilizations, and P. Sorokin “metacultures.”

These social and cultural supersystems coincide neither with a nation, nor with the state, nor with any social group. They go beyond any geographical or racial boundaries. However, like deep sea currents, they determine the nature of all smaller social groups and units in the ocean of social and cultural life.

The problem of civilization sets humankind new important tasks. For example, the essence of crises of separate cultures, especially western European cultures; the future of the Western world; strengthening of cultural identity and outbursts of nationalism; modern attitudes to religion, engineering, science; contrasts between East and West, comparative study of Western and Eastern societies.

Modern people no longer understand history as the alternation of events defining future lives of peoples, their occurrence, “golden age,” and disappearance. Now the past is treated as an alternation of large unities, based on antique culture. One of these, though yet uncompleted, is western European culture. Thus, civilization has become the main object of modern historical science.

However, the concept despite its concreteness is likely to change. For example, nobody can tell with any certainty the number of civilizations in the world. Even Toynbee estimates different numbers of civilizations: between 21 and 13. This can be explained by the dynamic development of civilizations themselves.

Civilization is in fact understood as a cultural unity of people having a similar kind of social genotype, or social stereotype. At the same time, it occupies a large closed territory. In other words, it is an image of “a specific humankind on another Earth.”

Two main approaches to civilization can be distinguished in cultural studies. The representatives of the first approach are Danilevsky, Spengler, and Toynbee. Toynbee’s

theory of civilizations can be considered the best theory of local civilizations and cycles of their development. The representatives of the other approach are the three American anthropologists F. Northrop, A. Kreber, and P. Sorokin. Theirs differs from the first approach in finding in global phenomena separate outlined systems, but their “cultural supersystems” (Sorokin’s term) unite them. They are considered cultural integrities of symbols. In this connection, Russian civilization is of special interest. Russia is treated as an intermediate civilization, “stuck” between traditional and liberal civilizations.

So, the meaning of the word civilization has not been defined yet. Obviously, however, it is the main phenomenon of historical development, based on the concept of “society.”

-  
-  
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE 22 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,  
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

#### **Bibliography**

Berdiaev N.A. (1990). *Sense of History*, 166 pp. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Examines the concepts, origin, and progress of cultural knowledge.]

Bibler V.S. (1981). *From Science to Logic of Culture*. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Examines the concepts of cultural knowledge, and the essence and specific features of culture.]

Danilevsky N. Y. (1992). *Russia and Europe*. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Examines the correlation of culture with civilization.]

Gurevich P. (1998). *Culture and Civilization*. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Considers cultural knowledge as an integral part of the common knowledge of the whole of humanity.]

Kroeber A.L. and Kluckhohn C. (1992). *Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. [in Russian translation.] [Considers culture as a social phenomenon in connection with the activities and behavior of people.]

Lotman Y.M. (1970). *Papers on Typology of Culture*. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Considers culture as the necessary basis for analyzing the contemporary problems of humankind.]

Moles A. (1984). *Sociodynamique de la Culture*, 343 pp. Paris: La Haye, Mouton. [Defines the place of culture within human knowledge.]

Sartre J.-P. (1990). *Existentialism as Humanism. Twilight of Gods*, 434 pp. Moscow. [in Russian translation.] [Considers human nature as part of human cultural knowledge.]

Sorokin P. (1992). *Man. Civilization. Society*. Moscow. [in Russian.] [Presents his views on understanding culture and civilization.]

Toynbee A. (1992). *The Study of History*. Moscow. [in Russian translation.] [Examines the concepts of culture and civilization.]



### **Biographical Sketch**

**Kokhanova Lioudmila Alexandrovna** was born on July 16, 1947 in Sevastopol, Crimea, where she completed her education. In 1967, she joined the Faculty of Journalism at M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University. After graduating she completed postgraduate work with the faculty, being awarded a Doctor of Philology. She has since been made a professor. Her fields of research and scientific activity are journalism, education, including environmental education and the problems of lifetime environmental learning for sustainable development. Professor Kokhanova is very active in practical education and pedagogical work, including lecturing, guiding seminars, studios, and master classes. Her 15 years of work has made the Studio one of the most effective and necessary methods of education in Journalism faculties. Professor Kokhanova has published over 600 items, among them ten books. She is married and has two daughters.

UNESCO – EOLSS  
SAMPLE CHAPTERS