

Culture and Identity

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What is culture?

When people hear the word “culture”, the first associations that make are related to art and knowledge. We might distinguish spiritual and material culture. Key elements of the culture are the knowledge and the values that create standards that encourage a certain type of behavior. Culture is neither something just material nor ideal - for it the important is the meaning and functioning of both aspects.

Furthermore, it is used in another sense - to characterize the individual. Thus we use the word "culture" in evaluative manner, to identify a person with "high or low" culture by his erudition, wealth of interests, education and behavior in society.

To fully understand the concept of culture, we have to consider it in its entirety - its emergence, development, use. In addition to this it is useful to understand the etymology of the word culture. “Cultura” is derived from the Latin verb “colo”, which has many meanings, but the most generally accepted are cultivate and worship. Primary the culture is associated with agriculture and pilgrimages. Over the time, however, it starts to get more meanings and to be used metaphorically – initially an ancient Greek sophist compares spiritual growth to agriculture, and later Cicero uses the term “cultura animi” - spiritual culture, which includes politeness, refinement and wittiness. Thus the word acquires many meanings - from education, lifestyle, religion and education to the means of living and agriculture. To summarize - culture is what distinguishes the man from the rest of the nature - the human world of a particular community. The word civilization is understood as widespread culture.

Culture and nature

Culture is considered to be the opposition of nature, which leads to two things. The first one - the culture of an individual is judged by the distance between the man and the nature. This leads to the opposition center versus periphery – defining the cities as cultural centers. In this case objects standing closer to the nature are defined as uncultured. Second - moving away from nature creates desire to return to it in the form of recreation.

Culture and Identity

Unlike the concept of culture that is present in antiquity, identity appeared quite later - the theme gained popularity during the last 20 years. The term also comes from Latin - from pronoun idem, meaning "the same." Identity is also ambiguous term which is used in at least two aspects - as personal identity that defines the individuality and diversity, and collective identity that defines the integration of groups based on similarity. Related to the subject - object of particular interest is the cultural identity - what is the relationship between the individual, his own culture and the culture of the community to which belongs.

Identity, culture, and communities

Culture has common expressions of all mankind, since its functions are common, but different communities and societies have their own identity, which exhibits particularly throughout their culture. A particular culture is determined by two things – the people and the historical period in which it is developed and represents a general spirit of the nation. From a cultural point of view, communities are generally divided into open and closed.

Closed communities are generally small and support certain traditions as overvalue that maintain their identity. This leads to the fact that individuals are highly integrated and keep

certain standards of behavior. They show a particular interest in the natural and cosmic, the leading role in the organization of their spiritual life is the idea of the afterlife. Closed communities distinguish very clearly everyday life from the holidays; the sacred from the profane. The issues related to the reality and "the present" are solved unrealistically and are not in focus. This requires the imposition of a mythology that specifies the paradigms of the culture and defining its identity and the identity as a sense of belonging of the members. The differences in the cultures come from the conveniences that a certain territory offers - from the circumstances of life. This leads to agriculture, industry, services and life with different physical dimensions. The change of identity comes evolutionary or revolutionary, but in relation to the natural features and the people of the society. However, the trend is towards extinction of closed communities. This becomes obvious especially in the current globalization processes in economy and politics.

On the other hand open communities are large - individuals are less integrated with each other and there is a greater opportunity for making a personal choice. The key issue is the present and the ways for further development – i.e. the people are more adaptable, do not strictly observe traditions and consider the time frame as a process. Open communities are closer to the concept of civilization, while closed - to culture

Globalization, culture and identity

Modern phenomenon in the field of culture are very dynamic. On the one hand, the industrial innovations lead to permanent changes in the life of humanity, and in spiritual aspect today Medias play a major role. The complete change raises the question of the nature of the contemporary culture - whether it will encourage the preservation of identities or set designs, patterns and stereotypes that will exterminate uniqueness.

It is obvious that modern man has a big appetite for the new - quickly accepts each new image, character, style, etc., but also quickly get rid of it. The creation of a certain common models lead to the creation of their oppositions - counterculture. Traditions and customs are forgotten, or start working in a new commercial way. The Globalization delivers anywhere the cultural achievements of each nation, leading to the unification of humanity and deletion of individual cultures and their identity, uniqueness. The passive aspect of the culture - the achievements and traditions so far are being used as a tool to achieve something new.

It is a matter for the emotional attitude of a man to the culture that represents, is the preservation of tradition. The culture is an evolving phenomenon and sometimes to achieve something new, you should "forget" previous knowledge and "break" the existing paradigm. This invariably leads to the deletion of a culture or aspects of it for the sake of a new one, which is natural and it is difficult evaluate it as good or bad. The global processes in 21.century ask more radical questions about this process: will that lead entirely to cultural unification or on the contrary, to the enrichment of cultural diversity through an accelerated dialogue between cultures? How the access to enormous amount of information will affect the overall cultural process? Today there is a virtual multicultural environment much different than before, in which "live" infinite worlds and values diversity of identities. This process is accompanied by an accelerated process of real internal and external migration, which leads to the enrichment of the cultures and valuation models.

Bulgarian cultural identity

Key elements of the Bulgarian identity are Bulgarian language, Cyrillic script, customs (mainly orientated towards the nature) and orthodox religion. For the script, we may say that the Bulgarians idolize the work of the founders of our alphabet, whose missions to legitimize Slavonic and Slavonic liturgy in Europe (when as sacred were considered only Greek, Latin and Hebrew), opens a new page in the cultural history of Europe. Since the beginning of these

events have passed more than 1000 years - and despite globalization, the separation of man from nature, urbanization, the lack of interest in the history, Bulgarian cultural identity is permanently associated with our language, script and literature.

As for the opposition center – periphery, the issue is even more relevant today than during the antiquity. Today it is closely related with the pursuit of economic growth, better career, a higher standard of living. The desire for being part of the center - a few large cities, especially in recent decades, when were eliminated all restrictions on free movement, led to a large increase in the gap between the center and the periphery. Traditional vocations, which are typical for small places were abandoned and the natural resources of the country are wasted; people lose their sense of regional identity; customs and cultural traditions are almost forgotten. The lack of coherent policies for small locations leads to poor usage of the incredible natural and cultural values in the periphery, even to their destruction.

The Future

The enrichment of the cultures does not mean a loss of identity. The vitality and the strength of the modern world is in the diversity in which all can preserve their own identity - such as honoring their art, their native language, respect their cultural traditions that serve for further progress of mankind. This is the way in which this process leads to development and not the collapse of the foundation of civilization, something that is well known from the myth of the Tower of Babel since ancient times.

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