

Why Culture Matters

What is Culture?

As individuals, people experience consciousness (identity, intelligence, soul, conscience), develop character (will, agency, behavioral patterns, habits), and demonstrate preferences of style (taste). Biological traits and tendencies both enable and limit perceptions and abilities, but all people have the ability (and unavoidable responsibility) to shape their character and develop to their potential.

By natural extension, groups of people also experience a sort of shared consciousness (shared identity, values, perceptions, language, epistemological orientation), develop a shared character (ethics, norms/rules, priorities, organizations, obligations, expectations, group dynamics, reputation), and express shared style preferences (aesthetics, dress and grooming, design, cuisine, music, humor, communication patterns, leisure activities, rhythm of life). Culture is an umbrella term for the shared identity, values, perceptions, perspectives, knowledge, beliefs, organizations, practices, and preferences of a group.

Culture is Fundamental

Culture is about much more than just style. Style is a very visible part of culture, but it is also comparably superficial and inconsequential. Style differences rarely cause significant conflict (except, perhaps between significantly shallow people). On the other hand, differences in things like ethics, rules, and behavioral patterns are at the heart of very serious conflicts, indeed. In fact, many conflicts that on the surface appear to be motivated by ethnic identity, political ideology, or religious affiliation are fundamentally cultural.

But understanding culture is not just about conflict; it's also about the progress of civilizations and quality of life for people everywhere. Key adjustments in culture can have profound effects on group dynamics and future generations.

Cultural Advancement and Decline

The word "culture" comes from the latin *cultura* referring to the care, development, and protection required to develop something, as in "cultivation" and "agriculture". The weeds and rocks have to go and the soil has to be prepared in order for precious seeds to be carefully planted and become a beautiful garden that bears fruit and is worth preserving.

In other words, a culture must be both conservative and progressive in order to develop. That is, its members must conserve positive elements while also abandoning negative ones and adopting additional positive ones. All cultures should embrace the best practices of other cultures while conserving and promoting their own.

Here are some examples of elements of high-performing cultures that have proven their value and are worth adopting: coherent philosophy, individual self-determination, reciprocity ethics and natural law, clear and noble grand narrative, private property norms, freedom of association, monogamy, incest avoidance, courtesy, hygiene, industriousness, low time preference, precise and high-minded language, appreciation of / participation in / contribution to sophisticated pursuits.

Cultural decline is marked by the abandonment of such elements and their replacement with corrupt and perverse ones.