

U N E S C O

CULTURAL CO-OPERATION IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE⁽¹⁾

by

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- (1) This paper has been prepared by the author, under contract with Unesco, as a contribution to a study of "Cultural Co-operation as a Factor in Peaceful Relations". The views presented in it are the author's own, and are not necessarily those of Unesco or any other organization with which he is associated. The paper is distributed in its present form in order to invite comment and criticism. No part of it should be quoted.
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CULTURAL CO-OPERATION IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE

Many words have been spoken and written on the subject on which I have been invited to make a study, namely "Cultural Co-operation as an Important Factor in Strengthening and Developing Peaceful Relations Between Different States and Peoples". Many discussions have produced a great variety of conclusions and recommendations. Few, however, have considered the question in relation to the fantastically rapid changes taking place today in all phases of human relationships. New discoveries and developments, particularly in the area of communication media, are having and will continue to have an immense impact on man's relation to man. I have determined, therefore, in this study to make a somewhat different approach to this subject, for under the terms "cultural co-operation, cultural relations and cultural exchange", one can subsume the whole history of mankind. Thus, the topic is one of the greatest importance and is deserving of consideration not only from the point of view of what pragmatically can be done politically or diplomatically by and between States, or by and between International Organizations, but also from the point of view of what sort of universe is emerging in this fast moving, changing, modern era today, and what sort of culture or cultures are being born and projected into the future. Cultural co-operation requires recognition and careful consideration of the nature and being of culture not only today, but in the days ahead.

In these opening paragraphs I think that it might be well if I state my credentials for this undertaking. I can make no claim to being a scholar as are others now preparing studies for Unesco. In my college days I did learn something of scholarship and so am acquainted with its methods, purpose and significance. My credentials are of a different origin. I have been and am both an observer and a participant in international cultural activities. I have been a diplomat representing my country in various capacities including that of Chief of Mission abroad, and I have been operationally in charge of the Educational and Cultural Programs of the Department of State. It is my privilege now to be associated with a private organization whose objective is to create a basis of understanding between the young people of all nations by bringing them together to live in each other's company and environment. My involvement has been long and personal and my deep concern with the problems of increasing understanding between the peoples and cultures of this world has been one of the more important factors shaping my life.

I write, therefore, not as a scholar who has done the endless, necessary, and valuable research in the field of cultural co-operation, but as an observer, participant and promoter. Furthermore, I write not in the Cartesian style but out of a pattern of thought, a pattern of ideas that shapes itself and then reshapes in my mind and will continue to shape and reshape. Had I written that sentence thirty years ago I would have built a concise word picture of my point of view or the framework or structure of my thought. "Pattern", it seems to me, is the better word in this electronic age, and it is in and therefore of the electronic age that I make this presentation today. To do so we must leave behind us Newton's mechanical world with its frames of reference, mechanical structures and so structures

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of thought in some degree. We must also leave behind us the Newtonian-mechanical-industrial man and thus the social order that was born of that environment in which man of that era lived. Our new environment is electronic and its meaning we must seek to understand.

There was a time in the distant past when man's environment was natural, that of nature, the same environment as that of all the animals of the fields and woods. Man then made tools, learned to hunt with weapons, tilled fields, domesticated animals, dug canals and irrigated his land, built huts, houses, towns and cities and boats and ships to sail rivers, bays, seas and finally oceans. He began separating himself from nature and the natural environment. With his technology he created his environment and thus began that interplay between man and his self-created environment, and this in turn, with the decreasing but continuing interaction between man and his natural world, produced his culture - a culture ever changing with the changes of his environment. Man's culture changed slowly until the innovations which arose from western man's Renaissance, a period of time more often associated with the past that went before, when it actually is more truly a birth into the future.

Today our new electronic environment brings man a new perception. It calls all his senses into the act of perceiving and amplifies them. In Newton's mechanical world, man extended his body through the tools he made. In today's electronic world, man has extended his nervous system and this new extension not only gives him a new environment, a new mastery, but throws light upon that nervous system and so brings him new insights.

We have before us, I think, the possibility of a new cultural level in the world if man takes the fullest possible advantage of his new insights and uses, directs and controls this new environment; that is, if he interacts with it intelligently. We have the possibility of a new cultural level available to all the masses of mankind. Our Newtonian world was essentially a western world - a world of developed and not developing nations, a world of comfortable conformity. One may pause to ask how successful will be the current transfer of the Newtonian-technological-culture to the new countries of a world in which there does not exist this comfortable conformity.

This new electronic world into which these new countries have been thrust is the planet, and this is the distinguishing fact of this generation. This is the new dimension of man's problem and the problem must now be seen and heard through the perception with which he is endowed. Old words take on new meanings. Patterns, images, messages; words popularized through television seem now best to convey the sense of motion characteristic of electronics, of the human brain and so increasingly of human thought, action and interaction. We search for stability today, and stability is a word out of economics, in a world of human molecular dancing. We have not yet realized that the dance with all its speed of motion is permanently with us - in fact, has always been with us though the tempo is now greatly accelerated as we know more, see more, and hear more. Hopefully, it will one day be expressed in more meaningful patterns, patterns as meaningful as the slow moving rituals of man's past which were once satisfying and still give satisfaction to many. Einstein's relativity is a useful theory to explain the electronic energy of thought as well as other forms of energy.

Electronics brings with it new information, new knowledge and new communications media. It is additive to the old scholarship, it will transform the old scholarship which we in the west so greatly admire and which has contributed so much to our culture and understanding. Electronics, as I have said, has extended man's nervous system. It has, among other things, given him television which focuses on him, not he on it as on a stage play. In so doing it involves him, makes him a participant in all he hears or sees. It can give us the story of George Washington or Nehru and all who view participate and learn. This is learning, this is involvement, and in time will bring the involvement of all men in the affairs of all men. Man can now "see" and "hear" and "feel" beyond the power of his senses as he gains an instrumented mastery of the electromagnetic spectrum. He now examines not the sky but the heavens which we call space these days, he examines not the crust but the bowels of the earth, not the waves but the depths of the sea, and he looks into himself not just as a physically functioning organism but as a system of energy.

Gutenberg gave us scholarship, I think. Modern scholarship as we know it in the west could not have existed without the printed page. The printed page made possible the vast increase in and distribution of man's knowledge. This printed page gave him a new perception following on our middle ages. It was in itself a way of seeing man and his world. It gave him conceptions that were linear, Newtonian by which to live. This knowledge of man was collected, assimilated and distributed by an elite of scholars. Now neither knowledge nor the information that is its structure is any longer the proud possession of an elite. Electronics with its all embracing distributive powers have incorporated the masses into society and culture.

At MIT there is a computer and into that computer several hundred scientists have programmed information. Each of those scientists has access to all the stored information. The computer has been contacted and its symbols manipulated from Paris. When will such a memory bank be open to all mankind?

I heard recently of a small girl who was discussing television with her father. He spoke of the picture on the tube formed by dots and he spoke separately of the voice itself. The girl who has grown up with television told her father that the dots themselves are the voice. She understands the electronic world and the future for she has grasped the oneness, the unity of the audiovisual world.

This new knowledge of which I speak is in a sense the electronic bits of the old knowledge, which, when programmed, give us new patterns and a new perception. The old categories of thought which we have known so long are going. We have new fields for thought and study. We now have mathematical biology, bio-chemistry and dozens of other combinations. We have sociologists who seem to be writing history, chemists who are city planners, political scientists working in demography and neurologists concerned with electronics. In time all knowledge, all man's thought and information can be related with endless variations through the magic of electronics. Today we seem greatly concerned with the problems of the future. In time, we will be equally involved in viewing the past in depth.

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The electronic world today has involved you who read this and I who wrote it in the same cultural problem even though my culture and that of some of you who read is considered to be strikingly different. When I have finished this paper, I will give it to my secretary. She will make one perfect copy on an electric typewriter. There is no longer any need for her to make carbon copies, to cut a stencil, or to make a reproduceable plate. When she has that perfect copy, she will become her own printer, or as easily I can be the printer. Down the hall from my office is an electronic device that will quickly make as many copies of these pages as I may want. Thus, if I chose, I can immediately send copies of the manuscript to all my friends around the world and have one for each of you. I can thus speedily, easily and inexpensively involve in this pattern of my ideas an endless number of persons. I can also, if I wish and can afford the cost, send my words around the world by teletype knowing that at the other end of the line my words will appear in typed form. One day it will be possible to feed such words as mine into a computer and so preserve them for ready reference for the use of any person anywhere in the world that has access by teletype to that computer. It is now possible to flash such words as these to Europe by television and it will not be long before all the world is linked in such a system. That will, of course, make it possible for men in Washington, Delhi, Moscow, Peiping and other places to conduct a true dialogue; that is, audio-visual, which it seems to me is the way the world goes today.

I will not, of course, do any of these things with this paper, but that which I will do also represents something new in the world. I will bundle this manuscript off to Unesco where it may, along with others, be printed in English and other languages and given distribution throughout the world. Unesco itself is a sign of the times. In contrast to all of this, think of the books in the past that have been written and sold in but a few hundred copies. Then there was Aristotle who was almost forgotten a generation or two after his death and who influenced our western world only in the middle ages. Cultures changed slowly, new knowledge was slowly acquired and its circulation, distribution took centuries and not minutes.

Returning to the present from this viewing of the future from what in parts exists today, I must add that modern transportation has made it possible for me as for many others to take part in the dialogue in many countries. I fly to such places as New Delhi as easily and with less bother than as a boy I took an exciting trip by train from Boston to San Francisco or went from New York to London by steamship. Where I have traveled hundreds of thousands of miles, my father traveled but a few thousands and my grandsons may well travel in space-ships and rockets.

Man's nervous system is now extended and the nervous systems of all men are being linked. His consciousness has been expanded. He sees more, hears more, and learns more and all of this more complexly. Life and the inter-relationships of man are no longer simple. We speak of change almost as though it were something new as we are experiencing it in ways so difficult to adjust to. This change - which is the order of the day - is it not the whole history of man? All that really changes is man's knowledge which brings him a new perception, an enlarged insight into himself and the world, and so a new base for action. Hasn't this been going on since that day so long ago when man's brain reached its present proportions? The new information from the natural environment interacting with man that brought that

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brain into being may have been an increase in the supply of oxygen in the atmosphere the scientists now tell us. This is a far cry from our 19th century Bishop Usher who told us that man and the world was created in the 4th millenium B.C. Perhaps one might think of the whole history of life on earth as an exchange of information between life in all its manifold forms and its environment. When man's environment changes, the inputs and outputs of his electronic brain change and so all relationships and all ratios change. Man's brain, his nervous system have remained constant since men could be thought of as man, but his perception has changed at various rates of speed over the milleniums. Change is, perhaps, determined by the volume and velocity of new knowledge and new information moving into a social organization. The lion cannot generate, receive or utilize new information either biologically or sociologically. Today new information is constantly generated by man and moves around the planet with the speed of electrons. We are bombarded and react and know not yet the meaning of the bombardment or the reaction. The dialogue becomes worldwide and from it there is no escape for any man.

With all of this unchallengeable evidence of lightning change in constant motion in this electronic world, is it not obvious that we need to update and upgrade our work in the cultural field? I think that we are the victims of some obsolescence. We need new patterns for our thought and new theory for efforts.

We speak of culture, cultural relations, cultural co-operation and cultural exchange. It is not yet 100 years since we began using the word culture in England and the United States as it is now defined by cultural anthropologists. It is only since the last war, I believe, that we have actively promoted cultural co-operation and cultural exchange. Our experience in this organized work is, therefore, very short in time though men have been culturally relating themselves since they possessed cultures.

The word culture has received a precise scientific definition over the years. It has been emptied of its older derivative meaning of cultivation and perfection. It has lost its quality of the ideal. Kluckhohn defines it as a "set of attributes and products of human societies and therewith of mankind, which are extrasomatic and transmissible by mechanism other than biological heredity, and are as essentially lacking in sub-human species as it is aggregated in societies".

I, of course, have no quarrel with Professor Kluckhohn or with our friends the anthropologists. Their contribution to the discovery of man as cultural man has been great. Their work was begun in the last half of the 19th century when great advances were being made in the physical and biological sciences. The early anthropologists followed on the work of Darwin and were contemporaries of the early great modern historians and particularly of Dilthey who first elaborated a relativistic view of man's history.

It seems to me that our task is a more creative one than that taken by the cultural anthropologist. I think the older definition of culture as cultivation may better suit our work. The scientific cultural anthropologist studies man and interprets his cultures. We are concerned with more than that, it appears to me. If we are interested in man's cultural relations as

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an avenue to peace, then our problem is the building of culture, the building of a new culture, the building of the culture of man's planet as it is evolving out of the worldwide interaction of man to his common electronic environment. Worldwide co-operation in the task of building a new culture common to all mankind would surely be a great contribution toward peace.

Each man is an end product and carries within him the whole biological history of life on this planet. Man's brain may be but the replica of the whole universe. Perhaps in the world there are men who, during a lifetime, live through all the cultural levels that man has known. Surely there are men on earth who are prepared today for a new and higher culture from which war may be eliminated, men who have mastered the volume and velocity of the information flow and penetrated its meaning for mankind. It is an obvious fact that today various groups of men live at different cultural levels and that between the levels communication is difficult or impossible. No information can be exchanged. Though man cannot expect any further biological advance or change save as it may come through science, he can and must anticipate and plan new stages of sociological, cultural advance and adaptation. It well may be asked what happens to man's culture if he succeeds in giving himself a life span of two hundred years, of five hundred years? And what happens if he succeeds in controlling the genetic pattern of life so that he can reproduce the types he selects? Science fiction? Possibly, but within the realm of probability.

I sometimes think that it is extraordinary that man is the only species that has maintained his biological power of communication as he has spread around the earth. American, Indian, African, French, Polynesian, Japanese, Chinese and Eskimo can mate and all can produce equally perfect offspring who can grow up to learn each other's languages and so communicate culturally as well as in physical ways. Neurologists tell us that one day we may be able to communicate symbols from brain to brain without the benefit of words or even electronic aids. No other animal, fish, fowl or reptile managed to circle the globe without dividing into separate families with no power of communication. At an early date they become closed systems. What was the pattern in man's nervous system that made this possible for him?

This is a new age of discovery or, and perhaps better, a new age of experimentation. Man continues to explore himself and his universe but with a new self-consciousness. Perhaps the expression "man has burst his neolithic chains" is a valid one. It is all tentative, experimental, a kind of dialogue. The old absolutes are missing and new information moves with a new velocity, increased volume and so with countless variables. This movement, this opening of communication to and from all the masses in the world is shaking us to the depths of our being - is forcing us to recognize the opportunities that lie ahead in the birth of a new culture.

Casting back into history and considering the slow development of the process of communication, in my mind's eye I carry a picture of the small ships of Henry, the Navigator, pushing ever southward along the east coasts of Africa. Voyages of discovery into the unknown. Ultimately those ships reached the Orient. Columbus sailed west to find the east and Magellan's ship circumnavigated the world. Thus began what historians have called the expansion of Europe. Is that a good name for it as we look back from the year 1966?

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By the year 1500 man had encircled the earth. He lived on every continent and all the greater and most of the lesser islands. These groups of men lived in isolation, the one from the other. There was no communication between most of them. There was little, indeed, to communicate. He could exchange, and did, women, trade goods, objects of art, geographic information, some, but not much, technology and religious ideas, all of which had basic common elements. He did not know enough about himself and his world to have much information to exchange. That exchange lay in the future. Man the world over was much the same. Each group looked into its small place in time and space from which he escaped through supernatural ideas.

The European, bored with the middle ages, broke out and fashioned himself a compass and ships and so sailed the world. He brought back information and he distributed and circulated information and, thus, he began the process of bringing all men into communication, the one with the other. His communication media was a ship - a great advance over ox, camel, horse and wagon. This was a stage in man's development. He begins to adapt himself to a world system consciously understood and used. For this advance he paid a high price in wars and bloodshed and suffering and death by sea and land. The fact remains that he did begin to communicate around the world. He did take a further step through and with technology in making the planet his. The step brought with it colonies and empires; new institutional means through which man communicated with man at various levels and with varying informational exchanges. Was there not something more here than adventure, the search for wealth and pleasure in power and conquest? Were not men then, as now, activated by forces beyond their comprehension, even as they sought to understand and explain those forces? East, west, north and south all were caught up in the flow of goods, institutions, people and ideas. All must ultimately profit for though it was the European who began the linking of all men based on his new knowledge and his search for more information, all men participated in some degree. We of the west must not think of that work quite so egocentrically and those of the east must not think of themselves so exclusively as the receivers and the conquered and the colonized. Time is making an enormous adjustment. All the ratios of relationships change.

Until five hundred years ago all the world was much alike. There was a great silence between the tribes and nations. There was, as I have noted, little exchange of information and precious little from our point of view to exchange. What movement there was took place over centuries and more. Greek art moved to the east. Afghan rituals moved to the west. Indian art moved eastward. Buddhist monks went north from India into China and then on to Japan. The American Indian and the Eskimo traveled over the centuries from Asia to North and South America. The Polynesian left the coast of China and settled islands in the Pacific. Japanese fishermen, it is likely, were blown to the coast of Peru four thousand years ago. The large areas of communication were defined by the great religions of the world, as they are in part defined to this day. The great religions purported to be universally applicable and to be concerned with the whole life of man.

The new information, the new technology of the west opened new lines of communication around the world. It also closed or foreclosed some lines of communication. It placed the west in a position of advantage and gave it a sense of superiority over those who did not possess the technology which

was producing Europe's wealth. The progress of Europe in science and technology, this vast accumulation of new information also cut Europe off from a true intercourse with the east for in some degree it temporarily, over five hundred years, separated man from man's true purposes. Europe and America became industrialized and as the factory system grew and as men increasingly became narrowly concerned with production, we lost sight of man as man; man as a whole man. For us man became economic man, man the producer, partial man. As this process proceeded, we lost sight of religious man, sacramental man who still lived on in the east until he, too, was touched by the industrial requirements of the modern world. And then, and underlying much of this, was the fact that much of the new technology was made possible by the printing press. This gave Europe a new perception based on the printed page. Western partial man could not communicate on many matters with Eastern tribal-oral-religious-whole-man. Western man, through his science, became complex. Eastern man maintained his age-old simplicity.

Man is an informational-processing-symbol-manipulating animal. He has now circled the planet as natural man and again as increasingly self-conscious man and we are all now in some degree of communication. This communication linkage is no longer dependent on trains and ships and cables, but is a nearly instantaneous linkage through the invisible beams that criss and cross the sky. We do not believe in miracles but we live one. All men are now involved. Man's advance sociologically has depended on his capacity to generate, receive and utilize new information. Thanks to technology, to the audio-visual characteristics of the new electronic communication media, which is man's extended nervous system, all men are now open to receiving the new information as they never were nor could be through older media. Thus, from the vantage point, the relative point of diverse cultures, all men now can contend with and understand and be absorbed by this new environment.

A monarchical system of government was certainly one in which a limited number of persons processed information other than the information of the ritual of the seasons and the rituals of religion. For the monarch there was limited new information. Monarchy itself could not exist in the modern world in the face of the new volume of information. Dictatorships are closed informational systems or directed and controlled informational systems. Feudalism which is thought of as a system of land tenure, and rightly so, can also be thought of as an informational system with different levels of society processing different information for varied purposes. Feudalism can no longer exist in the face of the new velocity and new volume of information. Old social organizations inevitably become revolutionary as they cannot accommodate or stand up to the strains of the new inputs. Democracy is the most open-ended informational, generating and receiving system man has yet devised. What will the new culture be when all the world has become an open-ended informational, generating and receiving system?

Electronics has changed much. Man is now more than ever man's problem. Man has more to learn of himself and the means to learn than he has yet learned. West and East approach an equality. Electronics is the great decentralizer and leveler, or, if you will, the upgrader of mankind to a

common plane. The western literate printed world adjusts to the new audio-visual electronic world. This audio-visual world is the very human world of Africa and the Orient. We of the west must again learn to use all of our senses. We relearn the forms of communication of the tribe as we use our electronic systems. We can now more fully communicate with the east. Western man becomes whole again as he ceases to be the industrial producer and, through electronics and the change it has brought in his perception, he can enter into a dialogue with the East on man's problems. Empires and colonies that brought us together are now of the past and we can enter into the true dialogue which is the life of man and its meaning. This we can explore scientifically-universally as once smaller groups conducted their religious universal dialogues about man and his nature. When all the variables have been run through the computer, perhaps the separate dialogues will look much the same. Certainly their purpose is. No man needs longer to be excommunicated from any other man. One technology, one environment, instantaneous and continuous communication.

All men now can share the common experience. The sharing of the common experience, the capacity to communicate with a large or small group lies at the heart of tribe, family, nation and religion. These are all systems of communication. We now have a universal system of communication to be used in elaborating man's new culture.

I think that our cultural problem within different states and nations and peoples and between them is the same. This new culture which is being built will transcend the present geographic boundaries of nation states and may well eliminate or transform the nation state. Cultural co-operation between states, that is governments, therefore presents difficulties. The nation state works in its own interest and cannot consciously be a party to a new culture that may bring with it the end of the very concept of nation state as we have known it, but cultural co-operation of man to man raises no such difficulties. I suggest that the time is at hand when we can begin thinking of man's culture and the transformations that are upon us in terms of a planetary informational system that must be kept open and used for all man's benefit. This will not necessarily lead to the man of one culture understanding another and different culture and so hopefully keeping the peace. It will, however, lead to a common shared experience out of which we can build a new culture which both can understand. Our problem is not cultural understanding as we have used that word. Though I speak of a common shared experience as a fact of the future, man has had over the centuries a common experience which he has not yet shared sufficiently or fully.

Wandering through a great hall containing three thousand young people between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years, having spent as American Field Service students a year away from their homes living with an American family, and then living on a bus trip for three weeks with many others of different nationalities who had had the same experience, the replies to my question as to what has most impressed them from this experience is astonishingly the same: "The discovery that all people, no matter how different are their cultures and the states from which they come, are basically the same human beings".

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I suggest that the kind of understanding we really need will only come through sorting out those common elements in all our cultures which can be shared, and which will provide the worldwide base for interaction with the new environment that will give man his new and higher culture. This means study and scholarship of a higher order.

It means cultural co-operation and cultural exchange of a far more purposeful kind than we have had in the past. It means perhaps less conscious or self-conscious action by Governments and more instinctive interaction and reaction of man to man. It means that peace through cultural co-operation can only come within our reach by the preparation of new programs with a new insight into the problems of man and his planet.