

Building Civilized Societies with Better Cultures

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Abstract—In this paper, I put forward the concept of culture space, and highlight its three principal axes for referencing values which are the ultimate causes behind all social and individual activities as well as behaviors. And, these three references for gauging values are: people-centric reference for values, family-centric reference for values, and customer-centric reference for values. The culture space is the domain in which all minds evolve and develop. All the differences of behaviors among people, populations and countries are reflected by the paths or trajectories of their minds in the culture space.

Index Terms—Mind, culture, behavior, value, creation, destruction

TODAY, we are living in a modern world with abundance of goods and facilities. However, we are still facing huge challenges of all kinds of conflicts and violence among countries as well as people of different races. Even within a same population, there are many different types of visible and invisible violence or abuses.

I. WHY CULTURES MATTER?

Then, the fundamental questions are:

- 1) How to make people co-exist peacefully within the common physical space on Earth?
- 2) How to make people co-exist peacefully within the common time space forever?

Today's science and technology have reached a level, which enables us to invent powerful tools and machines. However, it seems that these tools and machines do not really help us diminish conflicts and violence on Earth, but sometimes to make them even worse. Then, what is missing endeavor in our journey of making societies to be more civilized?

In order to find the answer, it is worth re-examining the behaviors of people from the angle of right settings of peoples minds and cultures.

II. WHAT IS THE CULTURE SPACE?

A human being is a complex system which is a combination of sub-systems such as biological system, chemical system, mechanical system, electrical system, control system, information system, motion systems and knowledge system, etc. In addition, a human being lives within a population which is also a super complex system on its own. Therefore, the fundamental question will be:

- 1) What is the key element which dictates the group behaviors in a society or within a population?
- 2) What is the key element which dictates the individual behaviors of a human being living in a society?

In layman terms, everyone knows that the answers are the brains of a society and human beings. In control engineering terms, everyone knows that it is the controller which dictates the behaviors of a system under control.

These answers are too superficial. And, we should continue to raise the following two questions:

- 1) What is the core module inside the brain of a society, which influences the operations?
- 2) What is the core module inside the brain of a human being, which influences the behaviors?

Clearly, the ultimate answers are: a) the mind of a society and b) the mind of a human being. The mind of a society is a complex system, which has been extensively studied under the social sciences of economics, finance, history, literature, arts, music, psychology, cognition, and so on. The aspects of culture in a society have been considered in a fragmented way. But, there is no systematic study of culture at the level of a stand-alone science.

Like some others [2,3,4], we also believe that the culture is the foundation for the study of the behaviors and activities in a society. Moreover, culture forms the basis for us to better understand the principles underlying economics, finance, history, literature, arts, music, psychology, cognition, etc. Especially, our studies show that culture provides three references to guide the formations of value systems employed in other social sciences. And, these three fundamental references for values are:

- 1) People-centric reference for values: Many countries are largely built on the value systems which are people-centric. People in such countries believe that we are all sisters and brothers, and that we should have equal rights and opportunities.
- 2) Family-centric reference for values: Some countries are largely built on the value systems which are family-centric. It is interesting to take note that in some countries, a nation simply means a nation-like family. Hence, people in such countries live in multiple hierarchies which are under the control of heads of families in a broad sense.
- 3) Customer-centric reference for values: Commercial world is largely dominated by the value systems which are customer-centric. The engine of creating wealth is the mechanism of exchange. And, the long-lasting activities of exchange are only possible with the customer-centric mindset.

At individual level, we can also consider the existence of the culture of a human being. And, the culture of a human being also has three references for values, which are people-centric reference due to the education received from religions, family-centric reference due to the doctrine learnt from Confucianism or the education received from family and consumer sciences, and customer-centric reference due to experiences learnt from markets.

Although the mind of a human being is less complicated than the mind of a society, it has the executive power which

could generate two conflicting outcomes such as creation and destruction. With the notion of the culture of a human being, it will be easier for us to explain why creation and destruction occur. It is straightforward to point out that:

- 1) Creative energy of an individual will be released as long as the culture of a human being aligns largely with the culture of a society, a population or a country.
- 2) Destructive behaviors will appear if the culture of a human being mismatches with the culture of a society, a population or a country.

Now, it is clear that the construction of civilization depends on the construction of culture. The next question will be how to build more civilized societies through the effort of evolving the culture in right ways.

III. HOW TO DESIGN BETTER CULTURES

Good design in accordance with universal principles is the root of all great works. As mentioned above, culture has three basic references for values. Interestingly, these three references define the so-called culture space. Within the culture space, we can find the location of a society's culture, a population's culture, or even a country's culture. Most importantly, the location of a society's culture, a population's culture, or even a country's culture in the culture space is not a single point, but a path or trajectory over a time span in history. And, a path or trajectory in the culture space defines the so-called path or trajectory of civilization followed by a society, a population or a country. As a result, the culture space is an important tool which could guide policy-makers to build a more civilized society or country.

Similarly, the culture of a human being has its own path or trajectory in the culture space. Although each individual has the freedom to choose his or her own path or trajectory in the culture space, the harmony or non-conflicting situation is only possible if the effort of an individual is to evolve his or her path or trajectory in the culture space so as to make it to be as close as possible to the path or trajectory of a society's culture or a country's culture. And, the individual effort could not solely depend on the individual's own resources or abilities. A society or a country must help such individual's effort through the mechanism of education.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this short article, I advocate that culture is a science which defines another important space for us to study and

analyze the journey of civilization by societies, populations, countries and individuals. Also, I emphasize that culture serves as the foundation for the construction of other social sciences including politics. On the other hand, the development of better cultures largely depends on education which embraces either the process of learning assisted by teaching or the process of teaching aimed at inspiring learning. And, the first primary goal of education must be to help individuals to align his or her culture with that of a society or a country because absolute freedom means absolute conflict. Moreover, this first primary goal of education must be put on top of other goals such as nurturing the technical skills and technical knowledge of individuals. From the perspective of culture, we can gain a better understanding about the differences among the holistic educational systems (which include the teaching of values advocated by religions, family sciences, social sciences and natural sciences) in the world, and to guide the policy-makers to design better educational systems in future. Finally, creating better cultures is more important than inventing better tools and machines. Such task could be accomplished by a design process in a better way with a clearer direction, instead of letting an evolutionary process to gradually evolve the culture in all possible directions.

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