



The Age of Culture

D. Paul Schafer

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"This is an exciting and visionary book, showing why an age of culture is necessary and how it can be achieved." -- Biserka Cvjeticanin, Director, Culturelink/Institute for Development and International Relations.

"Paul Schafer believes that we are standing at the threshold of a new era of global development and human affairs that should be driven by a holistic cultural perspective." -- Robert Palmer, former Director of Democratic Governance, Culture, and Diversity at the Council of Europe.

"Paul Schafer's vision of the centrality of culture to our lives, to societal development, and to the future of civilization has shaped policy development at the local, national, and international levels over the past four decades. His message cannot be ignored." -- Joyce Zemans, York University.

In this ground-breaking work, cultural scholar D. Paul Schafer draws on a lifetime of research and reflection to consider the implications of what he calls the cultural world view and the promise it holds for a more humane and fulfilling future.

Arguing that the current world system is overly dominated by economic ways of thinking about and acting within the world, Schafer considers what would be the prerequisites for a cultural age, the ways in which a cultural age would transform patterns of human life, and the advances in human fulfilment that the adoption of such an age and its associated values would bring.

Since the first international conference on cultural policy was held in Venice in 1970, culture has grown to be of increasing interest and importance to nations and individuals alike. Delegates at the 2013 International Congress on Culture in Hangzhou, China, declared cultural issues to be central to sustainable development, with a later session initiated by the UN's General Assembly placing culture squarely at the centre of the sustainability agenda.

In less than fifty years, culture has moved from being seen as a peripheral activity in the world to being utterly indispensable to the achievement of vital social and developmental goals. It is now apparent that culture (and by this is meant culture in the broadest sense, as the sum of human experience and achievement) is intimately connected to all the world's most pressing problems -- and may hold the solution to many of them.

Such problems are legion in today's world: climate change, glaring inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income, resource depletion, and conflicts between different nations, ethnic groups, and individuals. None of these problems can be addressed effectively, much less resolved, without recourse to the holistic, all-encompassing perspective that culture provides. Narrow views no longer suffice, and the status quo is unacceptable.

Paul Schafer has spent much of his life wrestling with these problems and demonstrating why culture has a crucial role to play in coming to grips with them. We ignore the book's timely, urgent, yet ultimately hopeful message at our peril.

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