



THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the dialectical relationship between culture and civilization as an essential framework for understanding social development. Although culture and civilization are frequently treated as synonymous concepts, the study argues that they represent distinct yet interdependent dimensions of human society. Furthermore, the article reveals that their interaction is inherently dialectical, involving both mutual reinforcement and internal contradiction. While culture provides ethical orientation and creative impetus for civilizational advancement, civilization reshapes cultural forms through modernization and globalization. Consequently, sustainable development depends on maintaining a dynamic balance between cultural continuity and civilizational innovation. The findings highlight that ignoring this dialectical unity may lead either to cultural erosion or to civilizational dehumanization.

The relationship between culture and civilization has long occupied a central position in philosophical, sociological, and cultural studies. Although these concepts are often used interchangeably in everyday discourse, scholarly analysis demonstrates that culture and civilization represent distinct yet interdependent phenomena. Therefore, their interaction should be understood not as a static correlation but rather as a dialectical relationship, characterized by mutual influence, contradiction, and continuous development.

To begin with, culture is commonly understood as the totality of symbolic meanings, values, beliefs, traditions, and creative expressions that shape human consciousness and social behavior. In contrast, civilization is usually associated with material progress, institutional structures, technological advancement, and the organizational frameworks of society. However, despite this apparent distinction, culture and civilization cannot exist independently. On the contrary, they emerge, evolve, and transform through constant interaction.

From a historical perspective, scholars have approached this relationship in different ways. For instance, Edward B. Tylor viewed culture as a “complex whole” encompassing knowledge, art, morals, law, and customs, thereby emphasizing its foundational role in social development [5]. Similarly, Arnold J. Toynbee argued that civilizations arise as responses to

cultural and environmental challenges, which implies that cultural creativity precedes and conditions civilizational growth. Thus, civilization may be interpreted as the external manifestation of internal cultural dynamics [4].

Nevertheless, this relationship is not linear or harmonious at all times. Rather, it is dialectical in nature. On the one hand, culture generates civilization by providing ethical norms, intellectual frameworks, and aesthetic ideals that guide technological and institutional development. On the other hand, civilization reshapes culture by introducing new modes of communication, production, and social interaction. Consequently, while civilization expands the possibilities of cultural expression, it simultaneously imposes constraints that may lead to cultural standardization or even erosion.

Moreover, this dialectical tension becomes especially evident in periods of rapid technological change. For example, industrialization and digitalization have significantly enhanced civilizational efficiency and global connectivity. However, at the same time, they have challenged traditional cultural forms, local languages, and indigenous value systems. As a result, culture is compelled either to adapt to new civilizational conditions or to resist them in order to preserve its authenticity. In this sense, contradiction functions as a driving force of cultural evolution rather than a sign of decline.

Furthermore, the dialectical unity of culture and civilization can be examined through the lens of values. Civilization tends to prioritize rationality, efficiency, and functionality, whereas culture emphasizes meaning, identity, and moral orientation. When civilizational progress advances without cultural grounding, it risks becoming dehumanized. Conversely, when culture resists civilizational change entirely, it may lead to stagnation. Therefore, sustainable social development requires a balance in which civilization serves cultural values rather than undermines them [2].

In addition, globalization has intensified the dialectical relationship between culture and civilization on a global scale. While global civilization promotes universal standards, technologies, and institutions, local cultures strive to maintain their uniqueness and symbolic heritage. Consequently, contemporary societies increasingly experience a dual process: cultural homogenization on the surface and cultural differentiation beneath it. This paradox further confirms the dialectical nature of the relationship, as unity and diversity coexist within the same civilizational framework.

Importantly, the dialectical connection between culture and civilization also manifests in language, art, education, and social norms. Language, for instance, reflects cultural identity while simultaneously adapting to civilizational demands such as scientific terminology and digital communication. Similarly, education functions as a mediator, transmitting cultural values through civilizational institutions. Thus, neither culture nor civilization can claim absolute primacy; instead, their interaction produces new social realities.

In conclusion, the relationship between culture and civilization should be understood as a dynamic dialectical process rather than a hierarchical or oppositional one. Culture provides civilization with meaning, direction, and ethical depth, whereas civilization offers culture the material conditions for expansion and renewal. Therefore, their interaction is characterized by mutual dependence, tension, and transformation. Recognizing this dialectical relationship

is essential for understanding contemporary social change and for ensuring that civilizational progress remains culturally and humanistically grounded.

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