

# Correspondence between society and culture as form and content

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## ABSTRACT

The article puts forward and substantiates the idea that society and culture are related to each other as to form and content. The authors consider the phenomenon of interdependent relations of culture and society in the context of various sociological theories. The unity and difference between culture and society is the unity and difference between content and form. Society is a form of social life, and culture is its content. Society is the joint existence of people, built over their being. Culture determines the whole meaning and content of social life since it embodies a person's richness of social relations. It is a culture that saturates formal sociality with specific real inner content. Proceeding from this, the article substantiates the need to distinguish socio-historical and cultural-historical processes. The natural-historical side reflects the need for history, and its regularity cultural-historical side reflects freedom. Understanding of culture underlies the understanding of society and its history.

**Keywords:** Humanity, Form, Content, Natural-historical process, Cultural-historical process

## Introduction

The range of human culture is extremely wide. The entire human world is fully incorporated into the world of culture. The world of a human is, in essence, the world of culture. The culture can represent a person itself. All cultural objects are an objectified person, his objectified forces and energy. Accordingly, crisis processes in culture inevitably lead to a crisis of human existence, and vice versa: the crisis of a person also determines the crisis of a culture, which is confirmed, in particular, by such trends of modern civilization as technologization, globalization, multiculturalism [1, 2]. Cultural objects reflect what a person is

and what a person acts. A person appears just the same as the culture does.

But the world of a man is at the same time the world of sociality, the world of human society. A person lives in society, and his existence is impossible without it. Man is as much a social being as he is a cultural one. The human world is the world of sociality, just like it is the world of culture. But how does the world of sociality and culture relate to each other? What does society act for culture, and what does culture act for society? And what do both these phenomena have taken together act as for a person? Which side of the human world expresses the phenomenon of culture, and which is sociality?

Usually, these issues are not sanctified in the philosophical and cultural literature, except that the unity and indissolubility of social life and culture are emphasized. In some cases, it is noted that culture is a certain aspect of social life. Meanwhile, these questions are philosophically fundamental [3]. Based on their answers, one can understand a lot in the human world and, in particular, in public life.

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## Materials and Methods

It is indisputable that society and culture form an indissoluble unity. There is no culture outside of society, and society can neither function nor develop [4].

However, delve deeper into the understanding of this unity. To reveal its essence, it is necessary to consider the interrelation of these categories and the phenomena expressed by them through the prism of such categories as "form" and "content." The point is that society and culture relate to each other precisely as form and content. The unity and difference between culture and society is the unity and difference between content and form. Society is a form of social life, and culture is its content. As form and content presuppose each other, society and culture are impossible without each other. Society is always a form of common cooperated being of people. It does not consist of a simple sum of individuals. Society is some form of joint existence of people, built over their being. Society is supra-individual and therefore abstract and formal concerning individuals. And it would remain and always remains an abstract form, a formal abstract being of people, if the latter do not join and are not included in it through culture [5].

Society, a social being, is the external world of a person. No matter how meaningful and rich a society may be, it remains an external factor, an external condition of a person's life. It cannot penetrate the inner world of a person because it is not in its power. The strength of society lies precisely in ensuring the external circumstances of life. The inner life of a person is dominated by culture.

Culture is primarily internal, intimate, and then external. It is the unity of the inner and outer sides of life with the domination of the inner. If it is reduced to the outer side, it turns into a "show-off" being and always looks dramatic and comical. All cultural needs come from the inner world, from the heart, not just from the mind. The outer side of cultural life is always just an expression of the corresponding depth of inner, spiritual life, a life that is hidden and inaccessible to an ignorant eye. A man of culture gets on not only with external life but also with internal life. «... Social being is precisely the dual unity ... of the inner spiritual life with its external embodiment», according to S. Frank, «conciliarity» and «external community» [6].

It is a culture that saturates formal sociality with precise real inner content. Through culture, a person has socialized as a member of society. Without culture, he is just an alienated element of society. He is alienated from society, and society becomes alien to him [7]. Culture determines the whole meaning and content of social life. Without culture, a person does not understand his life in society, does not understand the values of society and social life, does not understand why and what he lives in society for, what it gives him. Without culture, a person takes the path of denying social life, but with culture – the path of its protector, guardian, and creator. For a socialized person, the value of social life is the value of culture itself. He is in the world of culture, and society, in his understanding, is a condition for preserving and enriching this world of culture.

## Results and Discussion

### *Society and culture*

In the Marxist philosophical and sociological literature, which puts the social factor above all and therefore is distinguished by sociocentrism, it is customary to talk about the social conditioning of culture. According to Marxism, the social conditions, the society itself conditionate the culture. This statement can be accepted if only we proceed because culture is a product of society, as the Marxists believe. But suppose we proceed because culture is the content of social life. In this case, it is necessary to recognize that culture is not socially conditioned; culture is not determined by society.

On the contrary, culture determines society; society is conditioned by culture. It is in such a way because society is an external formal factor, external conditions, and culture itself is the internal content of social life. First, the content always determines the form and not vice versa. Of course, the form also affects the content, but this is secondary [8]. The development of culture serves as the basis for social progress, not vice versa. The progress of culture always pulls the progress of social life as a whole [9]. Everything always happens within the framework of culture, and the social form adjusts to the cultural content. The orchestra's performance is primarily determined by the talent of the musicians included in it, and only then depends on how they sit during the concert.

As our contemporaries believe, culture, not economics or politics (and not only those who recognize themselves as Marxists), is the foundation of positive social development because economics and politics are only the surfaces of culture. The basis of economic progress is again economic culture. The basis of progress in the sphere of politics is political culture [10]. The basis of social progress is the culture of society as a whole, the culture of social life. At the heart of society, progress is not an abstract social system but the person himself, the living tissue of human relations. The state of social life depends first of all on the person. Social life is primarily the life of a person. Therefore, the progress and development of society are associated with the man himself, with the human basis of society. It is this human basis of society that reflects culture. The culture is the same social being but refracted through the individual.

Culture embodies the richness of human relationships in social life, all the content of a human being, all the heights, and all the depths of the human world. As P. Sorokin wrote, «the structure of sociocultural interaction ... has three aspects that are inseparable from each other: 1) personality as a subject of interaction; 2) society as a set of interacting individuals with its sociocultural relations and processes and 3) culture as a set of meanings, values and norms owned by interacting persons, and a set of carriers that objectify, socialize and reveal these meanings» [11]. Culture is an open book of all the various human essential forces. Culture is an expression of the very human content of social life not of its abstract form. As noted by V.M. Mezhuiev, «culture, therefore, is the entire world where we discover, find

ourselves, which contains the conditions and necessary prerequisites of our true humanity, i.e., which is always and in everything social» [12]. Culture is a measure of what is human in a man, an indicator of the development of a person who embodies the image and resemblance of the higher spiritual world. Culture shows the extent to which a person has opened the spirit in himself, spiritualized his world, and humanized his spirit. The essence of culture is development of a man as a spiritual being and development of the spirit in human existence. It combines spirituality and humanity as two inseparable sides of a human being.

Through a culture, all the goals of social life are realized. As A. Toynbee noted, culture is «the soul, blood, lymph, the essence of civilization. As soon as a civilization loses its inner strength of cultural development, it immediately begins to absorb elements of an alien culture. Cultural influence turns out to be much more beneficial and useful than borrowing in economic or political terms» [13]. Culture is the content of society; therefore, the meaning of social life, primarily spiritual, cannot be realized outside of culture. Society alone (and, accordingly, social life alone) has neither purpose nor meaning. Culture contains them. Public life only carries good meanings and positive functions by filling it with cultural content. Take culture away from society, losing its purpose and meaning. Therefore, social life outside of culture ultimately becomes a negative phenomenon and absurdity. A negative phenomenon only arises when culture is excluded from the social form. And if there is no culture in public life, it turns into nonsense [14]. Such a social life, having lost its goal, having lost the orientation of the movement, begins to consider itself as the goal, and accordingly, to serve itself. The government then serves only itself to support itself, the economy - for the sake of the economy, politics - for the sake of the political process, art - for the sake of art, etc. But the goals of society and its individual aspects lie outside, above society. Therefore, such a society loses the good sense of its existence and becomes absurd.

Since all the good meanings of society are realized through culture, we can say that society's meaning and social life are in the culture itself. The meaning and purpose of all social life are to preserve and develop culture. By fulfilling this task, social life will achieve all its goals and not care about anything else. If culture develops, there will be progress in social development. Moreover, there is simply no other way to achieve social progress. Therefore, N. A. Berdyaev writes: «In public life, spiritual primacy belongs to culture. The goals of society are realized not in politics or economics but culture. It is the high-quality level of culture that measures the value and quality of the public» [15]. Indeed, economic activity and management of society can fulfill their functions thanks to culture only. Culture is the foundation of society, power, and economy, and not vice versa. Society as a whole, and the economy, particularly, finds itself in culture, but not vice versa.

The primary function of culture is to educate a person, change, and transform his nature. Living in a society, a person cannot but constantly change himself, and, in other words, educates and brings up himself. Otherwise, he will be rejected by public life.

And culture is what helps education to be carried out. Social education is the assimilation of cultural norms by a person. Both in the broad and narrow sense of the word, education is always carried out based on culture. Strictly speaking, upbringing introduces the culture, an entry into it. Education always acts as the cultivation of a person. Culture, forming the human content of social life, acts as an educational phenomenon and a phenomenon that educates, through which social and educational activities are realized.

Mastering the culture, a person changes his worldview and behavior in society. Thanks to the introduction to a culture, a person tries to behave with dignity among other people, does not allow himself to dissolve, takes care of himself, and does not give free rein to his excessive emotions. It is a culture that pushes a person into society and helps them seem better. Culture, educating a person in society, opens up the ways for him to overcome alienation from spiritual life. In his natural state, a man is alienated from the spiritual world. The being of a person does not come into contact with the spiritual world. Culture reconciles and unites them [16]. In culture, a person's existence meets the spiritual principle and finds its abode in it. A person overcomes his biological nature and becomes a spiritual being through culture. In the world of culture, a man is no longer just a natural and earthly being but a being that has risen above his earthly existence. As J. Huizinga said, a sign of culture is dominance over one's nature.

Culture spiritualizes the earthly life of a person and makes it a part of the universal life of the spiritual world, a manifestation of the universal spiritual life. Culture, spiritualizing a person, does not deprive him of his earthly life but subordinates to the spiritual principle. Thus, culture appears as a transformed, spiritualized earthly life of man. Suppose the biological nature of a person resembles uncultivated land, on which nothing grows, and somewhere a wild forest grows with different, useful, and useless plants, where good plants are mixed with weeds. In that case, the culture is like cultivated land on which a well-kept garden is located and where only good plants grow. It is no coincidence that in agricultural practice, well-selected domestic varieties of plants are called in the Russian language a «culture.»

### *Natural-historical and cultural-historical processes*

Based on the division of society and culture as a form and a content, it seems productive to single out the socio-historical and cultural-historical processes. At the same time, the natural-historical side reflects the need for history its regularity, while the cultural-historical side reflects freedom. In a single history, two stories are singled out: natural history associated with determinism, history of causality, and the history of culture, which pulls the human community out of the chain of cause-and-effect relationships and displays its world of freedom. The first is associated with the lower nature of a man and is associated with the natural needs, with what is called the first necessity, the second - with the higher nature of the human race. They can only overlap, but they do not match. And it depends on the person

what story his life will flow in, what story he will experience, living the years allotted to his life [17].

However, this implies only the culture with a noble origin and corresponds to its spiritual essence. If we bear in mind only this kind of culture, this concept can be unconditionally accepted. However, culture is heterogeneous in its content. There are two kinds of cultures: a spiritualized culture and a simple human culture. You could say «a culture of freedom» and «a culture of necessity.» And continuing this logic, it is necessary to correct the concept mentioned above. History and society have a natural and cultural side, but a naturally needful and spiritually free culture. There is nothing in the human world outside of culture [18]. Therefore, culture itself is subdivided into naturally needful and free ones. The natural-historical process is also saturated with culture, like the one called cultural-historical. But the whole question is just what kind of culture it will be.

Moreover, it is not natural and cultural history that does not coincide and diverge, but naturally needful culture and culture of freedom. They only have separate points of contact. The naturally needful culture is linked with society, forming its content and the culture of freedom; the spiritual culture exists and is created sovereignly, forming a supra-social sphere of being.

Of course, these different cultures interact with each other, but there is no direct determination subordination to one another. These two types of culture form two stories, or two sides, in one single story. As for the naturally needful culture is the culture that acts as the content of social life. And the interaction of the naturally needful culture and natural society forms the basis of natural history. Natural history presupposes a natural society and culture, with the unconditional dominance of cultural content over social form.

Although there are no relations of subordination between the naturally needful culture and the culture of free spirituality, and they exist relatively sovereignly from each other, one factor establishes a hierarchy between them already in human existence itself, within the framework of natural history. This is the question of the origins of these cultures. They are independent in their existence, but the question of the origin of a certain cultural phenomenon rigidly and unambiguously subordinates one type of culture to another. And here, the culture of necessity submits to the culture of freedom because it draws strength, develops, and enriches itself in the culture of freedom. And the culture of necessity lowers the achievements of the culture of freedom to its level, makes it accessible to society, and spreads it in breadth. The culture of freedom is always directed upward; the culture of necessity is breadth. But in breadth, culture cannot develop at the top. Height requires both the highest concentration and the highest integrity. Therefore, the movement of the culture of necessity in breadth is inevitably accompanied by a downward movement. Just as the height of freedom is inaccessible to necessity, the sublimity of the culture of freedom is inaccessible to the culture of necessity. All foundations, all sources of culture in general, are contained in the culture of freedom. Only in it are the sources of self-movement and self-development of culture, since it is the only true culture. The culture of necessity does not

have its sources of development. The culture of freedom only nurtures it. The culture of freedom is a living spring, while the culture of necessity only drinks water from this source. Without freedom, there cannot be any culture in general, and there cannot be the entire human world.

Besides, sovereignty and independence of the culture of freedom and the culture of necessity disappear when they are projected onto certain living people. Their independence exists at the level of social life, when human society is considered abstractly, outside of specific individuals. A concrete person cannot perceive them in isolation. Both of them are perceived by him as united, although they exist separately. The culture of necessity, which exists relatively independently, is poured into his external culture at the level of a living person. The culture of freedom becomes his inner culture and forms the basis of his own culture. At the individual level, these two types of culture complement each other and cannot remain isolated. The culture of freedom, mastered by a person, provides a basis for his culture of necessity, which he learns from social life. Without a necessary inner culture of freedom, a person cannot live even within the culture of necessity since he constantly needs the spirit of freedom. Freedom is an essential characteristic of a person; therefore, he cannot simply live without the spirit of freedom.

The culture of freedom forms in a person a commonly called «humanity» phenomenon. No culture of necessity can form humanity since humanity is always associated with freedom. You cannot be human out of need, out of necessity. Humanity is an intrinsic property of a person, depending on the goodwill of a person and not on external factors. A person becomes human himself; he cannot be forced to be human. It is humanity that is the highest characteristic of a person. The most difficult thing is to be and remain human, live and act not formally correct, but humanly. According to the law, doing the right thing without breaking it, having a high position in society, and becoming financially secure is much easier than remaining human. Humanity measures a person's inner freedom; it is a person's inner relation to the world. Just as human society cannot exist without humanity, so the culture of necessity always functions based on the culture of freedom.

## Conclusion

Thus, culture is the main category of social life. The meaning of social life as a whole and the meanings of its aspects are revealed through it. Culture holds the key to unraveling all the mysteries of history. One can comprehend the historical process only by understanding culture. Culture underlies the understanding of both society and the history of society [19]. As a tool for understanding history, culture reveals «conditions of truth that do not lie in the logic of research but precede it» [20].

It is impossible to understand history if either the economic factor or the idea is absolute. The essence of society is embodied in culture, and therefore it is possible to understand its essence and history by understanding culture only. Culture smoothly includes the economic side of social life and the world of social

consciousness. The role of culture cannot be exaggerated in public life because culture itself is absolute. Understanding the economy and social ideas is necessary to proceed from culture. It is not the economy that determines the culture, but vice versa. To understand the development of the economy, you need to understand the culture and not the other way around. The economy is a human activity, and culture is a person himself. Therefore, it is possible only to understand society and its history based on culture.

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