



THE GREAT CULTURAL AWAKENING

D. PAUL SCHAFFER

Other Books by D. Paul Schafer

Culture: Beacon of the Future (1998)

*Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an
Economic Age to a Cultural Age* (2008)

The Age of Culture (2014)

The Secrets of Culture (2015)

Celebrating Canadian Creativity (2016)

Will This Be Canada's Century? (2017)

The Cultural Personality (2018)

*The True North: How Canadian Creativity
Changed the World* (2019)

The Arts: Gateway to a Fulfilling Life and Cultural Age
(2020)

*The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic
Whole* (2022)

THE GREAT CULTURAL AWAKENING

**Key to an Equitable, Sustainable,
and Harmonious Age**

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Preface

This is a book about the great cultural awakening that is taking place in the world—an awakening that is opening the doors to a cultural age.

I have been thinking about such an awakening ever since I was very young. It all began when my grade six teacher asked me to give a presentation to my classmates at school. After a great deal of searching, I decided to talk about Marco Polo and his trip to China many centuries ago. I was fascinated by his journey along the historic Silk Road through what are now Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as well as his experiences in China and elsewhere in Asia, including the several missions to India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Burma (now Myanmar) that he carried out as an emissary of the great Kublai Khan. Over the course of his travels, Marco Polo met many different kinds of people, ate many different types of foods, and enjoyed superb banquets and festivities in the courts of Kublai Khan and other rulers. The terrain he covered, the many different tribes, clans, and peoples he encountered along the way, the numerous places he visited—all these captivated me immensely, as I believe they have many other people. The very names of the places he visited—Constantinople, Trebizond, Kerman, Bukhara, Tabriz, Samarkand, Kashgar, Lanzhou, Suzhou, Khanbaliq, and many others—made such a profound impression on me that I have never forgotten them.

I couldn't help thinking that the world would be a much better place if everyone could experience the kind of cultural awakening that Marco Polo did. I knew even then that I would have to write about the importance of a cultural awakening at some point in my life, although I didn't know how or when.

It took me the better part of thirty years to reach a position where I could think about this task in earnest. When I read somewhere that Gandhi had said, "Be the change you want in the world," I knew the time had come to learn as much as I could about culture and cultures and not just think or dream about them. Nevertheless, it took me

another twenty-five years before I had broadened and deepened my knowledge of culture and cultures sufficiently to write about them. I published a number of books on culture and cultures in the years to follow, including *Culture: Beacon of the Future, Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age, The Age of Culture, The Secrets of Culture, The Arts: Gateway to a Fulfilling Life and Cultural Age, The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic Whole*, and now this book. My deep interest in culture also led to creating the World Culture Project to commemorate the United Nations and UNESCO World Decade for Cultural Development from 1988 to 1997. This Project was founded in 1989 and I still direct it today.

As I delved more deeply into the realm of culture, I came to the conclusion that culture and cultures in the all-inclusive, holistic sense as “complex wholes” and “total ways of life”—the way many anthropologists, sociologists, biologists, cultural historians, and others see them—are the real foundations of human existence. I believe that by understanding culture in this specific sense we come to understand the nature of the world at its core and in its fundamental essence, encompassing not only human beings but other species and the world as a whole. I also believe that the great cultural awakening going on at present will open the doors to the creation and development of a cultural age. Such an age will bring with it more peace, harmony, happiness, sustainability, well-being, and equality, as well as making it possible for all people to enjoy a reasonable standard of living and decent quality of life without straining the globe’s resources, ecosystems, and finite carrying capacity to the breaking point.

In order to achieve goals as ambitious and worthwhile as these and enjoy all the benefits that can be derived from them, it is necessary to view the world and everything in it from a cultural perspective. As well, we must consider in detail why culture and cultures should evolve from the ground up and not only the top down if a cultural age is to be realized.

The urgency of this task is reinforced by even the most cursory survey of the difficulties, threats, dangers, and challenges facing humanity and the world that have emerged in recent years, whether it is the steady intensification of climate change, the ongoing COVID-19

pandemic, Russia's war on Ukraine, or, as I write the final words in this book, the outbreak of the calamitous conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Middle East.

In this book, I first read the signs and set the stage in considering the importance of culture. This leads to an examination of the vast constellation of cultures that exist in the world. We then move progressively “up the ladder” in practical terms, from the cultures of individuals, children, parents, homes, families, communities, and schools to those of towns, cities, regions, countries, the entire human world, and those of other species. This is followed by an assessment of several foundational requirements, such as the cultural interpretation of history, the centrality of cultural development and policy, ways of opening the doors to a cultural age, strategies to harmonize crucial relationships and cultivate spirituality and compassion, the prerequisites for living in a cultural age, and, finally, an exploration of why it is so essential to make the transition from the present economic age to a future cultural age.

I would like to express my gratitude to many people who have made valuable contributions to my work over many years. First and foremost, I would like to thank my family—my wife Nancy and daughters Charlene and Susan—for their commitment to my research and writing and always being there for me when this was needed the most. I also wish to thank Réal Bédard for his full support of my work and help with my World Culture Project website and computer requirements. My gratitude goes out to many longtime friends as well, most notably Jack Fobes, Guy Métraux, Prem Kirpal, Mochtar Lubis, Federico Mayor, Ervin Laszlo, Nadarajh Manickam, Joy MacFadyen, Máté Kovács, André Fortier, John Hobday, Max Wyman, Eleonora Barbieri Masini, Biserka Cvjetičanin, Gao Xian, Hans Köchler, Sheila Jans, Walter Pitman, Peter Mousaferiadis, George Simons, Herman Greene, Engelbert Ruoss, Alexander Schieffer, Frank Pasquill, Barry Witkin, Fred Matern, Joyce Zemans, Peter Sever, and many others. I owe a special debt of thanks to several recent friends and colleagues whom I have had the privilege of working closely with more recently, especially Galyna Shevchenko, Mark Riva, Diane Dodd, Susan Magsamen, Ashfaq Ishaq, Brian Holihan, Mira Sartika, Olimpia Niglio, Rana P.B. Singh, Meg Pier, Thomas Legrand, Carmine

Marinucci, and Benno Werlen. Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my friend, editor, and publisher David Stover. Without his support, encouragement, and commitment to publishing many of the books I have written over the last decade, this book and many others would not exist today. I am particularly grateful to him for all his help, kindness, and support during my work on the subjects of culture, cultures, and creativity, as well as in my efforts to make a strong case for a cultural age.

D. Paul Schafer
Markham, Canada
2023

ADVANCE PRAISE FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE GREAT CULTURAL AWAKENING

This book is amazing. Paul Schafer diligently chronicles the evolution of the cultural realm, imagining a world where harmony, sustainability, and well-being for all people, countries, and species are the ultimate goal. —Mira Sartika, founder and director, Chakra Cultural Foundation, Indonesia

Schafer guides us with erudition, authority, and conviction toward a clear and positive vision of a cultural age. His inexhaustible range of references, depth of insight and analysis, and trust in what he terms “the great cultural awakening” make this book essential reading. —Max Wyman, author of *The Compassionate Imagination*, Canada

A much needed, comprehensive, and insightful map to find our way out of the global crisis and make the transition to a cultural age. Schafer, an acknowledged expert in the field, offers an enlightening perspective on how to develop culture and cultures in theory and practice, drawing on a wealth of inspiring references and compelling examples. —Thomas Legrand, author of *Politics of Being*, France

Another masterpiece! I read the whole book in only two sittings and enjoyed every page. —Diane Dodd, co-founder and president, International Institute for Gastronomy, Culture, Arts, and Tourism, Spain

Perceiving, conceiving, and projecting the idea of culture for over five decades, Paul Schafer ... succeeds in depicting the changing nature of culture and [how] its systemic and complex nature as a whole or way of life will help to open the doors to a cultural age. —Olimpia Niglio, president, RWYC International, University of Pavia, Italy

A beacon of light in the emergence of the age of culture. —Rana P.B. Singh, Banaras Hindu University, India

Schafer highlights the transformative power of culture in reshaping our world, emphasizing its pivotal role in addressing global challenges and ensuring the future well-being of humanity and the environment. —Susan Magsamen, executive director, International Arts + Mind Lab, Johns Hopkins University, United States

While some may believe that “politics is everything” and “it’s the economy, stupid,” this lucid and insightful book makes you realize why culture matters far more.... [Schafer] explains cultural development from the ground up and addresses the crucial requirements for entering a cultural age and enabling it to flourish. —Ashfaq Ishaq, Ph.D., founder and chair, International Child Art Foundation, United States



D. Paul Schafer has worked in the cultural field for more than fifty years as an author, advisor, educator, and administrator. He was assistant director of the Ontario Arts Council from 1967 to 1970, taught arts administration and cultural policy at York University and the University of Toronto, has undertaken many projects for UNESCO, and is founder and director of the World Culture Project (www.worldcultureproject.org). He has written many books on culture, including *Culture: Beacon of the Future*, *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age*, *The Age of Culture*, *The Arts: Gateway to a Fulfilling Life and Cultural Age*, and, more recently, *The World as Culture: Cultivation of the Soul to the Cosmic Whole*. He lives in Markham, Ontario, Canada.

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