



Abstract



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Legacy for the 21st century: a vision of a cultural personality in the year 2020

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In this presentation, I attempt to promote better understanding of culture by presenting a vision of a cultural personality in the year of 2020. The year is just a reference for a point in the future. It will indicate a Japanese in his or her mid thirties since I am attempting to visualize what cultural personality, thoughts and feelings, the present college students will have in the next 15 years.

To achieve this goal, I will use the expression, 'meme.' The meme was originally coined by Oxford biologist, Richard Dawkins in an attempt to think about how cultural experiences were transferred from one generation to the other as if transmitted like genes from parents to children. Dr. Dawkins invented the meme as a cultural counterpart to a biological gene and defined it as 'a unit of cultural transmission,' I will use it as a cluster of reason and emotion-oriented judgment because I think a conventional expression like value does not quite capture the true sense of culture. I will use it in the sense that the wholeness of nine phases of human experiences such as *Homo sapiens, childhood, gender, age, family, occupation, schooling, local community, nation, world and universe (spiritual awareness)* which have been preserved through their transmission from one generation to the other.

How will the generations of the past and present, influence the thoughts and feelings of coming generations? Who decides what to be transferred? This inheritance is called, in this paper, memes as units of cultural transmission.

Before I present my definition of culture, I assume that we commonly understand culture within the framework of thoughts of these greats to mention a few: 1) Clyde Kluckhohn's diverse definition of culture (*Mirror for Man*, 1949); 2) Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973); 3) Raymond Willimas' *Culture is Ordinary* (1958).

It is significant that the concept of culture has transformed from a view that describes high-culture, or the culture of the highest classes, to a view that sees the ways of ordinary people. I consider it significant to see the transition from a high-culture view to the one that culture is ordinary.

Now, my idea of culture goes as follows: Culture is a broad and complicated reference to human experiences. While I attempt to make references to significant

cultural emotions, *I argue for the complexity of the concept of culture using a multimedia complexity model of memes as units of cultural transmission: The model refers to the basic structure of our existence.*

Human beings are not only an isolated form of life on this planet; we are Homo sapiens, a part of the earth's natural ecology. We grow up in a particular environment on this planet while we develop our personal associations with the fauna, flora, food-chain, and human relations of the surrounding environment.

From the moment we are born we begin learning from our parents what is required to survive in our mother culture. Reason (here I mean an ability to conceptualize) can most properly be developed through formal education. In the process of growing up, some very basic experiences, mother-and-child relations in particular, can greatly influence the child to internalize a cluster of emotional values. Thus, a grown-up will have accumulated enough ability to conceptualize reason-oriented and emotion-oriented values associated with his/her situation. S/he is a being that can combine the mixture of both reason-oriented values and emotion-based judgments. S/he is the self that has internalized such mechanism and s/he is therefore called *a cultural personality*.

Cultural personalities share elements such as the phase of Homo sapiens, childhood, gender, age, family, vocation that supports the family, schooling, local community, nation, world and universe (spiritual awareness). These nine phases, going beyond personal characteristics such as nationality, ethnic background and faith, are commonly shared among people.

The concept of the cultural personality presents a new direction in cultural studies, in contrast to a conventional cultural discussion that limits the subject and takes it up from a confined point of view. The new direction will rather be looking at human situations, including the ecological context. In other words, situations or issues will be considered on the basis of reason-oriented and emotion-oriented evaluation. *Intelligence and physiology are inseparable and integrated facets of the whole.*

When one discusses cultural issues, one would not normally hold this view that people share common elements, though. Rather, one emphasizes differences instead of the elements that can commonly be shared among people. Diversity must be expounded from a more organic culture-as-ecology point of view.

The view I present here will hopefully help the young people to prepare themselves to see what they have inherited and what should be transmitted to future generations to provide a better future for them.