

The Role of the Social Environment in the Development of Youth Culture

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Abstract: This article addresses the state of youth education and its current issues in today's rapidly developing world, with numerous references to the sayings and experiences of great scholars and thinkers from the past.

Keywords: youth education, culture, education, social situation, oriental scientists, spiritual environment, needs, family, society, state.

In the 21st century, the socio-cultural environment and the cultural context in which human activity develops play a pivotal role in the socialization of youth. In today's dynamic society, young people, due to their mobility, access to information, and cognitive flexibility, have become the primary critics, creators, disseminators, and consumers of culture. In this context, the statement of German philosopher Karl Jaspers, "Whoever wins over the youth possesses the future," holds particular significance.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, reflecting on the upbringing of the younger generation, emphasizes:

"One pressing issue that constantly concerns us is the moral character of our youth—their behavior and, in essence, their worldview. Today's world is changing rapidly, and young people are the first to feel these changes. Let the youth meet the demands of their time. Yet, they must not lose their sense of identity. The call to remember who we are, and the great heritage we possess, should always resonate in their hearts, urging them to stay true to their essence. How can we achieve this? Only through education—education, and yet more education. Today, we have grown accustomed to blaming schools for all our problems. But what about the mahalla (community), the family, and society at large? It is time to understand the true meaning of the saying: 'One child is the responsibility of seven mahallas.' It is time to live by this understanding."

Indeed, throughout history, one of society's most essential tasks has been to nurture the younger generation, shaping them into mature and accomplished individuals. As Abdulla Avloni stated in his work "The Turkic Garden or Morality":

"When creating humanity, God endowed people with talent and the ability to discern good from evil, benefit from harm, white from black. However, these abilities can only be developed through education."

Avloni highlights the importance of an organic connection between education and upbringing: "Though there is a subtle distinction between lessons and upbringing, they are inseparable. One supports the other, like soul and body."

Thus, the role of education and upbringing in fostering a culture among youth cannot be overstated in any society. This raises the question: "How were societies formed in ancient times, and how did they cultivate individuals?" The great Greek philosopher Plato, in his work "The Laws," remarked: "Every small community was led by elders and had its own customs rooted in diverse lifestyles. Thanks to different leaders and mentors, people learned various beliefs, acquired good behavior from

more virtuous educators, and courage from the brave. They then passed these values to their children and grandchildren. In this way, they integrated into larger societies governed by their own laws."

It is widely acknowledged that the more consciously a person works in their struggle for life, the greater their achievements. Successes achieved through effort and labor give rise to customs, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. During these times, primitive beliefs connected to supernatural forces also emerged, including totemism, animism, magic, fetishism, and shamanism, which were prevalent in the era of early human societies.

The great thinker Al-Farabi expanded upon Plato's views on the origins of society in his work "The Views of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City":

"By nature, every person requires many things—clothing, food, shelter, books, teachers, friends—to fulfill their needs and achieve perfection. No individual can produce everything they need on their own; therefore, they depend on the assistance of others engaged in various professions. Similarly, others face the same situation. To satisfy their needs and reach fulfillment, people must come together in groups and societies."

In such a society, each person, according to their nature, talents, and abilities, learns various professions and strives daily to perfect their craft or art. Consequently, people from diverse nations and religions come together to form different types of communities. These communities can be categorized as either complete or incomplete.

Complete societies are divided into three types: large, medium, and small. A large society encompasses humanity as a whole, spanning the entire globe. A medium society is comprised of a nation or people. A small society refers to the community of a specific city.

Incomplete societies include village, mahalla (neighborhood), and family communities. The family is the smallest unit of society. The mahalla and the village are linked to the city, with villages supporting urban residents by supplying goods. The mahalla, in turn, is a subdivision of the city, a street is part of the mahalla, and a household or courtyard is a unit of the street. A city is part of a nation, and nations collectively form the global community, encompassing various countries. The well-known principle of "human progress and achievement" echoes the contemporary notion of achieving a high level of culture. Al-Farabi's profound insights into the structure of society, despite the passage of centuries, remain relevant even today.

From ancient times, faith and religion have played a significant role in the education and upbringing of youth. German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, in his work "Ideas on the Philosophy of Mankind," emphasizes that "nations acquired science and culture only through religion, and this culture initially emerged as simple religious tradition." In Judaism, one of the earliest monotheistic religions, the core principle of raising children is *chesed* (humanity), with an emphasis on the personal example set by the educator. Traditionally, the responsibility for a child's upbringing falls on the father, and it is deemed inappropriate to show anger or punish children in the presence of others.

The sacred text of Zoroastrianism, the Avesta—written approximately 3,000 years ago—stands as a monumental and unique treasure, urging humanity toward perfection and progress. This text embodies high moral standards and philosophical thought tied to noble qualities such as purity, goodwill, sanctity, reverence for the earth, and understanding of one's homeland. It inspires a spiritual strength that motivates individuals to engage in the battle between good and evil, ultimately ensuring the triumph of virtue.

"From the world of thoughts, words, and deeds, I choose good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. I turn away from all evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds," the Avesta declares. These moral exhortations and spiritual appeals awaken feelings of compassion and kindness within individuals. A

person dedicates their life to these virtuous principles, rejecting all harmful thoughts, desires, and actions, and striving for self-improvement.

The Avesta also emphasizes that “true and noble education is the science of truth and wisdom.” The text urges all people to seek knowledge:

“At the beginning and end of the day, at the beginning and end of the night, one must learn, delve into thought and knowledge, and ultimately reach such heights as to praise the divine with good words, thereby increasing one’s wisdom. In the middle of the day and the night, one should embrace joy, rest in an enchanted embrace, and then make an effort to study all that has been passed down by the sages of the past.”

Indeed, all people, and especially the youth, aspire to gain knowledge, and through this pursuit move closer to perfection, laying the groundwork for cultural advancement.

The Avesta also warns students to exercise caution in choosing their teachers: “O people who have traveled from afar with the intention to learn! Pay attention and remember this: ‘A bad teacher must never degrade your life; do not let yourself be misled by a tongue corrupted by evil.’”

Indeed, people, especially the youth, must carefully consider the opinions, words, and actions of their educators. They should immediately reject the guidance of those whose influence is malicious.

Confucianism, which emerged in ancient China, also plays a vital role in broadening human consciousness and fostering youth culture. This philosophy, founded by Confucius (Kong Fuzi, 551–479 BCE), gradually spread across the country. Young men from various regions, eager for knowledge, flocked to Confucius. Over time, his school gained significant influence in ancient China, with many of his disciples attaining prominent positions in the kingdoms of the era. Renowned as a teacher and mentor to youth, Confucius became China’s first great educator. His reforms began to take effect after his death, and centuries later, as he envisioned, when rulers became wise, officials loyal, and the people prosperous, his teachings became an integral part of Chinese life.

Confucius developed the concept of the “ideal person” (junzi). In his view, such a person must embody two essential qualities: humanity and a sense of responsibility, particularly towards one’s ancestors. An ideal person, above all, should be reliable and loyal. They must serve their ruler, father, and elders selflessly, always striving for self-improvement.

Another key tenet of Confucianism is the doctrine of xiao (filial piety). This principle emphasizes that individuals must honor their parents and family. Confucius asserted that there is nothing more important than xiao for a person. He stated: “Xiao and ti (respect for elders) are the foundation of humanity.”* When asked what xiao entails and how children should serve their parents, Confucius replied: “You must care for your parents. After all, people take care of their dogs and horses. If a person shows no respect for their parents, how are they any different from animals?”

In Confucianism, the concepts of humanity (ren), proper conduct (li), and virtue (de) hold significant importance. According to the concept of ren, individuals must respect their elders and those in high positions while remaining loyal to their emperor. Observance of li fosters virtuous behavior, societal development, and justice. Fulfilling one’s duties leads to personal growth and self-perfection. Central to this philosophy are the principles: “To achieve what you desire, help others achieve it” and “Do not wish upon others what you do not wish for yourself.”

Confucius is traditionally credited with authoring the texts *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*. These works advocate five simple yet profound virtues as prerequisites for harmonious coexistence: wisdom, humanity, loyalty, respect for elders, and courage. These virtues emphasize honesty towards oneself and others, qualities achievable only by ideal individuals.

In ancient Greek society, the concept of paideia held significant prominence. German scholar Werner Jaeger, in his book *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, argues that “Homer left an indelible mark on Greek education” through his epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Homer is regarded as the first educator in ancient Greece, with Hesiod recognized as the second. Jaeger notes:

"If Homer emphasizes that the foundation of education lies in cultivating the aristocratic ideal—rooted in the deliberate nurturing of heroic and ruling virtues—Hesiod reveals the value of labor as the second major source of culture."

Hesiod's poetry highlights the importance of conscious self-cultivation in everyday life, devoid of aristocratic traits. Similarly, the works of tragedians such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, as well as the comedies of Aristophanes, prioritize questions of education and upbringing. During this era, the theater emerged as a center of culture, spirituality, enlightenment, and moral instruction. Socrates believed that humans are born to learn through paideia. This concept allows individuals to “fill their inner world with the highest good and achieve perfection. It provides an opportunity to discover truth and attain spiritual freedom.”

Aristotle, in his work *Laws*, reflects on education, stating:

"At present, we are discussing the merits or shortcomings of individual education. Some claim that certain individuals are well-educated while others are not, even labeling those trained solely in trade or seafaring as educated. However, we understand education not as these things but as that which drives a person to become a virtuous citizen who submits to justice, guiding them toward goodness from childhood."

Aristotle asserted that education rooted in wealth, intellect, and justice represents the highest form of education, while anything devoid of these qualities is unworthy of the name. On educating the youth, he remarked that anyone striving for excellence in any field must begin their endeavors from an early age, sometimes through play, sometimes in earnest. He wrote:

"For instance, someone who wishes to become a good farmer or builder must, in their childhood games, engage in working the land or constructing toy houses. Teachers should provide each child with small tools resembling real ones. In this way, children are trained in essential skills: builders learn to use measuring instruments, soldiers practice horsemanship, and so on. All of this should take place as play. Children must be guided toward the activities in which they are meant to excel, and their interests should align with their games. In our view, the foundation of knowledge lies in education."

Another great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, emphasized the importance of youth education for society and the state. In his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argued: "The strength of a state depends on the number of virtuous (noble, honest, courageous, hardworking, and strong) children in its families. A nation with well-educated youth—spiritually, morally, and physically robust, beautiful, and agile—becomes stronger and enhances its prestige."

Regarding spiritual beauty, Aristotle considered modesty and courage the greatest virtues in young men. He claimed that the presence of virtuous (*phronimos*) boys and girls brings happiness to both the state and family heads. For girls, the most admirable qualities are physical beauty, modesty, industriousness, and nobility. Aristotle stressed that truly educated individuals are those endowed with knowledge and wisdom.

In 340 BCE, Aristotle was invited by King Philip II to the Macedonian capital, Pella, to tutor the 13-year-old Alexander the Great. Aristotle educated Alexander in the spirit of heroism, inspired by Homer's *Iliad*. Later, Alexander remarked: "I respect Aristotle as my father because my father gave me life, but Aristotle taught me the values of life."

Indeed, thanks to his teachers and their paideia-based system of education, Alexander became one of history's greatest figures.

In conclusion, ancient Greek society's high regard for education, culture, physical development, science, and art was instrumental in shaping one of the world's most remarkable civilizations.

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