

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:  
A PRACTICAL COURSE

# 实用跨文化交流教程

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浙江工业大学重点教材建设项目资助

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## 前 言

跨文化交际就是指不同国度、不同种族、不同文化背景下的人们借助于某种符号来传递信息、交流思想和感情并产生相应行为。这种不同文化间的交流源远流长,但是真正将文化交流上升到理论高度并发展成“跨文化交际学”,还只是近五十多年的事情。

美国是个移民国家,来自世界各个角落的移民都强调并维护自己的文化,因而形成了美国独特的多元文化格局。1959年,以美国人类学家 Edward T. Hall 为代表的一些学者在前人研究的基础上提出了“跨文化交际”的理论,他的著作《无声的语言》(*The Silent Language*, Anchor Books, 1959)因而也成为这一学科的奠基之作。1974年,跨文化教育训练与研究学会(SIETAR, Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research)在美国正式成立,学者们也开始把研究重点从对比和分析不同文化交际中的差异(Cross-cultural Communication)转向研究跨文化交际中动态变化的过程(Intercultural Communication)。理论的突破促进了该学科快速发展,跨文化交际学所涉及的内容越来越多,方法也日臻完善。如今跨文化交际学已发展成为一门被全世界学者们充分重视的集人类学、语言学、心理学、传播学、社会学等为一体的综合性学科。

我国研究跨文化交际学起步较晚。20世纪80年代,我国开始实行改革开放政策。一方面,海外归来的学者不断地把西方有关跨文化交际理论、研究方法、教学实践等引进到中国;另一方面,国内学者对语言学和文化的研究更趋于人文化,在学习与借鉴西方的同时结合我国的实际情况,从不同角度探索与发展我国跨文化交际的学科外延。

虽然跨文化交际学在我国的历史不算长,但是其发展速度相当快。1995年在哈尔滨召开了我国第一届跨文化交际研讨会,并成立了全国性的跨文化交际研究组织——中国跨文化交际研究会。1997年在北京又召开了第二届研讨会。参与跨文化交际研究的学者涉及外语界、对外汉语界、语言学界和心理学界等等。尽管学者们研究的角度有所不同,但是他们都对跨文化交际学在我国的确立和发展做出了自己的贡献。迄今为止,他们在学术杂志上发表的论文已达数千篇,专著也已有数十部。

纵观世界,“全球化”的浪潮已势不可当,跨文化交际正成为越来越普遍的现实。不同国家、不同文化、不同宗教、不同信仰的人们能否在“地球村”中和谐相处,共同解决人类生存的一系列问题,在很大程度上取决于我们能否有效地进行交往并达到相互理解、相互信任、相互促进。

作为外语教师,我们在长期的教学实践中已经充分认识到,跨文化交际能力的培养是外语教育的重要内容,外语教学必须与文化教育相结合。帮助学生拓宽视野,提高他



们对异文化的宽容性和敏感度，这是我们义不容辞的责任。正是基于此目的，我们花费几年时间精心编写了《实用跨文化交流教程》，以满足广大师生及各方面读者的需要。

本书包括十二个单元，每个单元分四个部分：

第一部分为导入，对本单元涉及的话题作一个概括介绍。

第二部分提供一篇课内阅读、两篇课外阅读文章。课内阅读文章后列有词汇表、难句解释，并且编有与课文相关的练习（阅读理解题、讨论题等）。两篇课外阅读文章后也有难句翻译、阅读理解练习。注释中还将包括文化信息的部分以黑体突出，以方便读者查看文化信息点。

第三部分设计了与话题相关的课堂活动，包括讨论、案例分析、角色扮演等，形式多样，内容翔实，如在课堂开展活动一定能活跃气氛，大大提高学生学习语言和文化的兴趣和效率。

第四部分提供背景知识，信息量大，知识面广，是学生自学或教师备课的有力帮手。

此外，每个单元后，编者还列出了相关网址和参考书目，可以为感兴趣的读者拓展学习提供方便。

本书既可作为高校跨文化交际学的教材，也可作为海外留学生的生活学习指南，它集语言学习和文化教育于一体，生动多样的案例分析等活动与练习更增添了它的实用性和独特性。本书还配有教学课件，有需要的读者将来可到浙江大学出版社网站查询下载。

本书由李果红任主编，郭亚莉、姚冬莲任副主编，刘绍龙教授、楼荷英教授审稿。各章节的编写人员为：价值观（章以华、张小霞、葛红霞），非语言交际（戴剑娥、刘百军、申屠玉君），海外求学（沈英、郭亚莉、邱明明），教育（何君、沈英、何艾莉），社会现象（许晓洁、吴娟红、方昉），社交礼仪（王晓霞、张小霞、方昉），社会福利（吴娟红、许晓洁、王晓霞），工作（刘百军、申屠玉君、戴剑娥），饮食（楼红燕、郑维南、章以华），影视（郭亚莉、何君、楼红燕），日常生活活动（郭亚莉、沈瑛、葛红霞），旅游与交通（郑维南、何艾莉、吴娟红、邱明明）。李昌祖、王健倩、赵宇、谭静等老师对本书编写的前期工作给予了大力支持与帮助，在此我们表示诚挚的谢意。书中的错误和不当之处，敬请广大同仁与读者指正。希望此书能为提高读者的跨文化交流的实用能力做出我们的一份贡献。

编 者

2011年元月于杭州

## Introduction

In *Broadening the Horizon of Linguistic Politeness*, Prof. Robin Lakoff says, "During the early twentieth century, anthropologists began to objectively examine the differences in interpersonal behavior among diverse cultures, noting that what one group considered polite or proper, another might find bizarre or rude. While all cultures seem to possess notions of what was appropriate or polite in specific contexts, there was no universal agreement about which behaviors fell under that rubric."

In the past, most people lived in a limited area, without any contact with people outside their own area. Today the world is undergoing rapid change. Trade barriers are collapsing around the globe, and companies are marketing their products and/or services worldwide. Consequently, business procedures and company structures are adapting to these challenges, too, and intercultural communication becomes more and more frequent. To meet these global challenges, according to M. Byram and many other scholars, language instruction needs to expand beyond verbal communication to include intercultural competence in its curriculum, because intercultural competence is the key to successful intercultural communication. It is said that studying a second language without learning the culture is like learning how to drive by studying a drivers' manual only and never getting behind the steering wheel. That's to say, acquiring a second language demands more than learning new words and another system of grammar. It involves developing sensitivity to aspects of language that are usually not taught in language textbooks, for instance, permissible degree, directness in speech, forms of politeness, etc.

Globalization enables people to get in touch with people of other cultural backgrounds very easily. The whole world has become one market open to all. Marshall McLuhan went a step further, calling today's world a global village "because of the rapid expansion of worldwide communication networks." These global communication networks allow individuals in industrialized nations to communicate with one another almost instantaneously. Parallel to the telecommunications revolution, global travel has become reality, too, allowing one to meet virtually anyone anywhere on the globe within a few hours. The advent of worldwide computer networks and satellite teleconferencing has shrunk distances even further. As a result, cooperation throughout the world can be found here and there now.

In today's world, intercultural communication competence can never be overemphasized. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit as well as the Ashbridge Management Research Group of England, the top five characteristics of an effective global manager are:

1. strategic awareness
2. adaptability to new situation
3. sensitivity to different cultures
4. ability to work in international teams
5. language skills

In other words, four of the five characteristics are intercultural communicative skills. In intercultural communication, even if we have mastered the target language well, we may still fail to understand and be understood. In order to minimize misunderstandings when we communicate with people from other cultures, a good knowledge of their cultures is of vital importance.

Yet, intercultural communication is not easy simply because culture is invisible. Culture influences us from our birth, but we are rarely conscious of cultural messages (perceptions, rules, and behavior) that we are receiving. We not only learn cultural behaviors unconsciously, but also perform them almost habitually and automatically. To reveal the secrets in intercultural communication scholars at home and abroad have done numerous studies in the field of intercultural communication, mainly theoretically of course. This textbook, as its title indicates, focuses on the practical aspects that are closely related to people's life and work. There are altogether twelve units. Besides the three reading articles and the relevant exercises in each unit, we also provide lots of topic-related information, lists of reference books and websites for further reading.

The publication of this textbook could not have been possible but for the materials we use in it. Therefore, the contribution of all the authors of these materials should not get unacknowledged. We find it a great pity that the lack of contact information prevents us from delivering our sincere thanks directly to all the authors. We would appreciate it if the authors could contact us.

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# Unit 1

## Value

### Part One

#### Lead-In

We may all be members of the same village, but we are sitting at our own campfires.

—Anonymous

也许我们都是地球村的一员，但是无疑我们都围坐在自己的篝火旁。

——无名氏



Values are deeply held beliefs—usually based on cultural traditions, long-held family, religious teachings and long-lasting memories of personal experiences. Given their sources, people's values seldom change, even when their more superficial desires are modified. "Asking someone to adjust his values is like asking him to alter his sense of reality," explain mediators Susan Carpenter and W.J.D. Kennedy. While this can happen, it doesn't happen often or easily. For this reason, values usually cannot be negotiated, nor can they be changed through persuasive arguments.



## Part Two

### Reading Passages

#### In-Class Reading

##### Warm-up questions:

1. What do you think is the most important in your life? Or what do you pursue in your life?
2. What do you know about cultural values in the U.S.?

#### The Greatest American Value

*If you ask most Americans what the cultural values in the U.S. are, you might get some blank stares, or a statement of some basic beliefs. The question may seem simple, but the answer is quite complex. In a society as highly diverse as the United States, there is likely to be a **multitude** of answers.*

*American culture has been enriched by the values and belief systems of virtually every part of the world. Consequently, it is impossible to be comprehensive. Now this author offers you his individual perspective on American values.*

1 This week I've realized something about America. In separate discussions over assisted suicide<sup>1</sup> and sex before marriage, I've found out that we've gone quite a way from the nation founded by men who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of liberty. We've become a land where pleasure is king and pain for any reason is out.

2 There has always been this element in American life. After all, the South's avoidance of the uncomfortable task of **emancipation**<sup>2</sup> (which would have been a huge inconvenience) put our nation on the road to a war where half a million Americans died in senseless **slaughter**.

3 However, American life today is **overrunning** with the love of pleasure, like never before. In the debate over sex before marriage, the greatest argument encountered is that sex before marriage was necessary because without it, you could have a bad sex life.

4 The recent stories on women **aborting** their children so they could not have to delay school, not be too fat to fit into their wedding dress, and not be embarrassed are all part of the same trend. The most **heinous** case was a woman who aborted two of her triplets to avoid buying **jumbo** jars of **mayonnaise**.



5 In the Assisted Suicide debate, we want a quick way out. We can't wait for death to come; we must hasten its arrival, so as to avoid our pain. Issues of morality, **fidelity**, and truth are thrown out of the window for pleasure as our culture's greatest value.

6 Our love of pleasure leads us to make poor decisions in every area of life. For example, our need for instant **gratification** has driven our national savings rate to an all time low. Many marriages end each year because one partner is simply unhappy. Wisdom is less sought after than despised. Those who dispense advice that challenges us to do something other than what feels good such as Dr Laura, James Dobson, and Josh Harris of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* are **ridiculed** and attacked, often without their ideas even being examined<sup>3</sup>.

7 The impact it had on our nation's politics has been disheartening to say the least. The Clinton **Impeachment**<sup>4</sup> failed, not so much because people believed he was innocent but because:

- 1) they didn't want to risk hurting a good economy;
- 2) they were bored with the scandal and wanted to watch something else.

8 There are people (somewhere between 10%-20%) that care about issues on either side of the political fence, while the rest of the people are like windsocks, moving whichever way feels best at the moment. We wonder why we have **wishy-washy mealy-mouthed two-faced backstabbing** cheats in office. Well, folks, they REPRESENT us. If we don't like what we see in Washington, we'd better take a look in the mirror. We let them continue to represent us because our **patriotism** is shallow 4th of July stuff.<sup>5</sup>

9 It has infected our churches. Our hunger for God has been replaced by a desire for comfort. We ask Pastors to teach us only easy, light things and then walk away if they try and take us beyond our comfort zone. We choose or reject churches because of the style of music, not the guidance of the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup> not the eternal truths of God's Word, but our own passing fancies.

10 Now, I don't think we should become **masochists**, but we've gone beyond what is healthy in our quest for pleasure. We've become what the Apostle Paul<sup>7</sup> called, "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of family, country, or morality. By choosing the path of least resistance time and time again, we're choosing to forgo those events in life that can build character and make us into better people and a better nation.

11 Is it any coincidence that what Tom Brokaw called the Greatest Generation<sup>8</sup> went through the Great Depression? Women did without nylons, people drove together, and paid through the nose to defeat Hitler because they knew how to do without.<sup>9</sup> They remembered the importance of sacrifice, honor, and love.



12 If we are to survive as a culture, we must also remember. We must find a calling higher than pleasure, a reason for existence greater than the next **fad** or cheap thrill.<sup>10</sup>

—Adam Graham

### New Words and Expressions

<b>abort</b>	<i>v.</i>	terminate before completion, as of a computer process, a mission, etc. 异常中断, 中途失败, 夭折, 流产
<b>backstabbing</b>	<i>n.</i>	hurting sb. at his back or without his knowing it by mean means (用 诽谤或出卖等手段) 加害于人, 卑鄙暗算
<b>cause</b>	<i>n.</i>	purpose for which efforts are being made 目标, 理想, 事业
<b>comprehensive</b>	<i>a.</i>	including all or everything 全面的, 广泛的, 包容的
<b>despise</b>	<i>v.</i>	look down on with disdain 轻视
<b>dispense</b>	<i>v.</i>	give up as not strictly needed 免除, 省却, 无须
<b>emancipation</b>	<i>n.</i>	freeing someone from the control of another 释放, 解放
<b>fad</b>	<i>n.</i>	fashion, interest, preference, enthusiasm, unlikely to last 新奇的时 尚; 一时流行的嗜好或狂热
<b>fidelity</b>	<i>n.</i>	loyalty; faithfulness 忠实, 诚实, 忠诚
<b>forgo</b>	<i>v.</i>	give up 作罢, 放弃
<b>gratification</b>	<i>n.</i>	state of being gratified; great satisfaction 满意
<b>hasten</b>	<i>v.</i>	act or move at high speed 催促, 赶紧, 促进, 加速
<b>heinous</b>	<i>a.</i>	shockingly brutal or cruel 可憎的, 极恶的
<b>impeachment</b>	<i>n.</i>	a formal document charging a public official with misconduct in office 弹劾, 指摘
<b>infect</b>	<i>v.</i>	contaminate; give disease, (fig) feelings, ideas, to a person, his body or his mind 传染, 感染
<b>jar</b>	<i>n.</i>	vessel, usu. round, with a wide mouth, with or without handle(s), of glass, stone or earthenware 罐, 广口瓶
<b>jumbo</b>	<i>a.</i>	of great mass; huge and bulky 〈美〉巨大的
<b>masochist</b>	<i>n.</i>	someone who obtains pleasure from receiving punishment 性受虐狂 者, 受虐狂者
<b>mayonnaise</b>	<i>n.</i>	egg yolks and oil and vinegar 蛋黄酱
<b>mealy-mouthed</b>	<i>a.</i>	hesitant to state facts or opinions simply and directly 说话拐弯抹角 的; 说话委婉的
<b>multitude</b>	<i>n.</i>	a large indefinite number 多数, 群众
<b>overrun</b>	<i>v.</i>	run over (a limit or brim) 溢出, 超过限度
<b>pastor</b>	<i>n.</i>	minister of a church 牧师
<b>patriotism</b>	<i>n.</i>	love of country and willingness to sacrifice for it 爱国心, 爱国精神

<b>pledge</b>	<i>v.</i>	promise solemnly 保证, 使发誓
<b>ridicule</b>	<i>v.</i>	subject to laughter 嘲笑, 奚落
<b>scandal</b>	<i>n.</i>	disgraceful gossip about the private lives of other people; a disgraceful event 丑行, 丑闻, 诽谤, 耻辱, 流言蜚语
<b>slaughter</b>	<i>n.</i>	the killing of animals (as for food); killing (animals, people) in large numbers 屠宰; 残杀, 屠杀
<b>windsock</b>	<i>n.</i>	a truncated cloth cone mounted on a mast used (e.g., at airports) to show the direction of the wind 风向袋
<b>wishy-washy</b>	<i>a.</i>	weak in willpower 缺乏力量或香味的, 缺乏特点或决心的
<b>pay through the nose</b>		pay an expensive price 付出太多代价

### Proper Names

<b>Dr Laura</b>	劳拉博士
<b>James Dobson</b>	詹姆士·杜布森
<b>Josh Harris</b>	约叔亚·哈里斯
<b>Clinton (Bill Clinton)</b>	克林顿 (美国前总统)

### Notes

1. assisted suicide: suicide with the help of other people 受助自杀
2. **the South's avoidance of the uncomfortable task of emancipation:** In 1861, the American Civil War (1861-1865) began—a sectional conflict in the United States of America between the federal government (the “Union”) and 11 Southern slave states that declared their secession and formed the Confederate States of America, led by President Jefferson Davis. The Union, led by President Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party, which opposed expansion of slavery, rejected any right of secession. After the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation made the freeing of the slaves a war goal. The goal also allowed the Union to recruit African-Americans for reinforcements. This Emancipation Proclamation caused great opposition on the South side and hence put the two sides in bloody battles.
3. Those who dispense advice that challenges us to do something other than what feels good such as Dr Laura, James Dobson, and Josh Harris of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* are ridiculed and attacked, often without their ideas even being examined: **Laura Catherine Schlessinger** is an American radio host, author, and conservative commentator who is an outspoken critic of practices that she considers immoral and have become too prevalent in contemporary American culture including sex outside of marriage. **James Dobson** is a radio psychologist and the founder of *Focus on the Family* (爱家协会), a Christian conservative organization. **Josh Harris** is the author of a book entitled *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*—A new attitude towards romance and relationships—dating. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* suggests there is a better way to do with

romance than dating. It is reordering your romantic life in the light of God's Word and finding more fulfillment than a date could ever give—a life of sincere love, true purity and purposeful singleness. 整句话的大意是：如果有人做一些具有挑战性但不是为了享受的事情时不需要他人的忠告，如 Dr Laura, James Dobson, 以及《我与约会吻别》的作者 Josh Harris 等，那么人们根本不会去考虑他们的想法如何就会去嘲笑他们、攻击他们。

#### 4. **The Clinton Impeachment:** 克林顿弹劾案

The impeachment of President **Bill Clinton** arose from a series of events following the filing of a lawsuit on May 6, 1994, by **Paula Corbin Jones** in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas. In her complaint initiating the suit, Ms. Jones alleged violations of her federal civil rights in 1991 by President Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas and she was an Arkansas state employee. According to the allegations, Governor Clinton invited Ms. Jones to his hotel room where he made a crude sexual advance that she rejected. The name of **Monica Lewinsky**, who had worked in the White House in 1995 as an intern, was first included on a list of potential witnesses prepared by the attorneys for Ms. Jones that was submitted to the President's legal team. Finally the Senate voted that the President was not guilty.

5. We let them continue to represent us because our patriotism is shallow **4th of July** stuff. 此句大意为：我们继续让他们来代表我们，因为我们没有足够的爱国情感。（人们只有在 7 月 4 日才爱国）

#### 6. **Holy Spirit:** 圣灵

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of God: Father (圣父), Son (圣子) and Holy Spirit. The Bible declares that there is only one living God, yet we learn from scripture that He comprises three separate personages. The Holy Spirit, Father and Son all comprise a unified Godhead known in Christianity as the "Trinity (三位一体)." While each "personage" is distinct in function, each shares together in the same deity and each reflects the divine attributes of the one living God.

7. **Apostle Paul or Paul the apostle:** one of the most notable of early Christian missionaries, author of Fourteen epistles in the New Testament 使徒保罗

8. **The Greatest Generation:** The Greatest Generation is a term used to describe those U.S. citizens who fought in World War II, as well as those who kept the home front intact during it. Some of those who survived the war then went on to build and rebuild the United States' industries in the years following the war.

9. Women did without nylons, people drove together, and paid through the nose to defeat Hitler because they knew how to do without. 此句大意为：女人们没有尼龙面料的衣物（因为第二次世界大战中很多尼龙被用来做降落伞了），人们为了节省油拼车驾驶，付出很大的代价才击败了希特勒，这是因为他们知道如何应对匮乏。

10. We must find a calling higher than pleasure, a reason for existence greater than the next fad or



cheap thrill. 此句大意为：我们应当找到一种比享乐更高的生命的意义，一种比追求下一波时尚或廉价的刺激更伟大的存在理由。

### ●Reading Comprehension

1. **Directions:** *Discuss the following questions with your classmates.*

- 1) What did Americans pursue when the nation was founded?
- 2) What do they mainly pursue now according to the author?
- 3) What does the author say about American life today? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- 4) What impact does Americans' love of pleasure have on the nation?
- 5) What suggestion does the author give to solve the problem?

2. **Directions:** *Read the following statements carefully, and decide whether they are true (T) or false (F) according to the text.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) The author believes Americans now take pleasure as the first priority in their life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) The author supports the view that sex before marriage is necessary because without it, people could have a bad sex life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Assisted suicide is reasonable in the author's opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) The author believes the love of pleasure has affected American economy adversely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) The author thinks Americans are not patriotic enough at present.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) People choose different churches because they hold different faiths.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) The author believes hardship can build character and make people into better people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) The author calls on people to find a higher goal in life in order to keep the culture.

### ●Discussion

1. People have very different views as to what Americans believe in or value. What opinions have you heard or read about it? If you have not, then try to seek relevant information from all the sources available and compare those views so as to draw your own conclusion. You can either submit a writing or give a spoken presentation.
2. Based on your life experiences or those of others, talk about what many Chinese believe in or value, and give some examples to support your ideas.

## After-Class Reading

### Passage One

#### Warm-up questions:

1. What does "freedom" mean in your mind? Can you list some cases in which you can enjoy freedom and some other cases in which you can not?

2. Do you think there is any conflict between personal freedom and social loyalty? Illustrate your point with examples.

### **The Person between Personal Freedom and Social Loyalty**

1 In traditional societies, an individual person's entire life was predetermined and regulated from the cradle to the grave.<sup>1</sup> Membership in families, castes, social strata, and a particular people determined the course of a person's life, with little room for personal decisions and development. One's personal name meant little, and in some societies daughters were simply numbered, since after their regulated marriage they acquired the family name of the husband. By contrast, one's family name meant everything. A "good family" ensured one's social status. One had to come "from a good house," as we used to say in Germany. In traditional societies, stability meant everything, while individuality meant little.

2 Modern societies place the values of personal freedom above the values of membership and belonging. Tradition no longer shapes life. We live in free choice societies, for we believe that only in its individual persons can a society become creative. This is why we may no longer accept anything as predetermined and prearranged. Every person must be able to determine everything himself or herself: free choice of schools, vocations, partners, domicile<sup>2</sup>, politics, religion, and so on. We are even working on being able to determine freely our genetic composition as well. Nothing is permitted to be "destiny," not even gender; everything must be determinable. In half-traditional societies in Europe, a person is yet addressed by the family name; in completely modern societies, and among young people, the only name that applies is Jim and Joan, that is, a person's first or given name or the Christian name.

3 Modern big cities individualize and isolate persons. Only in villages or smaller towns can one live in an extended family. Modern apartments and cars are designed for at most four persons—father, mother, and two children. Free choice of vocation and free choice of domicile are tearing the older extended families apart. Ever since our own children have been living in Berlin, Hamburg, and New York, we rarely see our grandchildren. In the big cities of Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Munich today, more than half of all households are single households.<sup>3</sup> More and more, family members are becoming single persons. This does not necessarily mean isolation, though this, too, is present to an unnerving degree, for example, among the aged; to a much higher degree than before, freely chosen friendships are replacing the predetermined family. The residential group is becoming the new life form, and "patchwork families" are emerging in which no one knows or cares anymore just who is descended from whom or who is related to whom, but rather only who cohabits with whom or who is living with whom.<sup>4</sup> The "reference person" is replacing relatives.<sup>5</sup>

4 In every living room, the public sphere is furnished by television. Persons merely sitting alone in front of the television set do participate in all the events of the city, nation, and world, or at least they think that this is the case, even if in truth they are participating merely in the "virtual world"

of previously selected information and entertainment. Certainly, a person can turn the television on and off, but this act does not constitute control of the media. Although people can indeed participate in everything insofar as they watch the news, they cannot participate in determining these things since they cannot broadcast anything themselves.<sup>6</sup> This distinguishes the television public from every human face-to-face discussion. Human beings are always rendered controllable through individualization: *Divide et impera*.<sup>7</sup>

5 Finally, there are indications that a new culture of death is emerging. In traditional societies, a person was in a religious sense “gathered to his fathers,” and in an earthly sense interred in the family grave.<sup>8</sup> In the cult of ancestors<sup>9</sup>, at the Christian All Souls’ Day<sup>10</sup> or Totensonntag,<sup>11</sup> people visit and decorate the graves of their ancestors. In modern societies, personal care of graves is becoming increasingly difficult because people no longer live in the vicinity of the cemeteries. Religious interest in the family tradition is disappearing. This is why there are more and more “anonymous burials” in the secular spheres of modern human beings: the corpse is cremated and the ashes spread on a field or the sea.<sup>12</sup> “No one knows the place.” The isolated, now merely self-determinative, person disappears into nothingness. Actually, this is quite consistent, since the family name already counted for nothing in life. Why should it now bind the children to the graves of the dead?

6 A series of excellent attempts has been made to balance out the deficits of the human person in modern society through a reflection on community values.<sup>13</sup> I am referring not to conservative and fundamentalist retrogressions, but rather to the communitarian idea of strengthening once again the sensibility of modern human beings for the notion of membership and belonging.<sup>14</sup> This includes the creation of local forms of community in overseeable circumstances; a reacquisition of the values of the common good; an enhanced appreciation of social consensus; and the development of a participatory economic democracy. All in all: the idea of the “good society,” of a “civil society,” actualized at every level, both large and small.<sup>15</sup>

7 I endorse such a balance between the values of personalism<sup>16</sup> and communitarianism<sup>17</sup>, and will contribute no further vision here. I will restrict my consideration to personal freedom, a freedom that as a result of ever progressing individualism cannot be maintained. Neither can it be surrendered for the sake of belonging to a traditional society. In my opinion, it can be preserved only through dependability and loyalty.

8 The free human being is the being that can promise and that must also keep these promises. Through promises that I make, I in my multiplicity am making myself unequivocal both for others and for myself. In the act of promising, a person defines himself or herself and becomes dependable, acquires fixed contours, and can be addressed.<sup>18</sup> In keeping one’s promises, a person acquires identity within time, since that person reminds himself of himself whenever he is reminded of his promises. Only within the nexus of promises made and fulfilled does the free person, the person not predetermined by traditions, first acquire continuity within time and thus