

人类文明与文化读本

Read into Human Civilization and Culture

HUMAN, CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE

人类、文明与文化

主编：陈乃芳 蓝 纯

编者：顾曰国 MARY J. WILLES (英)

Volume 1

第一卷

外语教学与研究出版社

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**This book is dedicated to our cherished
memory of**

**Dr. Mary J. Willes, whose death in 2002
was an irredeemable loss to the project.**

General Introduction to *Read into Human Civilization and Culture*

More than two thousand years ago, the Chinese ancient philosopher, Plato's contemporary, Lao Zi, philosophizes thus:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物。(Lao Zi, ch. 42)

In other words, it can be said that at the very beginning of everything, the universe was one. Then it followed its own way (i.e. its 道) by breaking itself into two, then two into three, and three multiplies itself, giving birth to everything as is found today. In the parlance of the modern theory of the universe, at the very beginning, according to the present-day leading physicist, Stephen Hawking, there existed a pea-like ball. Then occurred the Big Bang. With it came time and space. Then the Cambrian Big Bang fills our Mother Earth with beaming lives and everything else!

What does this quick tour to philosophy and cosmology mean to us, learners and teachers of English? "I can't see any relevance," a challenging voice may say. It is a legitimate challenge and deserves a detailed answer, hence this preface.

There is only one Mother Earth. Plants, animals, oceans, lands, rivers, mountains, and of course us human beings—are all co-inhabitants. We live together and have to survive together. However, it takes thousands of years for us, the so-called super beings in the animal kingdom, to comprehend this simple truism. We have not been friendly to our co-inhabitants. Rain forests are being deforested, rivers polluted, rare species of animals eaten or deprived of their traditional habitats, ozone layers holed, to name but a few. To make things worse, the human world has been divided and locked up in brutal wars. It starts to dawn on us now that disasters are largely man-made, and that they know no country boundaries. A local nuclear explosion means a devastating short-term or long-term hazard to everything on the globe. It is high time now for us to learn to understand our co-inhabitants, and to develop a harmonious rapport with them so as to achieve a collective survival. It is from this broad perspective that the *Read into Human Civilization and Culture* series are designed and compiled.

Human, Civilization and Culture

The objectives the series hope to obtain are:

- to enhance our understanding of the human global environment;
- to enhance our understanding of organisms, plants and animals;
- to help us look at human society and culture in a critical and historical perspective;
- to enhance our appreciation of human artistic creativity and imagination;
- to enhance our analytic examination of human rationality and reasoning.

With these objectives, the series consist of four books, each of which is made up of two volumes.

The second volumes mirror the first volumes both in structure and theme.

Book 1

Universe, Environment and Life

- Part 1 The Big Bang and Afterwards
- Part 2 The Physical Environment
- Part 3 The Continents
- Part 4 Towards an Understanding of Animals
- Part 5 Life on Land, Sea and Air
- Part 6 Man and the Environment

Book 2

Human, Civilization and Culture (the present one)

- Part 1 Human Evolution
- Part 2 World Civilizations
- Part 3 Knowledge as Power
- Part 4 Scientists in Profile
- Part 5 Human's Insatiable Desire
- Part 6 Issues and Challenges

Book 3

Human's Imagination and Recreation

- Part 1 A Survey of Arts, Theatre and Literature
- Part 2 Religion and Arts
- Part 3 Music and Western Culture
- Part 4 Sculpture and Architecture
- Part 5 Sports and Culture
- Part 6 Trends in Modern Arts

Book 4

Human's Self-Understanding and Beyond

Part 1 Human as a Philosopher

Part 2 Human as a Social Animal

Part 3 Human as a Believer

Part 4 Human as a Tool-using Animal

Part 5 Human as a Political Animal

Part 6 Human in an Information Age

It is the hallmark of intellectual maturity for Chinese learners of English to achieve a good level of understanding in these areas. As editors of the series, we share the belief that a high level of English proficiency is no longer a sheer matter of language issue. It demands intellectual maturity and sophistication.

Each book is self-contained and can be used separately. However, they are preferably used together. Learners are advised to begin with Book 1 and carry on to Book 4. Although all the books can be used for self-study, they are also designed for classroom use. Volume 1 of each book can be used in classroom, while Volume 2 of each book is expected to be read after class. Since Volume 2 mirrors Volume 1 in structure and theme, the reading outside class will reinforce and consolidate what is taught in class.

Enjoy your reading. Good luck!

Introduction to *Human, Civilization and Culture*

Take a glance at the Table of Contents first. You might say to yourself: “Gosh! Quite a substantial book! And quite an ambitious one as well!” That’s exactly what we, the editors, aim at. We aim at providing you, in the limited space we have here, a general review of the evolution of the human race, the developments of some of the world civilizations, the ever-more important role knowledge plays from ancient times to the Industrial Revolution to the modern world, the never-ending exploration of human beings into outer space and into the impossible, and the many challenges and consequences (good and bad) that thus arise.

Have you ever considered why human beings are more developed, more civilized and more powerful than any other species on the earth? Why do there remain some isolated tribes—people who are still practicing an ancient lifestyle of a hunter and gatherer? Does the human mind control the human body or does the human body leave its mark on the human mind? And how did mankind develop the extraordinary intelligence that has made possible the varied histories and cultures we know about? These are the questions that Part 1 addresses.

Part 2 takes us on an exciting tour which starts from the pyramids and sphinxes of Egypt, through the memories of the Greeks, the present and the past of India, the Tang civilization and the Chinese centuries, and ends in the glorious histories of the African people and of Native Americans.

Part 3 demonstrates from three different perspectives why “知识就是力量”. The enormous power of knowledge is first reflected in the great changes that paper making and printing have brought to the mankind. It is also reflected in the Industrial Revolution, the shift from a traditional agriculturally based economy to one based on the mechanized production of manufactured goods in large-scale enterprises. Right now we are witnessing the most convincing demonstration of the power of knowledge in the information age we are living through.

Part 4 is devoted to scientists, where we are going to encounter 7 great names: Charles Darwin, Richard Feynman, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Marie Curie, Rosalind Franklin, and Dorothy Hodgkin. The texts you are going to read are not just limited to the major contributions

Human, Civilization and Culture

of these scientists, they also tell some interesting anecdotes of each of them, because after all, they are also ordinary human beings with family and friends, with happiness and sorrows.

Mankind is a greedy species, greedy in the sense that s/he is never satisfied with what s/he has, and greedy also in the sense that s/he is never satisfied with what s/he knows. We might refer to the former as greed for properties, and the latter as greed for knowledge. Part 5 concentrates on this greed for knowledge. It addresses the following questions: Can human beings travel to other planets during their vacations for fun? Can human beings live on other planets? In what way do you think computer technologies can still be improved?

From Part 1 to Part 5 we will be reading about human's achievements, and we might get the impression that when confronting nature, human appears great indeed. Yet on many occasions in the human history, human beings have also brought disasters to themselves and to nature out of their greed, ignorance and short-sightedness. And human beings have been punished by nature as a result. That is the focus of Part 6.

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Part 1

Human Evolution

- Unit 1 From Handy Human to Modern Human
- Unit 2 The Body and the Mind
- Unit 3 The Babel and Languages

Introduction

1. What do you already know?

There are more of us human beings than there are of any other species; we are more developed, more civilized and more powerful than any other. But have you ever considered why? To put the question in a more scholarly way: How has the undisputed dominance of a single sort of animal come about? Write down whatever answer that comes to your mind in the space provided below.

Admittedly, nowadays there remain some isolated tribes-people who are still practicing an ancient lifestyle of a hunter and gatherer. They have developed nothing comparable with the technologies familiar to the outside world. Again why? Do their small numbers and their isolation really account for such a sharp contrast or are there other reasons to be sought for? Write down your understanding in the space provided below.

Coming to the subject about the interaction between the mind and the body, there are some very basic and seemingly naive questions for you to consider:

- 1) Why can we walk?
- 2) How is it that we are able to handle things?
- 3) How does the mind of an athlete work?
- 4) How is it that some people are very good at sports and others simply aren't?
- 5) How far is it possible for the mind of an informed person to influence his or her body deliberately and intentionally?

One last question for you to muse about concerns the evolution of human intelligence: How did mankind develop the extraordinary intelligence that has made possible the varied histories and cultures we know about?

2. What do the three units tell us?

Each of the three units is made up of two texts. Text A of Unit 1 is about the development of the ape man of the African plains into *homo erectus*, and then into *homo sapiens*. Mankind is, in the author's view, unlike other species not in *communicating*—many species do that—but in the passion and persistence with which s/he communicates. Communication — and centrally language—has been an additional evolutionary force. Genetic inheritance brings about change, and in the process of time, profoundly significant and permanent change. Language, and the writing systems that record language, and the printing technologies that distribute language, have made cultural and social variation and change possible. That is the essential message of Text A of Unit 1.

Text B of Unit 1 explains the significance of the discovery of DNA to a non-specialist reader. The author works largely by several very different metaphors. He compares the genetic code to a river. It flows not through a landscape, but through time. It is a river not of water, but of coded information. Genes inherited from your mother and your father make you the individual you are. All members of the same species have the same genes flowing through them. A new species occurs when the river forks. Geographical separation is the usual reason for the process.

Text A of Unit 2 deals with another important subject, the interdependence of body and mind. The text begins with the analysis of walking—something that is taken for granted by everybody but actually involves complex neural activity in the brain and the spinal cord. The author then goes on to explain how it is that we are able to handle things with our hands and fingers. The final part of the text gives an account for the way the mind of an athlete works.

Text B of Unit 2 takes the subject a step further and deals with recent discoveries about the relation between the mind and the body. Mind and body are presented as products of evolution, designed and developed in order to enable the body to pass its genetic inheritance to the next generation. In the text the contributions made to our understanding of mind-body relations in the 1990's are reviewed. We are assured that the mind is immensely complicated. It is a living thing that is in constant motion and change. Its workings are like those of the playing of an orchestra or like a performance by a choir.

Text A of Unit 3 is a summary of the Biblical stories about the beginnings of language. Though it is difficult to say to what degree those Biblical stories present a close-to-truth picture about the beginnings of language, they do show that human beings began to ponder over the origin of language long long ago.

In Text B of Unit 3, we are going to read that the majority of the world's 6,000 distinct languages are spoken by 10,000 people or less. Within the next 100 years many experts believe that

half of these languages, together with the unique cultural identities associated with them, will go out of existence. The authors of the article, language specialists Doug Whalen and K. David Harrison, explore the causes and consequences of endangered languages.

Text C of this unit tries to account for the role language played in the evolution of the modern mind. The author agrees with those writers who believe that language started as a means of social communication. However, language could also be used to transfer information that was not social at all, but had to do with a whole range of other matters—with the natural world for example, or with the processes of making things or with the experience of the past. Eventually the possession of language *changed the nature of minds*. There could be all sorts of new connections. Minds could be immensely more flexible and powerful without any need for a bigger or heavier brain. The author's phrase for this is "cognitive fluidity".