Exposé

The concept of progress in different cultures

By

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Project Description

The German Society of Technical Co-operation (GTZ) GmbH and the Goethe Institute are implementing a project: “The Concept of Progress in Different Cultures”. In this attempt they are advised and assisted by the author of this Exposé. The differing concepts of progress in various world cultures have been arrived at through international co-operation. The aim of this project is to throw open these concepts to an interested public and to decision-makers and implementers. This would help to sensitize them to the above differences and their consequences on thought and action. Together with the anthropological and cultural aspects, the ecological and economic dimensions shall also be taken into account. This project would clearly abstain from a rigidly Eurocentric standpoint.

Conferences on this topic are being organized in 2004 in La Paz (Bolivia), Alexandria (Egypt), Kolkata (India) and Berlin. The participants would be expected to deliberate on and compare various world cultures and thereby arrive at a definition of the term “Progress”. It is essential that the voices of the representatives of “other cultures” be given a hearing so that their viewpoint on progress is also considered. In the course of working together on this project the final aim is to mirror the intercultural differences in this concept of progress.

In this project the basic anthropological perspective as well as the nature of the cultural-historical-anthropological problems will be discussed before arriving at the definition of progress in different cultures in today’s world civilisation. The final concept comprises of an historical overview from the international standpoint as well as the anthropological viewpoint from the perspective of the West. It is followed by the Topic-Question-Paradigm Questionnaire which the protagonists of “other cultures and the representatives of the GTZ and Goethe Institut shall work together on during the course of the conferences.

A proper understanding of the topic can be arrived at only when progress is considered in the context of political-economic challenges of the present. At the same time the anthropological variations among the different cultures represented in this project must also be taken into consideration. The following headings serve to highlight the basic aims of the project.

- Multiple Modernity as a prerequisite for different traditions of progress
- Man as a cultural being: Anthropology of Cultural Differences
- Progress, Globalisation and Technical Homogenisation and its converse: The search for a Humane Identity in the modern world
- Compatibility of Technology and Culture
- Convergence instead of Divergence: For a comprehensive definition of Human Development
- World Civilisation and Interculturalism: For the definition of progress in the 21st Century

Further light on this topic is thrown by Jörn Rüsen (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen) in his discussion on the trans-cultural universality and the comparability of different cultural traditions.
The Comparative Definitions of Progress In International Discussions

The concept of progress in international development can only be measured in the context of historical comparisons. The linear development from a comparatively archaic order to highly differentiated forms of production through the development of technology has a long historical tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages in Europe.

In antiquity different words such as increase, grow, continue, stride forward etc. were used to describe the term progress. When Plato, Aristotle, Chrysipp and Seneca spoke of progress, the word could, unlike its modern connotation, mean not only improvement but also deterioration. The oldest testimony (R. Koselleck, Historical lexicon, Vol. 2, S.) comes from Xenophanes (around 500 B.C.): "Truly the gods have not revealed everything in the beginning to mortals, who with the passage of time shall have to seek and find what is better" (Xenophanes Fragm. 18). The bridge to the present is the archaeology of Thucydides: he speaks of progress in terms of technology, economics and power, which was represented by the Greeks as opposed to the barbarians. (J.de Romilly, Thucydides et le idee de progres, 159 ff). These thoughts were later carried further by Demosthenes and Polybios. The change in meaning of the term progress in the fifth century reflects the break with the archaic connotations and the coming into existence of a new consciousness or awareness of progress which took into account past, present and future: man did not wait for a gradual improvement that time would bring as in the Ideal State. Change was no longer brought about automatically by time but rather by politicisation and pragmatisation of the social orientation.

Later, Christianity had an important influence on the modern, dynamic quest for the development of technology. This influence of Christianity on technical progress can be seen in the Middle Ages in Europe, as pointed out by Karl Loewith, Marc Bloch in France and Joseph Needham in America have also focussed our attention on this. The eleventh century witnessed the beginning of a markedly positive attitude towards progress, which is evident in the works of the period. Augiustinus in his "Praise God for everything which he has given mankind," (De civitate Dei XXII, 24) also includes the technical arts. In "Theologica Platonica" (XIII, 3 Marsilio Ficino, 1474) we find an expression of delight in man's successful subjugation of nature. Man is now regarded as the representative of God, as his steward on Earth. At the zenith of technological progress, man has god-like powers over the cosmos and paradise. Here we see a millennial form of prophecy with its own eschatology.

Between the 15th and 16th centuries the technical arts began to be held in higher social and cultural esteem. By practising the mechanical arts, man comes nearer to the image of God as in paradise. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Augustinus, Hugo von St Viktor and Vinzenz von Beauvais regard the mechanical arts as a compensation for the inadequacies of mankind, through which one can regain a form of paradise. Among the authors of the 16th century who have expressed themselves strongly is Georg Agricola who has left behind a comprehensive work on metallurgy "De re metallica libri"(XII, 1556).
In the 16th century, it was not only the authors writing on technical subjects who emphasised the importance of the mechanical arts but also philosophers like Juan Luis Vives and scientists like Vesalius. Practical knowledge was no longer looked down upon and in fact was more highly regarded than contemplative observation.

The new respect given to the mechanical sciences and to technical workers made it possible for scientists and technicians to work together and this was responsible for the upswing of the natural sciences in the 17th century. The name of Leonardo Da Vinci in Italy should be mentioned in this respect. In France, Descartes developed a plan for an École des Arts et Métiers to promote the co-operation between the natural sciences and technical arts, in which we can already see the seeds of the industrial revolution. The important elements for this breakthrough to the Industrial Revolution were the separation of nature from religion, looking towards the future with hope and a positive evaluation of all work which was directed to practical benefit.

The growing recognition of technical development is also mirrored in the works of other philosophers as in Thommasao Campanella's description of the Ideal State (Civita solis, idea rei publicae philosophicae), published in 1623. Of great significance are the opinions of Francis Bacon of England who regarded knowledge as power and John Locke's statement in his "Essay concerning human understanding" that the learning of the scholar was of little use to society, compared to the contribution of the hitherto despised technical workers. David Hume also emphasised in his writing, especially in his essay "Of Refinement In The Arts", published in 1742, the importance of the mechanical arts for the development of culture in the Anglo-Saxon world.

In France in 1762 J. J. Rousseau, allows his "Emile" to learn a craft (Œuvres, IV, 470) because he wanted to overcome the prejudice against the technical crafts. The machine becomes the recognisable symbol and model of progress.

The comparison of the Creator of the World to a watchmaker has been prevalent since the 14th century, as in the works of Jean Buridan (before 1365) and Nicole d'Oresme (died in 1380). Copernicus and Kepler were also of the opinion that the cosmos could be compared to a clock. The comparison of society to a machine can also be found in Thomas Hobbes' "Leviathan". The French Encyclopaedists from Diderot to d'Alembert (1751-1780) have also contributed significantly to the higher esteem in which technical achievement is held. This viewpoint has the weight of tradition behind it. In his "Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem" in 1556 Jean Bodin spoke of the significance of inventions and discoveries. Later, Francis Bacon in his "Novum Organum" formulated "hominem homini Deus esse" (129,Works 1,221 f).

As a consequence it can be seen that technical progress which was initially of an accidental and sluggish nature, suddenly gathers momentum from the 14th and 15th century and becomes a conscious and methodical quest. In the last three centuries we have seen an exponential acceleration in technical development which has led to a qualitatively new pattern of progress. This had far reaching consequences on the entire world culture. Modern theories were reinforced during the period of European Aufklärung (Enlightenment) and became manifest during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries.
The term industrial progress could initially be applied not only to the liberal market economy but also to the Marxist model of the Soviet Union in the 20th century. In its purest form, the Western concept of progress had a universal applicability but later it was based on scientific progress and functioned within the parameters of market laws.

The question regarding the positive and negative consequences of technical progress and how to hold it within control has been repeatedly raised. This is reflected in the flood of literature on the subject since the 19th century. In the technical books of the 16th and 17th centuries, men of science were equated with God as being all-powerful creators. The Industrial Revolution brought with it the system of patents and witnessed a further exponential acceleration of technical progress. Other contributing factors were the improved methods of communication and research.

The anthropologist Arnold Gehlen concludes that this almost explosive acceleration in the tempo of development was due to the merging of natural and technical sciences. The Swedish economist Gynnar Myrdal comes to the realisation that development is to be seen as part of a larger historical process, which had already been heralded in the previous centuries. (The same conclusion can be seen in the works of Jules Michelet 1872 in his "Histoire du XIX Siecle").

Arnold Toynbee in England also wrote about the technical breakthrough of the industrial revolution. (Ref: Wolf von Barloewen, Constantin von Barloewen: die Gesetzmaßigkeit der Geschichte. Evolution und Zivilisation. Von den Anfängen der Menschheit bis zum 3. Jahrtausend. 2 Vol. Athenäum, Frankfurt, 1988.) These volumes deal with the concept of evolution in its theoretical and historical aspects. Some of these ideas are mirrored in this expose. (See Vol. I Pg. 13)

With this new awareness came the realisation that the Industrial Revolution embodied a spiritual and intellectual change of a nature hitherto unseen in previous epochs. Lewis Mumford in America spoke of the historical significance of the Industrial Revolution for the whole world. Helmut Schelsky in Germany observed that the millennial continuity in economic and production forms was replaced by a new technical order. The Industrial Revolution brought about a decisive change not only in the history of technology but also in the history of the universe, comparable only with the transition of man from nomad to settler in the beginning of the Neolithic period.

A certain optimism regarding technology is thereafter evident. Progress in technology is regarded as the cause of, and being identical with, the progress of culture. This naturally leads to the hope that the technological revolution of mankind will result in a material and cultural paradise and will give man power over the cosmos. The term technology was always understood as hubris in all its ambivalence. From Paul Denis de Rougement in Switzerland to Paul Tillich, the Protestant theologian in America the "innocence" of technological development has always been questioned. In Lucretius we find an echo of the same doubt. Johann Gottfried Herder raises the query in 1785 "How have the arts and sciences contributed to the happiness of mankind" (collected works Vol 13, 372 f). This is also seen in the tradition of the 19th century. The French historian Jules Michelet wrote in his book "Le peuple" of the ambivalence of
The western concept of progress from a cultural anthropological perspective

We have said that progress in the western tradition has always had a millennial character with an eschatological promise that is not seen in non-western cultures. This raises a problem for the discussion of progress in different cultures. A survey of the western concept of progress from the anthropological perspective is not possible without a deep understanding of the “places of things in the world”, the interplay of human beings, technology and progress. Analysis of the position of technology in the life of mankind and relation to progress has been steadily gaining ground in the last 150 years. The progress of technology is becoming one of the central categories in the self-analysis of human beings. History is understood as the history of technology. That means the history of human progress as the history of the development and improvement of technical artefacts. Since that time, a number of authors on the cultural and social sciences have dealt with the problem field, of which the cornerstones are Man, Nature and Technology and Progress. In the assessment of the last 150 years, these three distinct points can be recognised.

Up to the sixties of the twentieth century the discussions on the topic of Technological Progress have been dominated by the first two points. Technology and Progress are an instrument of mankind. The question arises as to the autonomy of man and technology. Is man autonomous and does he decide about the functions of his technical means or has Technology achieved autonomy over man? The question can be summarised in 3 points of view.

1. Technology as merely an instrument or tool of man, as the means of his self-recognition, the compensation for his biological inadequacies, as an instrument of emancipation or as an expression of his special powers of rationalisation.

2. Technology and Progress as anonymous and autonomous power, as phenomena separate from man’s needs. Unfettered technology and progress are looked upon with both optimism and pessimism.

3. Ambivalence in the relationship of Man-Technology-Progress. The three stand opposed to one another.

The evaluation of Technology as an instrument of man proceeds from the belief that all progress evolves from technology. A full-length detailed discussion of the term Evolution is not possible.
This Exposé is based on Stephen Jay Gould’s “The Mismeasure of Man” published in 1981, New York. This Exposé also acknowledges the comprehensive discussion of the theories of Evolution published by Harvard University Press in 2003.

Technology is becoming a means of self-awareness of man. The “being” of man is reflected in technology. Technology appears as an instrument of man over a long period of time, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the 80’s of the twentieth century. The anthropological philosophy of Technology has always considered it as an instrument of man. This was based on the placing against each other of the Mechanical and the Organic, of Idealism and Materialism and of Man and Machine. The important elements of Technology were considered its automatic functioning, its rationality and its formal logic, which lay behind all mechanical inventions. Ernest Knapp’s writing “Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik” in 1977 is regarded as the beginning of the modern approach to technology, which mirrored the 19th century optimism regarding technology. The thought that nature could be in any way threatened by the thoughtless actions of man has not yet occurred. Man is the goal of Creation. He sees himself reflected in all objects surrounding him, especially in his technical inventions.

The ambivalence of progress has been discussed in modern times, from. Horkheimer of the early Frankfurter school of thought and Herbert Marcuse with his theory of the uni-dimensional human being, to Juergen Habermas and the French sociologists like Michel Serres. Similarly, Jacques Ellul, Gunther Anderts in his “Antiquity of Man”, Husserl and Heidegger and in the present times Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard have discussed the break between man and technology in pessimistic and apocalyptic terms. Hans Blumenberg considers man’s departure from the given cosmic order as an act of self-assertion. The process of technical development is seen not only as a great challenge but also as a threat to the very existence and identity of the human race. The question arises as to how mankind is to confront the threats posed by unchecked nuclear, biological and genetic development as well as by digital information technology. The peak of technological achievement very often ends in prophecies of the destiny of man and his salvation brought about by technology.

In the 20th century, Arnold Gehlen played a central role in the critical observation of technology and its relationship to progress. These ideas find expression in his principal works “Man: His position in Nature and his position in the world” (1940), “Early man and later cultures” (1956) as well as in his “Anthropological and socio-psychological studies”. His technical anthropology is firmly anchored in philosophical anthropology which was developed in Germany during the 20s by Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Helmuth Plessner (1892-1985). Max Scheler speaks in his writing, in 1928 of “The place of man in the cosmos” (1928) and Helmuth Plessner speaks of “Natural artificiality.”

Helmuth Plessner formulated the anthropological principles of natural artificiality in his treatise “Die Stufen des organischen und der Mensch.” While admitting the necessity for man to find alternatives and artificial inventions in order to survive, he simultaneously articulates his uneasiness about the ambivalent nature of technology. Andrei Leroi Gourhan, the leading French anthropologist of the 20th century and Heinrich Popitz in his work “Anthropology of Technology” as also Herder are equally perturbed by the outcome of evolutionary development. Man’s technical genius is his cultural reply to his inherent biological inability to survive. His ability to learn allows him to modify the life
threatening environment around him. The author is apprehensive about the explosively accelerating tempo of technical development.

During the Industrial Revolution, man experienced an upheaval comparable only with the complete change in all aspects of life seen in the Neolithic era when man underwent the transition from hunter-nomad to cultivator and herdsman. In the 19th century man was visualising the conquest of the world through a synthesis of science, technology and production, and the invention of the steam engine by James Watt (1769-1790), was heralded as the forerunner of greater things to come. During the 20th century criticism mounted against a technology that had become autonomous and had pervaded all aspects of life. It was an unparalleled unfettering of science and technology, which destroyed the existing fabric of society. This autonomous technology aimed at the subjugation of society through force. There is a growing awareness that man has alienated technology from himself and it has become separate and independent from man and his needs. Technology appears as an enormous power which rules over the world. The idea that technology has created its own dynamics, is associated with the fear that man's very being is threatened and his existence endangered.

The idea of an unfettered technology grew stronger after the Second World War. The sharpest criticism against a seemingly all powerful technology has been voiced by F.G. Jungers in Germany and by Jacques Ellul, Michel Foucault in the French language. The 50s and 60s were a period of introspection about the Atomic Age. The horrific bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led the philosopher Gunther Anders to perceive technology as an epochal phenomenon which has indelibly stamped man's thought and action. Since the 80s, computer and biotechnology have come to the forefront along with the digital revolution, thus supplanting atomic science as the leading technology.

The fact that our hopes in a progress-oriented world have been shattered in the 20th century has led many thinkers to perceive technology also as a threat.

In the 18th and 19th centuries there were only isolated voices against technical progress. It was not till the 20th century that the criticism against progress became a strong movement in the various strata of society. The technological catastrophes as well as the immense potential for destruction that the two world wars amply demonstrated, contributed to a change in perception regarding technology. The immense material losses of the First World War, the bureaucratic extermination machinery in Auschwitz, the totalitarian industrialisation of the Soviet Union, and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were circumstances which signified for many people a crisis in the optimism regarding progress. Far from preventing bloodshed in the 20th century, technology has facilitated slaughter on a far greater scale.

Since the time of the Enlightenment in Europe, man has ascribed a very significant role to technology. In the 20th century, man's perception of technology moves between two extremes: Either it is considered as the solution to all social problems or perceived as a satanic power responsible for all evil.

Since the late 1970s a clear change of perception among the common people is palpable. The fascination for science has been replaced by hostility towards it.

The report of the Club of Rome examined the position of man in "The Frontiers of growth. Five important aspects were listed: The accelerated pace of industrialisation, the rapid growth of
population, world wide malnutrition, exploitation of raw materials, and the destruction of the environment. The only solution appeared to be a departure from progress in its conventional sense and in a controlled transition to a world-wide balance. The public debate about the use of nuclear energy and technology is a sign of widespread pessimism in the 1980s. A greater rationality and a more judicious choice of the means at man’s disposal are required or else subjectivity, creativity, spontaneity and lastly the human identity itself are threatened (see Constantin von Barloewen, *Anthropologie de la Mondialisation* (Anthropology of globalisation), Paris Editions de Syrtes, 2003, 229ff, 253ff, 337ff, 381ff, 389ff).

Technology has become the new absolute Subject which has acquired autonomy and usurped man’s power of decision making. The hubris of technology and progress dominates the discourse on world civilisation from this point onwards.

**Multiple modernity as cultural–historical conditions for different traditions of progress**

The last 500 years have seen a world-wide spreading of norms which had originated in Europe. One may speak here of a universalisation of the western model of civilisation. (See Constantin von Barloewen, *Vom Primat der Münche*, 1990, 150ff)

The manifold expressions of modernity in different civilisations allow us to draw inferences about its different interpretations. This is absolutely necessary for a full understanding of progress. At the beginning of the 21st century, development in different parts of the world goes far beyond homogenous and hegemonic tendencies. It became clear that the term “modern” is differently understood in different cultures and has deviated from the Western vision which has its roots in the intellectual principles of the European Enlightenment. The search for authenticity oscillates between two poles: one tendency is to reject Western modernism because it destroyed the uniqueness of a country’s own culture (from Islam to India and China). The other tendency is to confront Western modernity with a country’s own modernity. The question is raised here as to how far modernity is a Western creation, what forms of non-Western modernity are there and how the relationship between cultural history and modernity in North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Russia is shaped. A thorough understanding of modernity and progress necessitates a prior study of the cultural-historical conditions in the context of the diversity of their traditions. We should speak here not of one modernity but of the plurality of modernity. (See C.v Barloewen, *Kultur als Faktor der Realpolitik*, FAZ, 21 January, 2000 as well as “le monde diplomatique”, November 2001.” It becomes apparent that the internationalism of world economics cannot be successful in the long run unless it is in harmony with the pluralism of cultures. This universal internationalism must also come to terms with varying historical traditions in a present which is dominated by World civilisation. This World civilisation is not concentrated in any single place but in time.

The great challenge of the 21st century lies in global interculturalism. A purely economic–material globalisation does not create true unity as man previously believed, but leads to the creation of diverse units. (For an understanding of the term Globalisation see C.v Barloewens *Gibt es Weltdorf? Die Globalisierung ist nur die Oberfläche*, FAZ, 8 Marz 1996)
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Globalisation is today a fundamental fact of world civilisation. Different states and cultures have however unequal conditions which vary according to their different cultural-religious-historical conditions which are reflected in economics and politics. Consequently the pluralism of cultures affects the politics of development and the concept of the term progress. (Report of the World Commission for Culture and Development of UNESCO – UNO, Paris, 1995. The author was also a participant.)

The basic question arises, as to why specific cultures and states are economically dynamic and politically stable, whereas other states less so. This question cannot be answered without an understanding of the cultural background of the countries.

Globalisation has become the subject of world-wide criticism. The industrial and technological World Civilisation is set against an alarming backdrop of a world-wide levelling of the historical and cultural traditions of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In these countries culture and religion are often in contradiction to the demands of the technological civilisation with its universal logic, which claims to have a monopoly over rationality. The western occidental rationality and logic are however only a small part of the planetary civilisation of the future.

We are experiencing presently a simultaneous representation of all cultures of the world. This presupposes the coexistence of cultures that were until now considered remote and far flung. Consequently there can no longer be an absolute world culture but only an insight into the openness of the pluralism of cultures.

The cardinal problem here for an understanding of progress is that the cultural and religious values of these non-western cultures are often not in harmony with the technology and instruments of the western industrial countries. This question has been thoroughly dealt with in (C.v. Barloewen, Szene einer Weltcivilisation, München1993, 55ff)

Man as a cultural entity: Anthropology of cultural differences

One may proceed from the anthropological premise that historically speaking in the evolutionary ladder man is not a natural but a cultural being, as Claude Levi-Strauss has formulated. It is becoming increasingly clear in international politics that the world order is not only an economic order and that man is not only a political animal, but also a cultural and religious entity.

Man not only belongs to a country but is at the same time a part of the cultures and religions of these states.

However, a culture may be typical of a country it always has the potential to absorb much more from other sources.
It embodies not only the typical way of life of a society, but also its underlying spiritual life as well as its values. Culture is also a term for the political and economic order of a country. Economic development is therefore to be understood in the larger context as being part of culture. The cultural symbols, values and institutions of a society have far-reaching consequences on economic development. This however means that any attempt at economic-technological development which goes against the existing cultural values will be a failure. This understanding of the wider connotations of the word culture is necessary for the comparison of progress in different cultures.

If we want to understand the logic behind thought and action in different cultures it is necessary to keep in mind their different views of life, their values and thought processes, which find expression in politics, economics, religions as well as in their institutions. (Lawrence Harrison, Samuel Huntington, *Culture matters, Conference of the Harvard Academy, 2000*). The author is a member of the Advisory committee. We are witnessing today the beginning of a global culture, which signifies something fundamentally new as against all other cultures which have gone before it. Quantitatively what is new is that the global culture embodies not a mere expansion of the culture of the occident but develops out of the confrontation of and growing together of varied traditions. This is also valid for the concept of progress. (*Report of the World Decade for a Cultural Development, 1988-1997, UNO, New York*).

### The Compatibility of Technology and Culture

The compatibility of technology and culture steps into the foreground as a question of the very survival of mankind. We have to incorporate the special cultural traditions of Asia, Africa, Latin America, East Europe and Russia. Not only are new paradigms for development and progress necessary but also a new assessment of the apparatus, ranging from the politics of development and its programmes to industry and technology. Only a convergence of the old traditions with modern science seems to offer alternatives for a new "Cairo" of the human identity and the concept of development and progress. (Ref: Culture and development report conference in Florence, World Bank, Washington, 1999). An in-depth study of the question was conducted at this conference. Lasting development is only possible within the framework of a holistic cultural process of renewal, otherwise it remains segregated from the mainstream of life. This failure to integrate results in fundamentalist or anti-modern tendencies as in Algeria or Afghanistan. Technology is not neutral and has to be in tune with the institutions of the state and the cultural identity of the people, if it is to exert a lasting effect. Technology must not owe allegiance to any one particular culture. In this sense it must be considered "acultural".

Every national economy has its cultural capital. Economic and development programmes are more than just a mere transfer of technology. (Ref: Culture and development report conference in Florence, World Bank, Washington, 1999 An in-depth study of the question was conducted at this conference). Lasting development is only possible within the framework of a holistic cultural process of renewal, otherwise it remains segregated from the mainstream of life. This failure to integrate results in fundamentalist or anti-modern tendencies as in Algeria or Afghanistan. Technology is not neutral and has to be in tune with the institutions of the state and the cultural identity of the people, if it is to exert a lasting effect. Technology must not owe allegiance to any one particular culture. In this sense it must be considered "acultural".

The concept of time has always been different in diverse cultures. (See: Indigenous Views of Land and Environment, World Bank Report, Discussion Papers 1988, Washington DC, 1993). This concept of time can be present, past or future oriented, which exerts a tremendous influence on the capacity for innovation and organisation. To give an example: the work ethic in a Calvinistic society like North America stems from the belief that material success in this
world is a stepping stone to spiritual gratification in the other world. This contrasts sharply with the Indian concept of karma and rebirth which influences the work culture.

In contrast to North America, Latin America has been influenced less by the philosophy of pragmatism, logic and empiricism, than by the Catholic scholasticism of the 16th century, with its emphasis on metaphysics and spiritual otherworldliness. Consequently, it had a completely different approach to technology which is empirical and logical in character. The prevailing historical-intellectual conditions in Calvinist North America provided more fertile ground for the development of indigenous technology than those in Latin America. (See C.v.Barloewen, *Cultural history and modernity in Latin America*). An E.U. Project, translation Barcelona and Oxford. This question has been thoroughly dealt with in this study and this exposition is based on that study.

Though Japan absorbed the tenets of Confucianism around 600 A.D. from China and Korea and also developed its own variant of Shintoism, at the same time it subscribed to an equally pragmatic tradition and a principle of consensus in political and economic matters. The amalgamation of these two inherently different traditions has had a beneficial effect on the work ethic and organisational efficiency of the Japanese people.

The cardinal question here is, why in the last centuries of the modern age, certain states and civilisations in the world have become economic powerhouses enjoying political stability, while other countries have not been able to achieve the same. We can take here the example of the Latin American nations, which have modern constitutions based on liberal European principles, in addition to an abundance of natural resources, and yet compare poorly with Japan, in spite of its obvious geographical isolation and poor natural resources. (See: C.V. Barloewen, Japan and the West, Technology, cultural history and Anthropology, 3 vols, S.Fischer, 1985. A project of the Hans Martin Schleyer. See specially vol. 3 55ff) This cardinal question of the discrepancies in economic growth cannot be answered without a thorough knowledge of the inner dynamics of cultural and religious values. (Ref: W.Pyne, Asian power and politics: the cultural dimension of Authority. Harvard University Press, 1985).

**Convergence instead of Divergence: towards a comprehensive definition of a more humane development**

Culture is not merely another dimension. Economics, technology and politics are rooted in a given cultural context. Culture is not only an object of anthropological curiosity, but it actually influences the thoughts and actions of man. Therefore can there be a modernisation without a forced conversion to Westernisation? In any contemplation of progress and development, this question assumes great importance. No world vision can claim to have a monopoly over the truth and the correct viewpoint.

François Perroux differentiated between economic growth and development. Growth is a quantitative indicator in the sense of the gross social product and of investments. Development, on the other hand is to be seen in connection with economic, social and human progress where man remains the motive as well as the objective. How can traditional cultures come to terms with the harsh realities of the market economy? (See: *World Bank Development*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999).
It embodies not only the typical way of life of a society, but also its underlying spiritual code as well as its values. Culture is also a term for the political and economic order of a country. Economic development is therefore to be understood in the larger context as being only a part of culture. The cultural symbols, values and institutions of a society have far reaching consequences on economic development. This however means that any attempt at an economic-technological development which goes against the existing cultural values will be a failure. This understanding of the wider connotations of the word culture is necessary for the comparison of progress in different cultures.

If we want to understand the logic behind thought and action in different cultures it is necessary to keep in mind their different views of life, their values and thought processes, which find expression in politics, economics, religions as well as in their institutions. (Lawrence Harrison, Samuel Huntington, Culture matters, Conference of the Harvard Academy, 2000). The author is a member of the Advisory committee. We are witnessing today the beginning of a global culture, which signifies something fundamentally new as against all other cultures which have gone before it. Quantitatively what is new is that the global culture embodies not a mere expansion of the culture of the occident but develops out of the confrontation of and growing together of varied traditions. This is also valid for the concept of progress. (Report of the World Decade for a Cultural Development, 1988-1997, UNO, New York)

**The Compatibility of Technology and Culture**

The compatibility of technology and culture steps into the foreground as a question of the very survival of mankind. We have to incorporate the special cultural traditions of Asia, Africa, Latin America, East Europe and Russia. Not only are new paradigms for development and progress necessary but also a new assessment of the apparatus, ranging from the politics of development and its programmes to industry and technology. Only a convergence of the old traditions with modern science seems to offer alternatives for a new “Cairo” of the human identity and the concept of development and progress.

Every national economy has its cultural capital. Economic and development programmes are more than just a mere transfer of technology. (Ref: Culture and development report conference in Florence, World Bank, Washington, 1999. An in-depth study of the question was conducted at this conference.) Lasting development is only possible within the framework of a holistic cultural process of renewal, otherwise it remains segregated from the mainstream of life. This failure to integrate results in fundamentalist or anti-modern tendencies as in Algeria or Afghanistan. Technology is not neutral and has to be in tune with the institutions of the state and the cultural identity of the people, if it is to exert a lasting effect. Technology must not owe allegiance to any one particular culture. In this sense it must be considered “acultural”.

The concept of time has always been different in diverse cultures. (See: Indigenous Views of Land and Environment, World Bank Report, Discussion Papers 1988, Washington DC, 1993). This concept of time can be present-, past-, or future oriented, which exerts a tremendous influence on the capacity for innovation and organisation. To give an example: the work ethic in a Calvinistic society like North America stems from the belief that material success in this
Our project is concerned with the fundamental question as to what effect progress has on different cultural traditions and how far values of other Non Western cultures can be equated with the idea of linear progress. A purely economic angle is not adequate here to achieve what may be termed a "human development. It must be reinforced by a comprehensive anthropological change of paradigm. Economic growth is not identical with development in its widest sense. (World Link Report, World Economic Forum, Davos 1995)

**World Civilisation and Interculturalism: The Definition of Progress in the 21st century**

Modern Science leads to a mechanical view of the universe, which is not necessarily valid for all cultures. The problem is that of finding unity in diversity. On one side history is played out in the arena of different countries and cultures. On the other side the world civilisation must have one common subject that is man. All cultures cannot be assessed by the same definition of rationality. Though universalising is possible in the context of progress we must consider the different cultural historical traditions.

We are experiencing today a common world history of the whole of mankind. Because of this, this project will avoid any Eurocentric view. Different cultures have different cultural premises and institutional practices. Hence modernity should not be perceived as a western creation. Other western cultures, as those in Asia, Africa and in Latin America must also be drawn into the picture.

The political World Civilisation of the 21st century should not possess a dogmatic character. It must not be centralised but rather intercultural in all aspects of life, in order to ensure the survival of man. This diversification must be at the same time be balanced by integration.

Conflict management and conflict diagnosis must also take this university-diversity factor into consideration. Internationalism can be successful in the long run only when it is balanced with the pluralism of cultures. (C.v. Barloewen, Die Zeit, August 2002, which deals with the different concepts of progress in North and Latin America.

A purely economic and material globalisation leads to radicalism and confrontations amongst the religions of the world. The technological domination of the world meets with local resistance (Ref: *World fit for people, containing ethnic conflict*, New York, UNDP, UNO, 1994). This is true, not only for Sudan and multicultural Nigeria but also for Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and India to name just a few examples. The foundations of religion have become stronger in all world cultures. Hostility to the global economy has created a high-tension zone in the conflict between the advancing technological uniformity and the religious and cultural variations. The far-reaching universalisation of the planet Earth in a global sense through the world economy and through the Western concept of progress has led us to the brink of imminent political and ethnic-religious disintegration.

The unification of the world can be achieved only by a rationalisation of the world market and not by attempting to create a common world identity. Only rationalisation would create space for dialogue between world cultures and civilisations.
The project recognises here an important point for the analysis of progress. It requires a judicious differentiation between cultures. The global village is experiencing fragmentation and separation, and an understanding of this is necessary in order to formulate our definition of progress. Economic globalisation is not automatically followed by cultural and political integration. It is the aim of this project to reflect on the definition of progress because it is increasingly clear that the definition of progress in different countries is becoming a challenge to the understanding of the concept of development. (Conference Papers, World Conference Cultural Politics, UNESCO, Mexico City, 1982.) This refers to the above problem.

We are confronted by the problem of a world-wide levelling of cultural differences on one hand and coming to terms with the demands of Technology on the other. This is of paramount importance for the definition of progress in different cultures.

Contrastive Paradigms - Theses - Questionnaire

1. Is there a universal doctrine for evolution and progress that can be applied to all cultures? What historical and philosophical meaning can be ascribed to progress in the different cultures which are represented in this project?

2. What inner logic is there in the term Progress when used in the context of the universal history of mankind? When can we speak of progress, what are the different categories, what criteria can be used to measure progress?

3. Is the question of progress in the twentieth century linked to the Western model of civilisation or is there a possibility of multiple modernity corresponding to the cultural and religious conditions? The concept of progress has developed differently in different world cultures. Is world-wide progress to have a linear nature which corresponds to Western traditions?

4. The technological industrial progress has become the highest criteria of civilisation having absolute claim. Can such a definition of progress be in harmony with a humane development of mankind? Can technical development be equated with the "vision" of progress?

5. How can Development and Culture be made compatible? How can cultural identity on one side and Development, research and modernity on the other side coexist? Can the pluralism of cultures be brought into harmony with economic globalisation, the internationalism of the world economy and with the Western conception of progress?

6. Is there not an anthropological thermostat in the world civilisations? A technological homogenising on one hand and on the other hand its counter-reaction. This counterreaction can take the form of ethnic and religious resistance, political Balkanisation and religious and secular nationalism as an expression of anti-modernity. What consequences will this resistance have for development and progress? Does technical homogeneity mean loss of the human identity?
7. Development and progress cannot take place in a cultural vacuum. No culture is better than the other. What are the consequences of this? Does any one culture have the right to be considered universal? Does not western progress in one sense always mean a loss for other cultures? How can a balance be struck between tradition and modernity?

8. What is the relationship between Environment, Development, Ecology and Progress? Is technological development a means of survival or does it endanger mankind?

9. What is the relationship between man and technology? Is there a conflict between the autonomy of technology and the freedom of man? Will man become the object of technology and not the subject? Is there a powerplay between man, Nature, and Technology?

10. Is there a radical conflict between human nature and modern technology, which is differently manifested in different countries? Has the dissemination of technology in the world civilisation assumed too dominant a character? Does the import of exogenous technology lead to alienation of indigenous people? Is technology neutral or should she not be made “acultural” according to the respective cultural and religio-historical conditions?

**Constant factors in anthropology as the basis for the understanding of progress in different cultures:**

1. What definitions can be derived from the term human need? What is meant by the term “human”? What is the anthropological significance of “human worthiness and happiness”? Does progress heighten self esteem or limit it?

2. What roles do the terms “work”, “action” and “activity” “play in different cultures? What roles do discipline and work ethic play in progress and development? What is self evident in the words “efficiency and innovation”? What is the role of initiative? How does a particular culture awaken dynamism, innovation and creativity? What is one’s understanding of productivity? What is the definition and meaning of the term economic success in different cultures? Is man a doer or a merely a being? What is the potential for change in a culture?

3. The concept of time varies in different cultures. This concept may be linear, it may be future-oriented, or past oriented or it may be cyclic. Man can directly confront future or he can wait for it to confront him. What concrete effects do past, present and future orientation exert on development? Does the evaluation, utilisation and planning of time subscribe to a progressive, retrogressive or cyclic conception? Does a culture articulate its vision of the future and what effect does this have on development?

4. Death is the one constant anthropological factor in all cultures. What effects does the attitude to death and to eschatology have on the work ethic and the dynamics of economic
development in the different cultures and on the understanding of progress? What is the attitude to nature, to the supernatural and to the environment in a deep ecological sense?

5. What role do women play in society and how do they carry forward development in different cultures?

6. How do we define "poverty" and "wealth" in different cultures? What are the different categories? Can one say that there is not one but different forms of poverty? Which needs of man can be regarded as elementary? What does one mean by a good life? Can the quality of life be quantitatively judged?

Are modernisation and universalisation synonymous with Westernisation or are the alternatives? Did the birth of modernity not take place in a specific Occidental-historical situation and can it not be directly transplanted to other cultures? Is universalism a monopoly of the West? Can there be a universality of the technocentric West and mass industrialisation in the non-Western cultures? What is the definition of modernity in a particular culture and what is the relationship between tradition and modernity? What role does indigenous knowledge play? What are the factors which hinder a dynamic development and progress in indigenous cultures? Why is a non-Western form of rationality and progress never correctly evaluated?

8. What is man's identity? Is Culture the identity of man? Is it endangered by development and progress? The unification of the world can be carried out only by rationalising the world market and not through any attempts to create a single world identity which could be a negotiating influence between world cultures.

9. Is economic growth identical to development in a wider and more comprehensive sense? What are the paradigms of growth in different cultures? How can one distinguish between quantitative and qualitative growth? Does material growth necessarily mean progress and growth in civilisation?

Translated by Sabita Dhar