

Education and Culture

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(Part V, see previous Part [I](#), [II](#), [III](#), [IV](#))

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1. Education

Education (learning) is a biblical commandment.

Humans have always strived for knowledge. Even the biblical episode of the forbidden fruit, among other issues, reflects mankind's "inclination" to learn new things and understand the unknown. However, both in the past and in the present, the difficulty often lies not in acquiring knowledge but in being ready for it and being able to absorb it. In the case of Adam and Eve, this applies both literally and metaphorically.

In the broadest sense, education and learning involve the systematization of knowledge, the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, and the ability to study, compare, and analyze one's own and others' experiences and apply them in life regardless of age, field, or desires. And while biological reproduction brings into the world new individuals with inherited traits of ancestors and, perhaps, with some of their problems (or adding new ones to the existing ones), education and learning, capable of reproducing an entire society, have the power to make it stronger and more resilient by addressing and overcoming its previous deficiencies. Together with the family, education broadly shapes the environment, the absence of which forces the statehood to respond by increasing the number of prisons and hospitals.

For Armenians, the commandment to be educated led to the creation of the Armenian alphabet and solidified our nation's **formula for surviving** the adversities of the following 15 centuries with the first biblical thought written in Armenian: *"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding"*². The invention of the Alphabet, which was of fundamental importance, is an exceptional illustration of the merger of the State and the Church efforts for the realization of a strategic state program for the sake of their people³. The outcome and result of this state program initiated in the 5th century were so significant that, according to Koryun⁴, it was also sufficient to create alphabets for the neighboring Caucasian Albania and Iberia (Georgia).

¹ The expert's viewpoint on the value-based foundations of national ideology is presented to the reader. The study consists of 5 parts, provided consecutively, with the included pictures taken from the internet.

² ([Proverbs, 1:2](#))

³ This once again confirms the progressive role of the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) in Armenian history. In our days, the opposition of these two institutions to each other naturally leads to the distortion and reduction of the national potential.

⁴ Koriun, Koryun (Կորյուն) – an Armenian historian of the 5th century AD. He received his early education under Mesrob Mashtots and continued it in Byzantium. In 432 Koryun returned to Armenia and later was appointed as a Bishop of Georgia. Koryun was one of the translators of the Bible into the Armenian language. After the death of Mashtots, Koryun was tasked to write his biography, now known as "Varq Mashtotsi" (Life of Mashtots). In modern period it was translated into Russian, English, French and Germany (See: THE LIFE OF

The invention of the Alphabet in Armenia was followed by what we would today call “*a perfect cadre policy*” and the schooling and teaching of an entire generation of prominent Armenian figures for their enlightening mission. Then came the translation work, the “Armenification” of spiritual and secular life, the beginning of the Armenian “Golden Age”, and the laying of the foundations of public and higher education systems among Armenians. It should be emphasized that the invention of the Alphabet led to the “Armenization” of the country’s secular authority, which had previously conducted correspondence in Aramaic and Greek, a concept from which we are far removed today, as we use foreign and foreign-language operating systems in our daily lives.

At the core of the national education system created on the basis of the invention of the Armenian alphabet were two fundamental components: the combination of the **leading educational experience of the time** and the notion of national. As a result of this unique combination, Armenians have maintained their identity despite various competing influences. They did not dissolve amidst the competition among empire-civilizations but have continued to exist and create as an independent and largely self-sufficient nation. The educational system began with monastic educational institutions, which created universities in the medieval period, earlier than in Europe, and during the decline of the national nobility, it also took on the role of forming the nation’s leadership.

The formula for raising and educating Armenians based on the advanced experience of others is still in demand today, because if any of the mentioned components are neglected, we are doomed either to train professionals for others or to “replace” the knowledge of our new generations with diplomas. Therefore, the educational system remains the foundation of the nation’s existence, preservation of identity, and creativity, along with its mission to transmit general, vital, and professional knowledge. Before taking steps to improve the system and, more importantly, to localize the current “progressive” trends in our realities, it would not hurt to study those old but proven ecclesiastical educational approaches and methods in the domain of Armenology, through which for centuries, even in the most difficult conditions, without state support, national cadre potential has been formed.

As a result of education and teaching, individuals who are well-versed in their national identity do not associate it with something “*ersatz Armenian*”⁵, which they would gladly abandon upon discovering the world. Instead, they identify with the “*truly Armenian*”⁶ as a path towards perfection. This does not negate the importance of advanced educational experience; however, when choosing the path and method, it is necessary not to be seduced by any one approach but to thoroughly familiarize oneself with various ones, for example, the traditional approaches of Singapore, Japan, Israel, China, and others, always being aware that the goal is, nevertheless, to raise an Armenian.

That is why the educational system cannot operate out of the national agenda in an “asynchronous” manner, which implies the improvement of the existing state education system and the transition to a national (or pan-national) educational system. This, in turn,

MASHTOTS, the Story of the Life and Death of the Blessed Man St. Mashtots Vardapet Our Translator by his Pupil, Koriun Vardapet, <http://armenianhouse.org/koryun/mashtots-en.html> (download date: 08.02.2025).

⁵ Հայավարի

⁶ Հայեցի

means involving the entire nation's intellectual and educational potential in the task of raising new generations, including (re)opening national educational institutions outside of Armenia, modernizing secondary, vocational, and higher education systems, and developing educational programs that correspond to modern challenges and national interests.

The inventory of Armenian and Armenophile scientific and pedagogical potential worldwide and the exchange of professional personnel between Armenian and Diaspora centers will become fertile ground for new developments and programs, enriching all segments of the Armenian people. While remaining conservative in its values and goals, education should nevertheless bring dynamism to society, ensuring “social elevators” for gifted and talented individuals regardless of their material capabilities. On the other hand, ignoring education in a competitive environment should guarantee the exit from the race of those who neglect self-improvement.

Emphasizing education as a personal and professional path in society implies a drastic change in the attitude towards teachers⁷ and educators, harmonizing the **form** and **content** in the state policy and in this field. Our attitude towards knowledge and education cannot be considered adequate if, thanks to modern pop culture, the image of a teacher, professor, and an intellectual is consistently formed in the minds of the youth as physically weak and frail, financially insecure, with a strange appearance and manner of speech.

There is also a need to review the emphasis on deeper issues.

Thus, when addressing well-known Armenian figures who are recognized in our reality and beyond, we often tend to emphasize their importance for humanity, viewing these figures as objects of “*national pride*”, rather than examples of individuals who have achieved great heights through diligence and consistent efforts. By valuing the result, we emphasize the past, while for the philosophy of education, the process is paramount – not the beautiful and static past, but the dynamic future, not the result, but the formula for achieving it.

One of the strategic issues related to education on the national agenda is the formation and refinement of the national elite. One of the severe systemic blows inflicted on the Armenian nation and statehood throughout history is the almost complete loss of the hereditary nobility, which was systematically implemented to behead, render powerless, and subjugate the Armenians⁸. The loss of this class was not only the loss of people but also the destruction of traditions of leadership, dedication, and service. Despite its inherent and human nature-derived flaws, the nobility was the “core” of the national statehood, the potential for its reconstruction. Its hereditary nature implied the transmission of not only the rights but also the duties and responsibilities from generation to generation, the willingness to stand in the front lines with its offsprings in times of danger, and to lead the people. Moreover, due to its education and conservatism, this class was also observed as a symbol of morality, values, and authority, dictating, and upholding public behavior norms and speech culture. A society deprived of such a class performing such functions is characterized by bourgeois manners, provincialism, and efforts to present the arrogant pride as “noble manners”.

⁷ It should be noted that Christ was also addressed as “Teacher”.

⁸ Also see: Eduard B. Atanesyan. Why are we losing? / Expert's comment, ARVAK Center, 12.03.2024, <https://arvak.am/en/why-are-we-losing/> (download date: 02.08.2025).

In our view, Armenia needs such a “neo-nobility” as an indivisible core of the nation, bearing the spirit, gene, and mission of the nation at an individual level. This endeavor is especially important for Armenians in our days when, due to objective socio-political realities, neither origin nor wealth can be a ticket to a platform that, presumably, should be composed of people who have “taken up their own cross”. Regrettably, we must state that the more than 30 years since independence have not become a period for nurturing a new socio-political elite from the new generations. A task, by the way, that all our neighbors have done and are doing consistently. On the contrary, in our reality, others were more actively engaged in selective and educational activities – choosing and educating outstanding young people, researchers, and individual specialists within certain perceptions, questions, and values, familiarizing them with each other, forming social connections between them, organizing various events for them, etc.

All the successive regimes also tried to “promote” individuals, but the only somewhat systematic attempt to work with large groups was the initiation of the “Baze” Youth Movement, which, however, as a typical political phenomenon of its time, had a short life. There are many reasons why the state, which has limited itself to exclusively supervisory functions in almost all areas of public life, has failed to create an elite, but we will mention a few of them. Firstly, a unified personnel policy has never been implemented in independent Armenia, and the ruling political teams have “promoted” individual individuals with the logic of reproducing and continuing their political line. Secondly, the tenure of any team is naturally not enough to form a new socio-political elite, while each subsequent team has practically abandoned the “projects” of its predecessors and started new ones, and so on. Third, the steps taken to promote new people lacked a unified, supra-political ideology, free from the logic of exclusively serving current agendas. And finally, the ineffectiveness of the (generally uncoordinated) **selection work** of the independence period is based on the fact that the “selected personnel” viewed their advancement not in terms of a future mission, but in the logic of social “elevation” and building a career.

Three decades later, against the backdrop of the crisis of political thought and traditional ideologies in Armenia, and the spread of perceptions based on the ideological foundations of liberalism, the issue becomes more complicated. The right to make decisions and manage one’s own life and path is no longer subject to not only legal but also moral and value system limitations and regulations. Therefore, in the process of the formation of the country’s socio-political class, the factor of the individual taking on a mission and realizing his responsibility is a mandatory requirement.

Dedication, while outside the legal domain and thus unenforceable, can be regarded as a moral duty inspired by the distinguished mission of an individual’s ancestors, although not universally applicable. At this challenging juncture in our nation’s history, where aspirations and visions for the future are intertwined with the need for spiritual and moral-psychological renewal, any efforts toward such revival must also encompass the reformation of the national elite as a pivotal aspect of **public and cultural life**. Nowadays, when there are only fragments left of the Armenian nobility, we do not mean a program to find the descendants of Armenian nobles and endow them with some rights, although those carrying the genes of the distinguished are also able and obliged to contribute to the nation’s revival.

The program should target prudent, modest individuals who are ready to serve their nation and Homeland in any field, those who have linked and will link their personal and professional growth paths to the Homeland, also for the sake of their ancestors' memory. Institutionally, the target group should not become a “club of the chosen ones”, but a platform of like-minded individuals sharing the same values, open to those who are ready to bring their own contribution to the nation rather than take what is meant for others. Here, too, the AAC has its role to play because, as we have already mentioned, the political nature and chronological peculiarities of formation of state power complicate the implementation of long-term programs by it. Additionally, the implementation of such a program, as a revival of a historical-cultural phenomenon, can contribute to raising people's interest in their roots, increasing knowledge of the Homeland, and strengthening national identity both in Armenia and the Diaspora.

2. Culture

Culture, as a product of the creative life of an individual and a nation, is a totality of material and immaterial values that form the environment and atmosphere of life and activity – a factor that shapes worldview, lifestyle, public behavior, taste and preferences. It is a process of constant reproduction of important and familiar “forms” and “shapes” that has accompanied humanity throughout its history. For example, the purpose of sculptures, ornaments, and paintings was the reproduction of important people or elements of nature; musical instruments imitated the sounds of nature; joyful or sad music reflected moods and feelings; dances represented the movements of animals and natural phenomena; carpets and clothes depicted forms and colors of nature. The same logic has been preserved in architecture and even in the creation of large structures – artificial hills and Egyptian pyramids reproduced mountains, while the Hanging Gardens of the Queen Shamiram recreated the lush vegetation of her homeland.

Intricately linked with nature and the human living environment and influencing the individual's exterior and interior through numerous material and invisible threads, culture is a process of harmonizing the inner world and the environment of a person; it not only reflects and reproduces the environment but also creates it. Culture is inherently flexible and plastic, transitioning smoothly from form to content and transforming from content to form. For example, we understand that a picture of Mount Ararat hanging on the wall is an image reproduced on a canvas with oil paint, yet it is capable of evoking a wide range of emotions and recalling poetic lines dedicated to the mountain. The real or entirely “conventional” furniture placed on the stage during a performance, despite not being real, creates the necessary environment for the ongoing activity, and so on.

This is the essence of culture's importance as a “guide” accompanying the individual at the boundary between the conditional and the real, and it is precisely the gradual elimination of this boundary that makes the function of national culture in the life of the individual and the nation even more important.

In the age of rapid development of modern technologies, technical means and digital technologies allow the formation of an “imaginary”, “augmented”, and “controlled” reality, creating artificial interlocutors, reviving old photographs, generating episodes of the lives of

famous, existing people, creating content that has no connection with reality but is indistinguishable from it. The quality of images and videos created by AI (artificial intelligence) is continuously improving, depriving the individual of the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Thanks to technological progress, modern information, movies, music, games, etc., create a bright and colorful interconnected universe with its heroes, realities, and rules, attracting the attention of the younger generation in particular. By capturing the individual's attention and time, all of this comes to replace preferences and quality literature for the individual, the stimulant force that develops the inner world, critical thinking, and imagination, with ready-made video content, ready-made forms, formulas, and behavioral patterns.

The charm of incredible scenes generated by Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) overshadows the attractiveness and warmth of the homeland's landscapes that have been formed in our minds since childhood, making them gray and uninteresting for children's brains. The tangible, recognizable images of the "heroes" of the modern world, with their incredible abilities, make the characters of traditional epics, heroic narratives, and fairy tales fade, their feats uninspiring, and their scales insignificant. The feats of modern heroes are "physical" and almost never "spiritual", they almost always fight and defeat others and almost never their own weaknesses⁹.

Another misleading characteristic of contemporary culture is that the "evil" can be "kind", and the "kind" can also be "evil", forming sympathy for the former and antipathy for the latter. This is especially true for the younger generation, which, being constantly surrounded by various "childish", including – deformed heroes, cartoons, movies, and encountering their images on clothing, toys, school supplies, etc., eventually forms new orientations and behavioral patterns for their lives¹⁰.

For the more mature audiences, the "flawless" images of heroes presented in several ways subconsciously urge people to pay more attention to their own and others' external appearance ("*forms*"), pushing their own and others' inner "*content*" to the background. The obsession with plastic surgery and radically changing one's appearance, deeply in line with the winds of "posthumanism", forms the conviction that the human beings are subject to improvement, and their abilities and capabilities can and should be elevated to a new level.

As a result, the perception of natural human beauty is also distorted. Especially when it comes to creating people with perfect traits through the transformation of DNA thanks to the latest scientific achievements. The most extreme cases involve individuals who, not coming to terms with their sexual identity, try to match their external "*form*" to their "*real content*" by undergoing gender reassignment surgery, and so on.

These aforementioned negative phenomena, of course, are not directed exclusively against Armenians but are ongoing worldwide, targeting almost all nations. Representatives of the older generation still remember the times when the fight against the influence of the

⁹ Perhaps an example of such an internal struggle can be seen in one of the episodes of the famous movie series "The Lord of the Rings", although it is not fully explained and revealed.

¹⁰ Back in the day, American films like "The Godfather" and "Scarface", the Armenian film "Trap", and the Russian film "Brigade", among others, gained widespread popularity in the Armenian environment, forming a large army of fans.

“*enemy*” culture was conducted by administrative-command methods, prohibiting any phenomenon contradicting the official policy and calling their organizers to criminal responsibility. Even today, several societies try to prevent the entry of undesirable values into the country by extreme methods (e. g. in Afghanistan) – a method whose applicability is debatable for us both from the point of view of civilizational and effectiveness. We believe that in this case, the competition against negative phenomena should be conducted precisely in that field, not by prohibiting the “*bad*”, but by creating a real taste and demand, generating a “*good*” alternative to the “*bad*”.

In this regard, our national culture plays a key role. The rich and multifaceted heritage of our national culture, which is a repository of the inventive mind of the Armenian people, with the application of modern technologies and proper packaging, provides an opportunity to form a respectable competitive potential against negative external influences.

In the process of reinterpreting national culture, the priority should be given to the collection and codification of the cultural heritage of all Armenians, including those elements that have been deprived of their sources of nourishment due to the loss of their native lands. Thereafter, it is important to communicate creative potential and its outcomes, which reflect national values and agendas, to both domestic and international audiences. Through its rich toolkit, culture is capable of reproducing the national environment even outside the Homeland, thus contributing to the preservation of the Armenian identity.

Due to its diverse forms, the nation’s cultural heritage can sometimes stray from traditional value trajectories, influenced by the aforementioned globalization trends and external impacts, as well as environmental characteristics, material factors, and other factors. Nevertheless, as history has proved, only the creative life that stems from and reflects the sacred values is capable of producing eternal masterpieces that transcend space and time. In this regard, another important function of the national culture is the filtering and “Armenianization” of innovations and various creative outcomes¹¹ entering the Armenian environment, harmonizing them with the national heritage and complementing them with national content and nuances. This refers to the widespread manifestations of material culture, such as rapidly changing architecture of our townships, the clothing lacking any national element, etc.

There are many examples in the world of combining the new and the old, contemporary trends and traditional values, while maintaining a clear national outline. Perhaps the most famous example is that of Japan, which has the most advanced example of scientific and technological development in the world and has been able to derive its development philosophy from its own civilizational and, primarily, cultural heritage.

Researchers of our cultural heritage and, in general, people familiar with it, state that the Armenian culture, while remaining national in its manifestations (“*forms*”), is substantially aligned with universal traditional values and perceptions, and thus is accessible and understandable also in foreign environments. In this regard, national culture is one of the main tools of Armenian “soft power” to present the messages of one of the world’s oldest nations to the mankind in an appropriate package. We genuinely hold a special place in the

¹¹ The so-called “*mass consumption*” products.

history of civilization, and therefore, when presenting ourselves to others, we should always try to make them aware not of the well-known discourse about “*what Armenians have done for the world*”, but of what we have done for ourselves.

We must also accept that no nation can be spiritually powerful and rich solely within itself, without getting to know and engaging with the inventive minds of others. Our understanding and perception of the world cannot be expressed by keeping our gates closed against the modern “cultural winds”. In order to recognize and understand our own, society must be familiar with the masterpieces of world culture, recognizing culture in its entirety and interconnectedness, as it is the real bridge between nations and peoples.

Rooted in the logic of creativity (creation), **culture is free** in its forms. Nevertheless, summing up, it should be noted that national culture has its tasks to be fulfilled by the nation as a whole and by the State within the overarching goal of preserving identity:

- Clear formulation, development, and popularization of national values
- Formation of a national environment in the Homeland and its reproduction abroad
- Protection of the nation from aggressive cultural influences
- Harmonization of modern cultural trends with national perceptions,
- Preservation and codification of the endangered cultural heritage
- Development of culture as a component of the Armenia’s “soft power”.