

Peter Berger, from *The Sacred Canopy* (slightly edited)

The condition of the human organism in the world is characterized by a built-in instability. Humans do not have a given relationship to the world. They must ongoingly establish a relationship with it.

Biologically deprived of a species-specific world, humans must contrive, construct and maintain a human-world. This world, of course, is culture.

Culture must be continuously and collectively produced and reproduced by humans. Its structures are, therefore, inherently precarious and predestined to change. The cultural imperative for stability and the inherent character of culture as unstable together posit the fundamental problem of human world-building and world-maintaining activities.

Society is, of course, nothing but part and parcel of non-material culture. Society is that aspect of non-material culture that structures the necessary ongoing relations with one's fellow humans. As but an aspect of culture, society fully shares in the latter's character as a human product. Society is constituted and maintained by acting human beings. It has no being, no reality, apart from this activity.

However, while society appears as but an aspect of culture, it occupies a privileged position among human cultural formations. This is due to the essential sociality of human beings.

The human activity of world-building and world-maintaining is always and inevitably a collective enterprise.

Society, therefore, is not only an outcome of culture, but its necessary condition.